Equality for Women in Agriculture: A Transatlantic exploration of Island Communities

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Abstract

History presents agriculture as a traditional male occupation, associated with physically demanding labour, even though women have always played an essential role in the farming industry (Alston, 1995; Shortall *et al,* 2017; Abrams, 2005; Dunne *et al,* 2021). Although there has been an increased awareness of the role of women, which will be discussed throughout this thesis, there remains a consistent and global difference between men and women in the agriculture industry, in terms of ownership and management. This thesis will first briefly examine the existing literature regarding the relationship between gender and agriculture at an international level in the Global North and will then narrow down to Scotland and Canada, highlighting both the similarities and differences between the two territories. The focus will then shift to specifically the experiences of women in agriculture in the Scottish and Atlantic Canadian Islands, with the presentation of the results of 33 semi-structured interviews carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic with men and women who are involved in the agriculture industry. These results are split into the past, present and future of women in the agriculture industry, of the barriers they had, they have and continue to face due to their gender. Within these sections the notion of 'islands' is considered, with some examples of the different theoretical and methodological perspectives within island studies, including the very recent 'island feminisms' perspective which is used as the theoretical framework for this thesis. Furthermore, reflections on the challenges of conducting research in peripheral rural island areas, whilst being a researcher residing in a remote island will be discussed.

Similarities and differences between the Scottish and Atlantic Canadian Islands case studies are outlined throughout the results chapters, with each concluding with an overall summary of these socio-cultural factors. There were several similar barriers experienced by women in the islands across the two countries. These included childcare, lack of female leadership in agriculture organisations, women still being seen as only women and the unconscious bias of those working in the agriculture industry, such as salespeople. Although some argued about the existence of the barriers and would point to examples of women leaders, this followed the exceptional women ideology, that women are not seen as the norm and instead this ideology is used to justify patriarchal structures on the islands. These barriers transcend both space and time, as they are evident to have existed in the past, present, and future. Even though Scotland

and Canada are exception of countries which have invested heavily into the eradication of gender inequality in the agriculture industry, there remains significant issues.

The most evident differences between the two territories include the land tenure systems, which vary even between the Canadian Islands themselves. A further unexpected finding in the Scottish Islands was the unconscious bias of women trainers, who used the term 'normal' to describe mostly male training groups and used the excuse of there not being enough women in the island to justify their apprehension of women only training and organisations. Yet were surprised when a huge turnout of women attended. A significant contribution of this thesis is both theoretically and empirically to the island feminism approach. It has demonstrated the need to study island women in agriculture in their own terms, as the issues and barriers they experience are more pronounced due to the combination of the geographical isolation of islands and the patriarchal social structures that are intensified in island settings. This is due to typically lower populations, tight knit communities, and the need to maintain good relationships between neighbours in order to prosper in a challenging economic and physical landscape on islands.

Future research should include a comparative analysis of island and mainland women in agriculture. Although there is existing work of both communities, such as this thesis, research that directly compares them would further strengthen the island feminism theoretical approach and demonstrate further the different lived experiences of island women compared to their mainland counterparts.

The overall conclusion of this thesis is that although there has been some progress in this field, full gender equality has not been reached due to engrained cultural norms and practices, such as patrilineal inheritance patterns in the agriculture industry.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Women have always played a key role in the agriculture industry. Today, women make up 43% of the world's agricultural labour force (FAO, 2023). However, there continue to be barriers to women both entering the industry and succeeding if they do enter. This is because farming is socially constructed, and typically understood, as a masculine occupation (Alston, 1995; Shortall *et al.*, 2017; Abrams, 2005; Azima and Mundler, 2022; Dunne *et al.*, 2021). It is an issue that has been recognised in the literature of women in agriculture for several decades (Sachs, 1983; Shortall, 1992, 1996, 2014, 2020; Alston, 1995, 2006; Dunne *et al.*, 2021; Istenič and Charatsari, 2017) and why there continue to be barriers to women in the industry. Therefore, the overarching aim of this thesis is to examine what barriers there are to women both entering and succeeding in the agriculture industry in the Scottish and Canadian Atlantic islands. This thesis refers to 'women' and 'men' throughout, as the terms used in the relevant reports and literature, although it is recognised that gender identities are not binary or limited to these terms (European Court of Auditors, 2021). Given that the aim of this thesis is to examine the inequalities that women experience in agriculture, it was outside the scope and timeframe of this research to consider all other gender identities. It is also inappropriate to use gender-neutral pronouns, as it was important when reporting the data analysis to state the gender of the participants to highlight the differing or similar perceptions of women and men regarding the barriers that women face in the agriculture industry.

The intersection of islands, gender and agriculture is a topic that has not received much attention in the existing literature. Island studies have long called for islands to be studied on their own terms, in order to take into account of the unique features and spatial factors that influence island life (Baldacchino, 2008; Karides, 2017; King, 2009). In order to build a comprehensive study, the emerging island feminism theoretical framework was applied; this perspective combines feminist theory with a spatial awareness of islands, therefore connecting feminism and 'islandness' (Karides, 2017, 2020: Gaini and Nielsen, 2020; Dávalos and Zaragocín, 2022). This study will contribute both empirically and theoretically to this framework, which seeks to better understand the experiences of women and social structures that exist on islands. This ensures that the intersection of islandness and gender will be fully explored, which is a key consideration to the understanding of the barriers that women face in

the agriculture industry on the islands. As in previous feminist and islands studies research, there has been a lack of 'consideration of how island societies construct and are shaped by gender' (Karides, 2017, p.30).

In Scotland and Canada, there has been investment by the governments in investigating and reducing the barriers women face, as will be discussed throughout this thesis. However, research in both countries lack a specific island focus, which is a gap that this research will fill. The rationale and reasoning for these chosen study sites will be further expanded in the next section; this will be followed by the research aims and objectives. The overall structure of this thesis will then be depicted, followed by the concluding comments.

1.2. Research background and rationale

This internationally recognised issue has received varying degrees of attention from governments, from non-existent through to those leading in the field. A government that has invested in this issue is the Scottish Government, who commissioned a Women in Agriculture Research Report in 2017, which led to the creation of the Women in Agriculture Taskforce (Shortall *et al.*, 2017). The taskforce sought to implement the recommendations from the report. These included the creation of women-only training programmes and the need to address engrained cultural norms in the industry, effectively to break down the perspective that agriculture organisations are 'old boys' clubs'. Since the report and taskforce, there has been investment of £400,000 into the outputs of the report to ensure the recommendations are implemented, with an annual update report being published detailing the progression and results from each of the programmes that have been put in place (Scottish Government, 2022a). Although Scotland is part of the UK, agriculture and the Scottish Parliament have both been devolved since the Scotland Act (1998). Therefore, throughout this thesis, Scotland will be the focus and referred to throughout due to its separate and very different agriculture policies and land legislation to that of the rest of the UK. This highlights a devolved government that has shown commitment to end the gender inequality in the farming industry; this is an exception to the general trend by governments, which have generally ignored this issue. Yet, barriers persist in this area, even in Scotland.

Another exception of a country that has demonstrated an on-par investment into the eradication of gender-based barriers for women in the agriculture industry is Canada. Both countries have

left-wing socialist governments in place. In Canada, there has been a large investment of both wider equality programmes and women in agriculture programmes. A $734,806 investment, launched in 2022, aimed at increasing the diversity of those working in the agriculture and agri-food industry by examining barriers and subsequently dealing with the issues that prevent them from entering the industry (Government of Canada, 2022). This highlights the comparative nature of these two territories: both are invested in the eradication of gender-based barriers for women and should be placed as leaders in this field, which other countries should be able to follow as examples of good practice. A further similarity is that they both have several islands in their archipelago. These islands form a key part of their identity, but all are very different. This is part of the rationale for the selected case study sites: both Scotland and Canada are exceptional cases in terms of their government's investment into eradicating gender inequality in the agriculture industry and in that they both have island communities. This means that this is an appropriate comparative study into the lived reality on the islands.

Comparative studies have long been recognised by the founding fathers of sociology as the bedrock of identifying social patterns. The appropriateness of comparing those on the Scottish and Canadian islands will therefore be key to understanding how the barriers facing women in the agriculture industry are similar or different across the Atlantic. By using this comparative case study approach, this reflects the international focus of island studies and justifies the need to use two differing island contexts to illustrate the evidence.

1.3. Research aims and objectives

The key question that this thesis looks to answer is this: why, after all this investment and raising awareness, do barriers persist in the agriculture communities on the Scottish and two Canadian Atlantic islands? To answer this overarching aim, the following three research questions were devised:

1. What are the barriers women in agriculture face in an island context?
2. Are the barriers women face different or similar in Canada and Scotland?
3. Are there different barriers between the islands, depending on socio-cultural factors?

In Appendices A and B, there are maps of the two island groups, the Scottish and two Canadian Atlantic Island groups, which demonstrate their position relative to their wider mainland landmass that make up the countries. The Scottish islands are split into four groups in this analysis: the Outer Hebrides, the Inner Hebrides, the Shetland Islands and the Orkney Islands. This reflects the wider patterns of groupings in terms of their local government councils. As some of the islands, particularly in the Inner and Outer Hebrides, have very small populations, it was appropriate to group them together to avoid any issues of confidentially. This is extensively discussed in the methods chapter. The chosen Canadian Atlantic islands are located on the east coast of Canada. Although much larger than the Scottish islands, both in land mass and population size, the historical connection of the islands makes them an appropriate comparison. This is because, during the 1800s in Scotland there were several circumstances, including the Highland clearances – when landowners evicted croft tenants from their land – and the potato blight, which meant that many Scots, including those from the Scottish islands, emigrated to Canada, including Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland (Kennedy, 2002). Over 80% of Scots who migrated during this time, specifically to Prince Edward Island, were from the highlands and islands of Scotland (Bagnor-Jones, 2021), to the extent that on Prince Edward Island, 37% of the population is of Scottish heritage, as are 40% on Newfoundland Island (Statistics Canada, 2019). Furthermore, for practical reasons, two islands which were close to one another made it appropriate for the research to be carried out, to make the most of the time spent in Canada and meet the budget provided for Plan A of the research. More background information on the islands, including their population and land mass, can be found in Appendix I.

Plan A involved going to the islands to collect the data; however, due to COVID-19, the research plans were significantly altered. The original plan for the research was to conduct interviews and focus groups in person; however, this had to be significantly altered due to COVID-19 and the subsequent travel restrictions that were in put in place. Therefore, the planned visits to the islands were not possible in the available timescale. This meant that the rich descriptions from observations of the island communities and land holdings that would have been used to enhance the evidence was not collected. This would have improved the research data and situated the literature and theoretical framework in the context of the island space through the experience of being within the communities and conducting participant observation. As I am Scottish and grew up on an island, I have lived island experience, including the issues of islandness. This is true of the Scottish context, but not the Canadian

one. The impact of not conducting participant observation was somewhat mitigated by this knowledge, but a shortcoming in the research was caused by not being able to spend time living on the Canadian islands. This issue, and what it meant to be an insider conducting research, is discussed further throughout the thesis.

1.4. Structure of the thesis

In order to answer the research questions, the structure of the thesis will be as follows: initially, the existing literature will be reviewed, followed by a discussion of both the methods and methodology utilised for this research project. Then, the three combined results and discussion chapters will be presented, and finally a concluding chapter will summarise the key themes and potential for future research.

- ***Chapter 2: Literature Review***

The literature further elaborates the historic connections between the islands and explains why a comparative case study approach is appropriate for the question in hand. The literature review discusses in depth the international, Scottish, Canadian and island-specific literature that focuses on the topic of women in the agricultural industry. Key themes were identified from the literature about the barriers experienced by women in the agriculture industry; these included patrilineal land succession patterns, the 'invisible woman', lack of women in leadership positions in agriculture organisations and gendered expectations of childcare. Furthermore, the concept of islandness is examined, with a brief overview of the island studies literature.

To explore these key themes within a theoretical framework meant that there was breadth to the context and that an in-depth consideration of these barriers could be explored. This includes how the island feminism perspective is the theoretical framework of this thesis and why it is appropriate to use a framework with a focus on the intersection of island spaces and gender. This examines how island spaces influence the role of gender in social structures in island communities.

- ***Chapter 3: Methods***

The methodology for this research followed a feminist epistemological approach, appropriate for investigating gender and agriculture (Tickamyer, 2020). The use of case studies is discussed

and how they are suitable for in-depth examination of both agriculture and island communities and have been utilised effectively in both island studies and women in agriculture research in the past (Karides, 2017; Tickamyer, 2020). Furthermore, this chapter details how semi-structured online and phone interviews were utilised to collect the data as, due to COVID-19 induced travel restrictions, no in-person research was able to take place. The benefits of undertaking online interviews, including reduced costs and being more environmentally friendly, are balanced by the drawbacks, which included recruitment challenges and poor connectivity, resulting in frequent disruptions during the interviews. Even though recruitment of participants was difficult, by using a snowball sample, a total of 33 people in the agriculture industry were interviewed. In total ten people (seven women and three men) from the Canadian Atlantic islands and 23 people (19 women and four men) from the Scottish islands took part. Both men and women were included in order to understand the persistence of gender inequality (Budge and Shortall, 2022a).

- ***Results and discussion chapters***

The results and discussion chapters are combined, as a thematic analysis was used to analyse the data and thus it was logical to discuss the emerging themes by referring to the appropriate literature. During the data analysis, it became clear the chapters should be structured as follows: 'Surviving in the Past', 'Striving in the Present' and 'Thriving (?) in the Future'. This is in relation to the barriers that women in the Scottish and Canadian Atlantic islands faced through the ages. The rationale for organising the data in this way emerged during the data analysis phase, as during the interviews, the participants' answers would typically fall into three categories; firstly, the participants referred to women's experiences and barriers facing women in a historic context, namely the 19th and 20th centuries. Then, they spoke about the current perceived and experienced barriers for women in the industry. These were different from those identified in the historic context. The final time period the participants referred to was the future, and the potential for a different reality to develop for the next generation of women in the agriculture industry on the islands, which is dependent on the outcomes of policy measures and how they are implemented and received. Given that the women and men interviewed responded to questions in historical, present and future contexts, organising the thesis in this way best captures gender inequality on the islands in terms of the agriculture industry. Furthermore, participants suggested future topics of research and the current gaps that require further investigation, such as LGBTQ+ farmer experiences.

- ***Chapter 4: Surviving in the Past***

Firstly, the historic barriers are addressed, which provide the context as to why there remain issues for and stereotypes of women in the agriculture industry on the islands today. It was recognised that women have always played a key role in the agriculture industry on the islands, to the extent that some argued that women were viewed as equals in the island communities, as women were allowed to be in the public space of the fields, rather than follow the Victorian ideology during the 19th and early 20th centuries, which promoted the idea that women should primarily inhabit the private space of the home and it should just be men who conduct business in public spaces. This chapter combines the existing literature and the participants' data to prove that despite this perspective, women were ultimately still only seen in supporting roles on the islands, even though it was recognised that without their labour, the fields, the crofts and landholdings would not have been viable, due to the men being away at sea for large parts of the year. This highlights that it was only in the absence of men that women were allowed to show their full potential and ability (Abrams, 2005). The use of an island feminist framework enabled a critical analysis of how being on an island shaped women's experiences in agriculture during this timeframe, which differed significantly from their mainland female counterparts.

- ***Chapter 5: Striving in the Present***

This chapter addresses the 'present' barriers that women face in the agriculture industry. These include those barriers that have been well documented in the existing literature: land access, women being seen as women, the 'exceptional woman' ideology and the lack of women in leadership positions. Although all of these have been evident in the literature previously, it is argued that when examined through the island feminist perspective, there is an increased layer of barriers that island women face. This is due to tradition and patriarchal structures within the island communities coupled with the limited population. Effectively, the ability to challenge gender-based barriers is more difficult, because many of the island crofters and farmers rely on one another to help during busy and difficult periods because of the islands' isolation and remoteness from standard farm services. For instance, this may include being some distance from the vet and the challenging nature of accessing resources due to island extremities, such as lifeline ferries being cancelled due to adverse weather. This means that island women must conduct a balancing act of getting along with their male counterparts and pushing back on

traditional structures. This results in engrained culture norms that are harder to shift, resulting in a slower progression towards gender equality.

- ***Chapter 6: Thriving (?) in the Future***

The final combined results and discussion chapter examines the 'future' barriers: this focuses on what the participants proposed to be solutions to challenges faced by women in the island communities, addressed in the previous chapter. These include women-only groups and the support of mentors. The participants' critiques of existing initiatives are discussed, including the various attempts at opening up land access through farm retirement programmes and how women-only groups should be seen as a short-term solution, rather than a long-term option. Furthermore, the inability of these programmes to take into consideration the specific island contexts – for instance, women missing out on training opportunities due to travel restrictions – again highlights the need for an island feminism perspective to be used to understand and analyse these issues; essentially, further justifying the need for this research and thesis. This chapter also addresses the wider diversity in the agriculture industry, specifically a very brief examination of the topic of queer and trans farmers, which at the time of writing is an under-researched topic in Scotland and Canada. This was highlighted in the interviews, and although it was outside the parameters of this thesis, it is discussed how, despite it being an important area of research, there would need to be increased ethical and confidential safeguards put in place to protect participants on islands with low populations before conducting such research.

- ***Chapter 7: Conclusion***

The conclusion chapter seeks to summarise the key themes and issues that have been raised throughout the previous chapters. This includes the overarching message that although some note the progression for women that they have witnessed in their lifetime, this should not be overstated, as there remain significant barriers for women in agriculture in the islands. These include but are not limited to: gendered childcare expectations, women being seen as women, access to land and having to balance the traditional social expectations of being an island woman. Although it could be argued that some of these factors also occur for mainland women in agriculture, they are more pronounced in island settings. This is due to small populations, reduced resources such as childminders and engrained traditional social structures that are harder to challenge whilst not upsetting your neighbour. All these factors require a specific island feminism focus to be fully realised and challenged in their unique island contexts. The

barriers found in the various islands highlighted that those faced by women in an island context are transatlantic; they are not unique to their respective countries. This highlights the need for comparative work to illustrate the commonalities of the inequality women continue to face, which are pronounced on the islands, even in these countries, which are seen as global leaders in promoting the needs and support for women in the agriculture industry. Key differences between the island contexts are the various land tenure systems in place, and the use of Crown lands in Newfoundland, which is largely public land rented out by the local government and could theoretically be advantageous to women who have historically been denied the opportunity to own land due to patrilineal land succession practice. This even differs from Prince Edward Island, which has the most privately owned land in Canada. However, similarly to studies that have compared the varying European laws determining land succession, this has not made any difference in women's ability to enter the agriculture industry (Shortall, 2015). This highlights the engrained challenges that women continue to face due to embedded structures in the agriculture industry.

1.5. Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has introduced the topic of this thesis. It outlines the structure and content of this thesis. It has introduced the historic relevance of women in the agriculture industry and the appropriateness of conducting a transatlantic comparative case study of the island communities in Scotland and Canada. The analysis uses, and contributes to, the theoretical framework of island feminism. The literature that has informed and provided the grounding for this research will now be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Historically, agriculture was understood as a traditionally male occupation, associated with physically demanding labour. However, women have always played an essential role in the farming industry (Shortall, 2015; Abrams, 2005). Although there has been an increased awareness of these roles, there remains a consistent and global difference between men and women in the agriculture industry, in terms of ownership and management (Charatsari and Istenič, 2016). This literature review will first briefly examine the position of women in agriculture on a global level, and then the discussion will be narrowed down to a solely Scottish and Canadian perspective, highlighting both the similarities and differences between the two territories. The focus will then specifically turn to the experiences of women in agriculture in the Scottish and Canadian Atlantic islands. Within this section, the notion of 'islands' will be considered and some examples of the different theoretical and methodological perspectives within island studies will be explored. This includes the very recent 'island feminisms' perspective, which will be used as a theoretical framework for this thesis. Following this, the gap in current literature that this thesis will seek to address will be defined.

2.1 Global context

The extent of the gender and agriculture issue is highlighted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, which goes as far as to state that if women were given the same level of resources and access to land there would be a reduction of hunger felt by approximately '150 million people due to productivity gains' (UN Women, 2020). This is due to the lack of resources and opportunities that are available for women, which prevents them from maximising their agriculture productivity in the developing nations (FAO, 2011). This is despite decades of work that have illustrated the 'invisible woman' in farming (Sachs, 1983; Alston, 1995; Shortall, 1992; Riley, 2009; Shortall and Adesugba, 2020; Dunne *et al.*, 2021; Kubik, 2005; Corman and Kubik, 2017). Some causes which are preventing women from reaching their potential in the Pacific islands were highlighted in the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2012) report. It was stated that there had been recommendations for policy changes surrounding gender that stemmed back to the 1970s and 1980s. Yet, half a century later, there remains little to no improvement regarding access to land, training, job opportunities and working conditions. From the outset of this report, it is admitted that:

> ‘little is achieved in the way of effective, institutionalised gender mainstreaming with respect to agriculture’ (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2012, p.7).

This demonstrates the awareness of these issues, yet an apparent reluctance to implement and thus enforce effective policies to mitigate the barriers that women in agriculture face daily. This demonstrates the engrained difficulties within the industry and how there is a reluctance to embrace these changes and modernise effectively to be in line with current societal norms.

This is an issue which persists in both the global North and South. Although there are inherent and evident differences between the North and the South, there are also similar issues in both contexts, such as women’s farming organisations’ inability to be fully integrated into mainstream agriculture groups, therefore lacking the potential to have impact on wider legislation (Shortall and Adesugba, 2020). This highlights that even when there are social differences in place in certain countries, gender inequality in agriculture remains. Mainstream farming organisations typically have patriarchal structures, where women are made to feel unwelcome and experience engrained cultural barriers, preventing them from achieving leadership positions (Alston, 1998, 2000; Alston and Wilkinson, 1998; Shortall *et al.*, 2017, 2019). Other international examples of such inequalities facing women include Alston (2017), who highlights in her longitudinal study that many rural Australian women are choosing to move away from the traditional farm ideology, as they are tired of doing long hours of off-farm work whilst being expected to also complete the farm books as well as the farm tasks. Studies in the USA have highlighted how women farmers do not have the same access to training opportunities, due to agriculture extension educators not seeing women as ‘authentic’ farmers, and therefore the offered training does not meet the needs of women, such as the times of meetings due to childcare restraints (Trauger *et al.*, 2008, 2010). In Europe, women in Greece and Slovenia are not obtaining access to training programmes, to the extent Istenič and Charatsari (2017, p.131) highlight that the current structure of agriculture education opportunities ‘puts women farmers at a relative disadvantage’. Shortall *et al.* (2017) demonstrate that in Scotland, in a report which will be further examined throughout this thesis, a number of barriers to women exist in modern-day Scottish society, including land being passed onto the eldest son being the norm, despite women demonstrating their equal capabilities.

A recent systematic review by Dunne *et al.* (2021) of the international English-language literature regarding women in the agriculture industry, spanning five decades from the 1970s to 2020, identified three key barriers to women's being able to contribute economically to the agriculture industry and their invisibility within the farming community: access to land, education and farming organisations. These factors appear consistently in the literature. This demonstrates how embedded patriarchal structures in the agriculture community prevent women from reaching their full potential in the industry and thus stop women from fully contributing economically to the industry. Furthermore, these issues are evident on a global scale; although Dunne *et al.*'s (2021) review focuses on the UK agriculture industry, it uses literature from across the global North to evidence these points.

These, albeit brief, global examples highlight that this is a worldwide issue for the agriculture industry. It is experienced in both the global North and the South. Although there has been much research completed regarding this issue, work is still required before equality is fully embedded in the agriculture sector. Although there are very different societal norms in all these areas, the situation remains that women all over the globe are not given the same opportunities in the industry as their male counterparts. Despite there being an ever-growing wealth of literature and a substantial amount of research into this topic, there has not been the drive to achieve gender equality in the agriculture industry (Charatsari and Istenič, 2016; Bock and Shortall, 2015; Dunne *et al.*, 2021).

2.2 UK and Canadian perspective

Similarly to the Pacific islands report, during the 1980s UK academic research increasingly recognised the historic lack of recognition it gave to women, who have always been an inherent and necessary part of family farm businesses (Shortall, 1992, 1996; Little, 1986; Coughemar and Swanson, 1983). This was in part due to women being simply recorded as 'farmer's wives' or spouses in statistics, thus giving an incomplete reflection of their roles (Alston and Wilkinson, 1998; Alston, 1995; Gasson, 1992; Shortall, 1992, 2014; Corman and Kubik, 2017). For example, it was only in 1991 that women could classify themselves as a 'farm operator'[1] in the Canadian census (Corman and Kubik, 2017). In terms of rural women in Canada, the historic power imbalance between men and women was highlighted during the 1800s and early

[1] A farm operator is a person who oversees the management, decision-making and daily running of the farm holding. They can own, be tenants of or be a hired manager of a farm (Statistics Canada, 2023).

1900s, when, due to the rising economic importance of the dairy industry, the state incentivised male farmers to take over what had been a typically female occupation and role on the farm (Shortall, 2000). This demonstrated how, due to men typically owning the land and resources on the farm, this resulted in women's inability to challenge this loss of income and their role on dairy farms in Canada. The catalyst for change in Canada was sparked in the 1970s by the case of *Murdoch v. Murdoch*, where a woman who filed for separation was not awarded any part of the ranch that she and her husband had built up throughout their 25 years of marriage (Machum, 2015; Shortall, 1994). This was despite the fact that she had contributed both physical labour and financially to the farm business, which would not have been viable without her work. Machum (2015, p.35) highlights the judge ruling that this was to be 'expected of any ranch wife' (*Murdoch v. Murdoch*, p.444), which was then met with a strong retaliation from the general public, who were exposed to the reality of the fragile position of farm women across the country. Additionally, this highlighted the expectations placed upon a 'ranch wife'; to work hard and contribute to the holding but not to be guaranteed any recompense in the case of separation from their partner. This led to substantial changes in Canadian law, where both partners are now entitled to half of the family assets (Shortall, 1994).

From this case, groups such as the Concerned Farm Women and Women for the Survival of Agriculture were created, which aimed to help rural women improve their lives and give them access to 'credit, training programs, childcare, health and safety programs, and new government tax regulations for greater equality on the farm' (Machum, 2015, p.36). Furthermore, the wider women's liberation movement during the 1970s aided the development of women's farming groups (Shortall, 1994). One consideration that these bodies had to make was whether it would be best to create a separate group for women or to try do this from within existing farming organisations. This is a debate which continues today as to whether women-only groups are the best way forward (Dunne *et al.*, 2021). Shortall *et al.* (2017) termed it a 'double-edged sword' regarding the effectiveness of creating a separate entity for women, and whether this would further distance them from the mainstream farming organisations. This could effectively further divide men and women in the farming industry, rather than close the gap, despite the best intentions being at the heart of the idea. This is a difficult balance to achieve; to create a separate safe space for women whilst still ensuring they have an effective voice in the mainstream organisations, which wield much of the influence and power over the farming industry (Shortall, 1994; Alston and Wilkinson, 1998). This additionally sheds light on the state of the industry, if this is still required, that men are still presumed to be the norm.

This is demonstrated by the need to add the word 'women' to the title of a group, showing that the assumption remains that being a male farmer is the norm (Shortall, 2016). Therefore, this might unconsciously reinforce pre-existing stereotypes.

In terms of more recent research of farm women in Canada, the continuation of them being deemed invisible is evident within the literature (Kubik, 2005; Corman and Kubik, 2017). Two key scholars in this field include Wendy Kubik and Amber Fletcher, who have each published research in this area. For instance, in Kubik's (2005) paper, she discusses how women's work on family farms is not recognised, reflective of Sach's (1983) 'invisible women' ideology. Kubik (2005, p.86) depicts the reasoning for this as due to the deeply intertwined nature of farm household and farm business, where women's roles on the farm are seen as 'helping out' rather than contributing fundamentally to the farm business. This is especially the case when childcare is involved, as farm women are still expected to 'multitask' and balance this responsibility with farm chores, which Fletcher (2023) demonstrates in her recent book chapter entitled 'Fifty years of farm women: Gender and shifting agriculture policy paradigms in Canada'. This chapter discusses how agriculture policy in Canada has historically been unequal, depending on a person's gender, race and social class (Fletcher, 2023). It provides an overview of how the various politico-economic structures over the past 50 years have impacted farm women and the issues they face in their daily routine and lives. Fletcher has also published and co-authored several papers and books that utilise and call for an increased use of an intersectionality framework to understand and examine the issues experienced by rural farm women in Canada, especially indigenous women (Fletcher, 2018; Walker *et al.*, 2020, 2021; Fletcher and Reed, 2022).

A further example of Kubik's important work in the field of women in agriculture in Canada includes her co-authored paper (Corman and Kubik, 2017), in which the authors highlight that the household work carried out predominately by women had begun to be recognised at government level, with the inclusion of household labour in the 2001 and 2006 Canadian census; however, in 2011 the long-form census was replaced and, therefore, the tracking of this information ceased. This demonstrates a wider issue of the priorities of the government, and highlights that when a crisis occurs, it is gender equality that is first to be shelved (Shortall and Marangudakis, 2022). Therefore, although the *Murdoch v. Murdoch* case occurred in the 1970s, the Canadian literature demonstrates that the expectations placed upon a ranch or farm wife are still no different to those from 30 years prior (Kubik, 2005; Corman and Kubik, 2017;

Fletcher, 2023). Due to the format of the Canadian federal census, this invisible labour cannot be captured and continues to be unrecognised at provincial level and thus not accurately portrayed or presented in the media. Thus, women's work will continue to remain invisible in the farm household and undervalued as an essential role in the farm business. Kubik and Fletcher (2016) co-edited the book *Women in Agriculture Worldwide: Key issues and practical approaches,* which brought together authors from the across the globe. The various chapters discuss a range of issues experienced by women in the agriculture industry, demonstrating the commonality of the continuation of gender-based barriers across multiple societies. Kubik and Fletcher's work highlights the ongoing issues that farm women face across Canada and is reflective of the barriers that have been highlighted in the UK-based literature. Again, this demonstrates the appropriateness of this comparative transatlantic case study.

The gender barrier for women in the agriculture industry is an issue that is recognised by both the Canadian and Scottish governments. In Scotland this was evident from the *Women in Agriculture Final Report*, produced by the Scottish Government Women in Agriculture Taskforce in November 2019, which highlights the barriers faced by women in the agriculture industry (Scottish Government, 2019a). In terms of leadership roles, there are few women in elected farming body positions. The Scottish National Farmers Union currently has 'no women in its national office holders, regional board chairmen or committee chairmen', with a belief among some farmers of both sexes that men would refuse to vote for female candidates (Shortall *et al.*, 2017, p.4; Shortall *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, there are examples of exclusionary practices, such as, in the UK, all-male dinners or women being asked to leave meetings once the social component is completed. This was demonstrated at the 2018 Dartmouth Fatstock show in Devon, UK, where the prizes were presented in the afternoon, after which the women were then asked to leave prior to an all-male dinner (BBC, 2018).

In Canada, the government introduced Farm Credit Canada's new Women Entrepreneur Program, a $500 million fund that was available to women in agriculture to grow their businesses over three years (Government of Canada, 2019; Farm Credit Canada, 2023). Although progressive steps, the requirement for the state in both countries to intervene in the structure of the industry demonstrates the level of inequality experienced in the two countries. In terms of leadership positions, the Canadian Federation in 2019 elected their first-ever female president, Mary Robinson, in their 84-year history; although a positive development, this demonstrates the novelty of women being able to achieve the top position in the agriculture

federation (*Guardian*, 2019). Exclusionary practices in the agriculture industry are evident in Canada, with women stating that there is a sense that farming bodies are 'old boys' clubs', which results in a lack of female role models (Davison, 2016).

The persistence of these issues can be attributed to gender identity (Brandth, 2002; Shortall, 2016). This observation builds on Becker's (1963) labelling theory, where in rural areas male farmers embody the masculine traits associated with labour-intensive work in the countryside (Charatsari and Istenič, 2016; Shortall, 2014). This can be due to their identity being entwined with the land and the traditional belief that men are head of the household, whereas in many farm households this is no longer the case, with many women being the main breadwinner for the family. This change of economic power in the relationship is viewed as threatening to the male farmer's identity, which has become increasingly fragile due to the reduced standing of farmers in their communities (Bryant and Garnham, 2017; Shortall, 2016). Additionally, mechanisation has meant a reduction of farm labourers working on smaller holdings; this has resulted in farmers suffering from loneliness and isolation as they spend much of the day alone (Holton *et al.*, 2022; Shortall, 2014). Recent research into male farmers' mental health and farming identity has highlighted this as a prominent issue in the industry, with more farming men in Ireland dying from suicide than farm accidents between 2014 and 2020 (Hammersley *et al.*, 2022). To combat this, women unconsciously put themselves down and encourage the traditional identities of the 'farmer and his wife', effectively to save the identity and mental well-being of their husbands (Alston, 2006; Shortall, 2014; Wheelock and Oughton, 1996). However, this comes at the cost of preventing progress and the breaking down of barriers to women in agriculture, even with the advancement of equality in wider society (Charatsari and Istenič, 2016; Shortall, 2014). Furthermore, these pressures could also impact on farming women's mental well-being; a recent report found that 58% of them suffered from mild, moderate or severe anxiety (Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, 2021). The mental well-being of farming women has also been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, due to a regression of gender expectations in households and therefore an increase of invisible domestic work for women (Budge and Shortall, 2022a, 2022b). The impacts of COVID-19 will be revisited in depth in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

This highlights that there are many parallels between Scotland and Canada, both in current and historic terms, concerning women in the agriculture industry. The many shared issues and interests demonstrate the appropriateness of this comparative research. The differences, in

terms of scale and types of farms, political organisation and culture, also make the comparison relevant as the study will identify commonalities and differences. In the following section, this will be further analysed, with a discussion surrounding the island communities in both nations, and how they compare and contrast in various ways.

2.3 Scottish and Canadian islands

This section carries on the narrowing of the literature to the islands themselves. First, there will be a brief overview of some of the island studies literature. This is followed by the introduction of the theoretical framework which will be used in this thesis: island feminism. Then, the Scottish and Canadian islands themselves will be discussed, leading on to how they relate to the women in agriculture debate. The section will then conclude by identifying the gap in the current knowledge base that this thesis will address.

Although the study of islands is not a new concept by any means, the increasing interest from the academic community to study them from an economic, environmental and social perspective has been evident over the past few decades. This was, in part, motivated by the inauguration in 1985 of the Institute of Island Studies based at the University of Prince Edward Island in Canada, and although it primarily focused on locally based issues, the establishment of the Island and Small State Institute at the University of Malta in 1989 provided a more international perspective on concerns facing islands (Scottish Centre for Island Studies, 2023). This has led to several other island-based institutes being created around the world, such as in Australia, Japan, South Korea and Estonia. This demonstrates the international growth of interest in islands being studied as their own entities.

Furthermore, the first-ever issue of *Island Studies Journal* was published in 2006 and was the first English-language, peer-reviewed journal specifically focusing on island studies (Baldacchino, 2006; Grydehøj *et al.*, 2023). This has since been followed by several other open access journal outputs: *Shima*, *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures*, *Urban Island Studies* and *Okinawan Journal of Island Studies.* The growth in literature and interest in the specific study of islands demonstrates the need for islands to be studied on their own terms. From this, there have been several influential texts, both peer-reviewed articles and books in island studies that have shaped the field and aided its growth. One of the key figures and texts include Baldacchino's (2004) paper 'The coming of age in island studies'; it is here where island

studies is defined as the study of islands on their own terms. Baldaccino (2004) provides an overview of the history of island studies and discusses the increasing international interest and awareness of the need to understand islands as their own entities, therefore establishing the rationale and call for future research to take a specific island approach. This article has since become the most cited paper in the island studies discipline and is viewed as the foundational paper to have laid the groundwork for the field of island studies.

Island life is different to that of mainland life in multiple respects, both in academic terms and the stereotypes associated with island communities; for instance, Baldacchino and Veenendaal (2018, p.339) discuss that:

> 'In academic literature, island societies are frequently presented as friendly and easy-going environments in which citizens live together in harmony.'

This plays on the assumptions that island life is idyllic, following the same premise as the rural idyll, which is the belief that those in remote areas have easy, romantic lives (Castree *et al.*, 2013). This could be taken to a greater extent in terms of these communities, where 'islandness' in island studies considers islands in terms of:

> 'smallness, a strong sense of local or island culture and identity (typically implying some tension with a larger "mainland"), peripherality, and a sense of being bounded by water' (King, 2009, p.57).

Although the use of the word 'smallness' would suggest that larger areas that are technically islands, for instance Australia, are not included, it is argued that the study of islands can be rendered impossible as a single entity (Ronström, 2012). This is due to the vast differences between the islands themselves, with vast population, geographical and socio-cultural differences.

Island studies consist of a variety of differing perspectives, both theoretically and methodologically. For instance, 'nissology', which seeks to replace the previously mentioned 'islandness', is an approach that advocates putting the research into the hands of those being studied: islanders themselves (Baldacchino, 2008). This reflects examples in island studies of the reliance on informal networks due to a distrust of state officials and a sense of

powerlessness (Azzopardi, 2015). Some feminist approaches in the rural literature would also advocate for this type of research, as it would mitigate the power imbalance that may be evident when research is conducted. It is argued that it should be those who have experienced the issues personally who should lead and conduct the research (Little, 2002; O'Reilly, 2009). These thoughts could similarly be applied to island studies, as 'nissology' where McCall (1994, 1996) advocates for islands to be studied 'on their own terms' (King, 2009, p.56). However, King (2009) criticises this approach, as he highlights that there is no evident definition of what constitutes someone as an islander or not an islander. For instance, in some studies it may simply be defined as how long an individual or family unit has lived on the islands. Gibbon (2010, p.188) highlights that the community itself determines the membership of the local society:

> 'the community serves both as the audience to the enacted identity, as well as the judge as to whether or not that identity is granted through membership in the group.'

Therefore, this could be divisive; additionally, the methods by which islanders (whoever that may be) would choose to represent themselves might be very different to those of classic methods used by researchers. Furthermore, as a critique to the feminist approach, there will be only so many researchers who experienced specific situations, which might therefore prevent important studies being carried out due to the lack of expertise and matching personal histories.

There are additional perspectives, including island feminism, that relate to the place and geographically specific factors that result in the cultural and social identity of the islanders themselves (Karides, 2017). This is a recent concept in island studies, with the first book, *Gender and Island Communities*, edited by Gaini and Nerlsen having been published in March 2020. Gaini and Nerlsen (2020, p.3) summarise the issue as follows:

> 'a research gap exists in terms of taking an explicitly feminist approach to studying gender and social inequalities in island settings'.

This speaks to the rationale for this study. Although a recent concept, it is adopted as the conceptual framework for this thesis. The logic for doing so is presented in the next section.

2.3.1 Island feminism: Theoretical framework

This section will discuss the appropriateness of using an island feminism conceptual framework in this thesis. As this is an emerging perspective, there will be a discussion of where it originated and thus contextualise it within the literature, and how it fills a gap in both the field of island studies and established feminist perspectives. This will be followed by its critiques, and a subsequent defence will be offered against these perceived shortcomings. Finally, there will be an outline of the significance of island feminism and why it is the most appropriate framework to use for this piece of research. It both informs the study, and the study demonstrates the value of this emerging theoretical perspective.

Island feminism was initially introduced by a paper in the journal *Shima* in 2017 by Professor Marina Karides from the University of Hawaii, which was entitled 'Why island feminism?'. This article was the first to criticise the wider field of island studies for the lack of engagement with how gender impacts island spaces and people's experiences, and at the same time the lack of engagement from mainstream feminism theory, including Marxist, postcolonial, geopolitical and other scholars to fully analyse 'islandness' and how being on or from an island does or does not affect social inequalities in communities. Therefore, Karides (2017, p.30) proposed island feminism, as follows:

> 'Island feminism is a theoretical orientation that understands islands on their own terms … [a] synergistic perspective to enable a critical analysis of the social equality and sexuality regimes within and across islands and the varied gendered strategies for maintaining island livelihoods and preserving island topologies'.

This paper seeks to highlight that there needs to be a move away from the perception that island spaces have no influence on established gender structures; that instead, there needs to be a greater focus on how the unique characteristics of islands can impact the experiences of women:

> 'Feminist scholarship in geography, sociology, and other related disciplines have not considered how "islandness" or the social construction or spatial imaginary of islands guides gender and informs sexualities on islands (or not)' (Karides, 2017, p.30).

The need for this perspective was furthered in the book *Gender and Island Communities* by Gaini and Nerlsen published in 2020. This, surprisingly, was the first-ever book to consider how gender interacts and influences island communities. This demonstrates again the newness of this approach and reiterates the historic disregard by both island studies and feminist scholars to appreciate the need to synergise both gender and islandness to fully understand how islands as spaces impact on women.

In terms of its origins in island studies, Karides (2020, p.27) demonstrates that whilst there has been a focus on theorising 'islandness' and 'nissology', in the two main academic journals in the field of island studies, *Shima* and *Island Studies Journal*, there were only 11 published articles that 'analytically addressed gender, sexuality, feminism, masculinity, or queer theory to some extent'. This demonstrates the lack of engagement from the wider island studies academic community of examining gender in an island context. Gaini and Nerlsen (2020, p.3) summarise the issue as follows:

> 'a research gap exists in terms of taking an explicitly feminist approach to studying gender and social inequalities in island settings'.

This gap in the literature and lack of engagement from the wider field of island studies is part of Karides' (2017) reasonings for the island feminist framework. As previously mentioned, the concept of islandness is fully embedded within island research (Azzopardi, 2015; King, 2009; Baldacchino and Veenendaal, 2018). Therefore, an intersectionality lens that utilises both feminism and islandness allows for a comprehensive analysis of the experience, in this case of island women in the agriculture industry. Therefore, island feminism will aid the analytical expansion of island studies and further its scope, in terms of making an explicit examination of the experiences of women on and in island settings, and this is impacted by both gender and island spaces.

Island feminism seeks to use feminist theory combined with a spatial awareness of islands, therefore connecting feminism and 'islandness'. Dávalos and Zaragocín (2022, p.314) describe it as: 'an incipient framework, whose scholars have identified the need for feminist theory to be considered from island spaces'. The key difference between simply using a feminist framework to examine this issue is that feminist scholars have failed to consider the explicit differences between island and other spaces, even though the importance of how gender

impacts on space has been highlighted, to the extent that that 'space is gendered, and gendering has a profound consequence for women' (Doan, 2010, p.1). Furthermore, a cornerstone of feminist geography is to consider whether 'gender relations are constitutive of material and physical spaces, as well as symbolic and discursive spaces' (Oberhauser *et al.*, 2018, p.4). Therefore, there remains a lack of feminists who incorporate 'islandness' into feminist frameworks. This thesis thus utilises island feminism as its conceptual framework, as it will allow for both islandness and feminist perspectives to be considered and most importantly, how they interact in island spaces.

The existing feminist theories and their principles that island feminism utilises and draws upon are outlined in Karides' (2017) paper and include intersectionality, queer theory, postcolonial and indigenous feminism. Each of these existing theoretical frameworks will now be described in turn and how they were appropriate to be the basis of the island feminist theoretical framework. This will include the key feminist scholars, examples of how they are already used in existing island studies literature where appropriate, and a brief critique of each theory.

Intersectionality theory is a framework developed by legal scholar and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the USA. Crenshaw's (1989) article 'Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics' was a pioneering article in that it sought to highlight how both feminist theory and anti-racist policy discourse at that time needed to be reconfigured to adequately consider black and other women of colour's experiences. It was in response to what was seen by black feminists as an over-concentration and presentation of a singular experience by mainstream feminism of the struggles and inequitable opportunities for women, which was based on the issues faced by white middle-class women (Cooper, 2015; Carastathis, 2014). Therefore, it was argued that previous mainstream feminist theory did not consider how those of a different social class and race might experience fewer or more opportunities, depending on the intersection of those factors. Intersectionality theory examines how various social identities and categories, such as race, gender, class and sexuality intersect and interact with one another, creating unique and interconnected experiences of both privilege and oppression (Cooper, 2015; Davis, 2008). Intersectionality theory recognises that individuals hold multiple social identities and that these identities cannot be understood or analysed in isolation (Carastathis, 2014). Rather, it

emphasises the need to consider how these identities intersect and shape an individual's experiences within existing systems of power and oppression (McCall, 2005). Its shift to mainstream feminist theory demonstrates intersectionality's wide popularity and appeal amongst scholars. Some even hail it as one of the most important contributions to feminist work (Davis, 2008). Yet, its broad appeal may also contribute to one of the theory's key critiques. As it can be viewed as an ambiguous approach, this consequently means that intersectionality is not unified in its methodological techniques or conceptual ideas. This results in consistency being a challenge. An example of this is how power is incorporated and understood in intersectional approaches. A critique of how some scholars use intersectionality in their work and research is when they ignore power relations within structures; this results in intersectionality being 'flattened' (Hopkins, 2017). Flattening relates to its shift to mainstream feminist theory, so that the use of a blanket approach results in 'flattening the very differences intersectional approaches intend to recognise' (Luft, 2010, p.145). This demonstrates the challenging nature of ensuring intersectionality is used appropriately and in line with its original purpose. In response to these critiques and to prevent a shallow analysis, there have been calls for ethical consideration and care to be taken when scholars use intersectionality, as when its origins in black feminism and the anti-racist movement are forgotten, it can result in work that ignores the very social categories and subsequent issues that intersectionality initially sought to highlight (Hopkins, 2017).

In terms of how intersectionality theory is used by island feminism as a basis, it can be summarised as 'introducing islandness and island sense of place as significant social and spatial qualities that influence work, communities, social networks, and families' (Karides, 2018, p.80). Whilst intersectionality has traditionally focused on the intersection of various social categories, island feminism instead focuses on the intersection of gender and island space: a social category and a spatial category. Island feminism acknowledges the power relations that are evident in the local island communities that are a result of islandness, and their subsequent impact on women. This differs from the traditional use of intersectionality, as it focuses on a place-based intersectional approach. Therefore, instead of examining the interaction of social categories that cause oppression, islandness and gender, and the power relations that interact with both these factors, are what Karides (2017) views as foundational to the principles of island feminism. A recent example of a place-based intersectional approach in island studies was evident in MacGilleEathain *et al.*'s (2023) paper, which examined sexual well-being of young people in the Scottish islands. The authors highlight that their results show a need for

an intersectional, place-based approach to be taken in order to support young people in their sexual well-being, as 59% of participants did not know about any sexual support services available to them. Being in a small island community meant that young people felt 'alone yet visible', because they felt a sense of shame and stigma associated with being sexually active alongside the inability to remain anonymous and the impossibility of confidentiality being maintained in their island community. This is because participants were fearful that their neighbours or members of the community would see them accessing sexual health services. This demonstrates the challenging nature of living in a small and tight-knit island community and outlines the geographical as well as social and cultural barriers, especially for young people, to access services that may be seen as shame inducing. This links to how island feminism uses an intersectional framework to examine a social category – gender – and the impact of island space, including social and geographical isolation on islands, when examining issues that affect those in island communities. It is acknowledged this differs from the traditional form of intersectionality and could be criticised in the sense that it does not overtly prioritise other social categories such as race, ethnicity, education and disability. However, the focus of island feminism is to incorporate gender as a category of analysis in the field of island studies and islandness, which remains a key gap in the literature, thus promoting intersectionality within the field of island studies itself.

Queer theory is a further existing feminist perspective from which island feminism takes inspiration. This school of thought can be traced back to the 1990s and emerged following Foucault's (1978) *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I,* in which he rejected identity politics and instead discussed his sentiment that sexuality is socially constructed. A further key figure in the literature is Judith Butler, whose book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* (1990) is credited as being one of the founding pieces of queer theory, in which she challenges the very category of 'woman'. Queer theory challenges traditional understandings of gender and sexuality by examining how societal norms and power structures shape and regulate these aspects of identity (Downing, 2008). Rather than viewing gender and sexuality as fixed and binary categories, queer theory seeks to deconstruct these categories and instead emphasises the fluidity, complexity and diversity of human experiences (Goldberg, 2016). Critiques of queer theory include its tension with feminist studies, such as questions raised in the *Coming out of Feminism?* (1998) collection of essays edited by Merek, Segal and Wright, which discussed the question of whether queer theory 'came out' of feminism or rather if it left it behind (Love, 2007). A key difference between queer theory and feminist studies is the

distinction of gender from sexuality by the former, whereas the latter sees it as deeply embedded. This links with a further critique of queer theory, which is its focus of being framed as an anti-identity, which created tensions with lesbian and gay studies to the extent that some argue that queer theory undermines the previous decades of work by gay and lesbian activists (O'Driscoll, 1996; Love, 2007).

In relation to island studies and island feminism, a person's sexuality and their expression of such can be limited or impacted upon due to being on an island. Historically – pre-colonialisation and pre-contact – many islands, such as the Pacific islands, had a much greater diversity of both gender and sexual orientations (Besnuer and Alexeyeff, 2014). Yet, due to islands' 'particularities', residents can 'harbour virulent forms of homophobia, fuelled by coloniality and religion' (Karides, 2017, p.34). Therefore, island feminism draws on the patriarchal structures and power imbalances evidenced on islands, where gender relations can be impacted by traditional outlooks and communities.

Postcolonial feminism is a multidisciplinary framework of critical analysis that emerged in the latter half of the 20th century, following the waves, including feminism and critical race theory (Elam, 2019). It examines the historical legacies, cultural dynamics and power relations resulting from the colonial period and its aftermath. Postcolonial theories aim to challenge and deconstruct Western narratives, structures and ideologies that have shaped and continue to influence societies and institutions worldwide (Gandhi, 1998). Postcolonial feminism became more apparent during the 1980s, where, building upon

> 'Edward Said's (1978) enunciation of the "social construction of the other" as an organising principle of imperialism, post-colonial feminism captures the significance of global hierarchy among nations and races, while emphasising the centrality of gender to the world system' (Karides, 2017, p.33).

Other leading scholars and works include Audrey Lorde's (1984) 'The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house' essay, which sought to speak to white women and urged them to recognise and reflect on their ingrained, unconscious racist bias by comparing it to the patriarchy in terms of them both being structures of oppression. Furthermore, Gayatri Spivak's (1988) 'Can the subaltern speak' article critiques both liberal feminism and wider Western academia for only focusing on work by those who are white or from the global North, whilst

cherry-picking the oppressions faced by minority women or those from the global South to further feminist causes without considering their – namely white women's – own role in reproducing these oppressions. Therefore, postcolonial feminism advocates for a shift away from the 'white saviour complex' and advocates for the recognition that minority women can use their own voices and act for themselves and do not need to be 'rescued', whilst simultaneously recognising that there are challenges and oppressions faced by these women (George, 2006).

A key critique of postcolonial feminism is in the name itself, that the use of the word 'post' would suggest that we live in a world without any colonialisation (Asher and Ramamurthy, 2020). There remain areas, including islands, which, as termed by Royle (2010, p.203) 'remain in a colonial relationship, being simultaneously colonial and postcolonial'. This demonstrates the complexity of both the historic and current geopolitics of islands and their relationship with the larger mainland and ruling territories. Therefore, it can be argued that 'decolonial feminism' is a more appropriate term, which acknowledges the continuality of those areas who remain under colonial rule and does not try to frame colonialisation as a thing of the past in today's world.

In terms of its relevance for island studies and specifically island feminism, it is acknowledged that islands have suffered greatly from being historically colonialised, and as Baldacchino and Royle (2010) highlight, many islands are the last to gain independence from colonial rule. This has resulted in a call from Nadarajah and Grydehøj (2016, p. 437) to prompt 'island studies as a decolonial project'. Therefore, the importance of using and engaging with postcolonial theory has been acknowledged in the wider field of island studies. This demonstrates its applicability and appropriateness of being used as one of the key existing feminist theoretical perspectives used for the island feminism framework. It is a well-used existing framework within the field of island studies and one which continues to be utilised following Nadarajah and Grydehøj's (2016) call for increased scholarship regarding decolonialisation of islands. This makes postcolonial feminism key for island feminism, as it is already established in the existing field of island studies and therefore important to consider for scholars to understand island life.

Indigenous feminism is the final existing theory that island feminism utilises. It combines principles of feminism with indigenous perspectives and experiences and seeks to address the unique challenges and forms of oppression faced by indigenous women and their communities

(Green, 2017; McGuire-Adams, 2020). Indigenous feminism is grounded in the intersectionality of gender, race, colonialism and cultural identity and acknowledges the diverse experiences and knowledge of indigenous women, whilst simultaneously valuing their roles as caretakers and knowledge holders (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). Furthermore, it promotes the idea that indigenous women are not passive; rather, they are agents of change within their communities (Walker *et al.*, 2021). It seeks to challenge and dismantle patriarchal structures, colonial legacies, and gender-based violence that disproportionately affect indigenous women (Liddle, 2014). Indigenous feminism provides a framework for challenging and transforming the structures of power, by amplifying women's voices, knowledge and leadership and by contributing to the ongoing struggles for indigenous rights, gender equality and social justice (Green, 2017). It should be recognised that for many years indigenous women have called for increased scholarship and research to incorporate their experiences and shift away from what is viewed as a white, Western feminist approach that ignored the gendered impact of colonisation; therefore, the origin of this theory is situated in indigenous women's activism (Suzack *et al.*, 2010).

Critiques of this approach include that it presents women as heroes and can be patronising. This is evident in Mcleod *et al.*'s (2018) work, which states that local knowledge is lost due to women joining the workforce and therefore not remaining in the home. Whilst this sentiment raises a valid point concerning the loss of knowledge, the burden of placing the upkeep of indigenous and local knowledge on women alone represents the patriarchal nature and expectations placed upon women (Fletcher and Knuttila, 2016). Furthermore, some indigenous women do not like to be associated with the word 'feminism', as reflected upon by Green (2017, p.2): 'most of the Aboriginal women who identify as feminist remain cautious about claiming the label'. This demonstrates the tensions within indigenous communities and the existing power structures that women must negotiate in their daily lives.

The appropriateness of using this final theoretical framework as a guiding source for island feminism is summarised by Karides (2017, p.33):

> 'Indigenous feminist approaches guide island feminism, not only because of the numerous indigenous communities on islands, but also the historical practices of islanders including the retention of island communities and culture, often the undertaking of women, and a social orientation guided by the natural environment'.

This role of challenging existing roles of power by indigenous women in islands is evident in Rodríguez-Coss' (2020) paper, which uses island feminism as a praxis to amplify the voices of female activists on the island of Puerto Rico. Specifically, Rodríguez-Coss (2020, p.84) utilises the example of the street performers *Las Musas Desprovistas y Sin Sostén* (dispossessed muses without support), where women were topless and had the word AGRESIÓN (aggression) painted on their chests, as an example of a 'feminist strategy of resistance that acts to contest dominant constructs of islands and island people'. This demonstrates the use of activism by island women to challenge and resist embedded patriarchal structures evident in island communities. The protest represented women from the following communities: victims of domestic violence, immigrants, unemployed female family providers, victims of sexual aggression, homeless women, HIV/AIDS and breast cancer survivors, and lesbians (Rodríguez-Coss, 2020). All of them had been unable to access sufficient protection, which is supposed to be provided the state to prevent experiences of both economic and sexual discrimination in their communities and workplaces. This reaffirms the necessity of utilising indigenous feminism theory as a source for island feminism and demonstrates how it can be used to understand acts of resistance by island women against patriarchal structures existing in their island communities.

It also demonstrates the role and theme of empowerment. Whilst the concept and very definition of empowerment is heavily debated and critiqued in the literature, a commonality is the importance of power and how the collective action of a group can enact change within a community or organisation (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995; Wright and Annes, 2016; Rowlands, 1995; Walker *et al.*, 2021). The above example demonstrates the use of action by island women to organise themselves and protest structures and powers that prevented them from accessing essential resources (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995). It can be argued that the empowerment of women is a key issue that is part of all the theories discussed in this section, and the goal of each is to understand the structures that inhibit empowerment being realised. Whilst it is outside the scope of this thesis to delve into the complex debates surrounding the very definition of the concept of empowerment, reflections from the literature and how it is incorporated into the emerging island feminism framework demonstrates the need to understand why island women still seek empowerment and why structures remain in place that prevent equality. Equality can be defined as every person being treated the same despite the group that they may belong to (*Cambridge Dictionary*, 2023). As mentioned in the title of this

very thesis and reflected upon throughout the following chapters, the equality of women in the agriculture industry remains a distant goal. This is true in a global context and evident in the case studies around which this thesis is built. The focus of this thesis is to examine the barriers that women in the agriculture industry on the case study islands continue to endure, and the success or failure of current programmes and initiatives that seek to mitigate the gender-based obstacles that are evident in this research. Therefore, it is important to reflect upon the theme of empowerment and how women in the industry have either felt empowered by such programmes or if they have effectively stifled their ability to experience equality due to furthering the division of men and women in agriculture, such as the previously mentioned women-only groups and how they are dubbed a double-edged sword (Shortall *et al.*, 2017). Thus, the concept of equality in the context of this thesis may be termed as a complex and challenging goal. This is due to reasons such as engrained gender norms in island spaces and an already masculine-dominated occupation. This intersection again highlights the appropriateness of using an island feminism framework, as it allows for a deep analysis to understand the challenges island women face when trying to enter and their experiences within their local agriculture industries.

Although all these existing feminist theories differ in their own respects, a commonality is that they all seek to understand those who are traditionally repressed in mainstream research and broader society. As demonstrated throughout, gender and an explicit focus on the experience of island women have largely been ignored in island studies and broader feminist work. As discussed, it is acknowledged that there are well-deserving critiques of all of these theories and they are not without any flaws; it remains that these are the key feminist theories in which island feminism is grounded. They make up the key principles of this emerging framework, where islands are used as an intersectional category alongside gender. It allows the study of what is currently an under-represented group – island women – in the existing literature of island studies and broader feminist research, where there is an explicit concentration of how women's lives are shaped and determined by being in an island space.

Whilst feminist theory has been the cornerstone of many studies and academic articles by scholars who have investigated women in the agriculture industry, there is a lack of any academic work that specifically studies this from an island perspective and utilises this framework. This has been key to guide the analysis and subsequent structure of this thesis, as

it also seeks to further the field of women in agriculture to focus on women in the islands, specifically in the Scottish and Canadian contexts. By using this emerging framework, this will allow this thesis to contribute both to the women in the agriculture field and the island feminism theory framework by providing empirical evidence that will close the gap in current research that has been identified within this literature review.

Thus, island feminism is a theoretical concept that encompasses the unique intersection of feminism and the specific contexts of island communities. It acknowledges the diverse experiences and challenges faced by women living on islands, where geographical isolation, cultural distinctiveness and colonial legacies often shape their realities (Rodríguez-Coss, 2020). Island feminisms emphasise the importance of local knowledge, cultural traditions and the histories of resistance in understanding and addressing gender inequalities (Karides, 2017). It recognises the multiple layers of oppression and discrimination faced by island women, such as limited access to resources and services. By centring the voices and experiences of island women, island feminism aims to challenge and transform patriarchal structures, foster solidarity, and work towards inclusive and sustainable futures for island communities (Karides, 2017, 2020).

This is evident in the studies that have used an island feminist perspective, which have shed light on complex situations that disadvantage women because of them being on an island. One study used an island feminist perspective to illuminate issues relating to gender-based violence (GBV) on islands: Dávalos and Zaragocín (2022) used an island feminism theoretical perspective, which allowed an analysis of how 'island society constructs and is shaped by gender to shed light on Gender Based Violence dynamics' in San Cristobal in the Galápagos archipelago (Dávalos and Zaragocín, 2022, p.322). The authors highlight the tense relationships that San Cristobal has historically experienced with their mainland state, following the annexation of the Galápagos Islands by Ecuador in 1832 and the subsequent establishment of the Galápagos National Park in 1959. The authors argue that:

> 'the state's long-standing prioritisation of conservation and tourism over the socio-economic and political concerns of islanders has consequently invisibilised (sic) gender disparities' (Dávalos and Zaragocín, 2022, p.322).

Economic priorities for the islands overshadow the violence women experience, and there is no appetite to implement gender-based policies. In the study, a clear rigid set of gender roles were apparent for native Galapagueña women. Native women do not inhabit public spaces due to conservative social expectations, which means that women are relegated to the private sphere. This is compared with those who migrate to the islands and are not subject to exclusionary practices. This was highlighted in the research, which combined two methods to collect the data: a survey and three feminist cartography workshops. The first workshop comprised only native Galapagueña men; the second workshop included native Galapagueña women and the final one was made up of women who were not from the island. During the workshops, the participants were asked to draw a Galapagueño man and woman and place Post-it notes on their body parts describing particular characteristics, whilst explaining to the group what they had written and why they had chosen it. This promoted discussions of gender-based social expectations of native women and how they differed from native men and women who migrated to the islands. This was illustrated when all groups described conservative dress codes for native women, including wearing long sleeves and never wearing bikinis to the beach, even when the temperature was high. Furthermore, in all three of the workshops the participants confirmed that there was a much greater investment by the government in environment-based policies compared with services preventing and attending GBV cases.

This conservatism, combined with the lack of trust and poor relationship with the island's mainland-based state, meant that this further reduced victims of GBV's ability to access any services and support provided by the state. This lack of trust was highlighted in the survey, where 74% of victims of physical violence and 67% of victims of sexual abuse had reported incidents to the authorities, yet the authors highlighted that National Police data on the island reported zero cases of femicide and no legal cases against any GBV offender. The lack of prosecution by authorities was not lost on participants, who reported that key issues in reporting incidents included the lack of privacy and anonymity of living on an island and a mistrust of state agencies such as the police and medical centres. Participants in the study also stated that they felt unable to report incidents because of the inability to distance themselves from the perpetrator on the island due to the lack of available shelter or refuge. Furthermore, the impact of tight social control of neighbours, family members and the wider community, which is typical in island societies, was discussed as a further factor discouraging women to report incidents of GBV. These factors, combined with a mistrust of the mainland state, led to women

victims feeling isolated and led the authors to conclude that migration status influenced the likelihood of those who experience GBV in the Galápagos Islands.

The authors highlighted the need to examine how GBV affects women in an island context using an island feminism framework to fully understand the spatial impacts on gender-based policies and their subsequent effectiveness on island communities and in households. This is especially the case if the inhabitants of islands are minority groups, as was the case for native Galapagueña women. This understanding of the situation of women experiencing GBV on a remote island is enhanced by an island feminist perspective.

Another study used island feminism to examine women's careers in STEM faculties on the island of Hawaii. The purpose of this work was to provide an analysis of how island spaces influence higher education institutes, specifically two-year colleges in Hawaii, and shape employment opportunities. Karides *et al.* (2020) highlight how employment on islands is largely influenced by both informal and formal networks, where it is the norm for professional and social relationships to overlap. The extent of how engrained these networks might be was illustrated by the fact that 50% of the interviewees and 60% of the survey participants had graduated from the University of Hawaii system. This demonstrates the longitude nature of relationships of those working in academic institutes on the island from an alumni perspective and the attachment to island place.

A key finding from Karides *et al.*'s (2020) study was the gender-based differences between white men and white women who were not from the island and how these impacted women's careers at academic institutions in Hawaii. This was found at several different stages in women's careers. Firstly, in the initial hiring period, the authors found that 25% more men than women were first employed at a higher rank and thus a higher salary at the institution. This demonstrates that, from the onset, white women from outside the island were placed at a disadvantage to white men who were also not from the island. Following this initial hiring disadvantage of lower rank and lower salary, white migrant women were then unable to access the informal and formal networks to the same extent as white migrant men. This was illustrated by the fact that a much higher proportion of white men were able to build relationships with colleagues who showed them round the island, explained how local systems worked and introduced them to the wider island community. Thus, men were able to quickly increase their formal and informal networks, which are intrinsic to island life, both professionally and

socially (Karides *et al.,* 2020). This is due to men typically having more free time, as they are not expected to take on the bulk of the care work in households, which is typically gendered and falls to women. Men are not as restricted by school pick-up times or childcare responsibilities compared with women. Therefore, men can take part in after-work lectures and social activities outside working hours; attending such events allows for both professional and social networks to be built and sustained. Women, in comparison, are not able to attend such events, due to being expected to take on the bulk of the care work, and are therefore at a disadvantage compared with men. This was again demonstrated by the fact that white men were more likely to report that they had a support system in place on the island, whereas only 12% of white women agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. The disadvantage experienced by white women who were not from the island and were not able to access or utilise the networks that became easily available for white men demonstrates gender-based barriers for migrant white women on the island. This led to the authors concluding that white men were able to benefit from their race and gender to obtain faculty positions created specifically for them by academic institutions, and also permanent posts and higher salaries. Furthermore, white men were able to benefit from being quickly integrated into the 'in-group' of islanders by accessing local networks via colleagues. These benefits were not offered to the same extent to white women, demonstrating an evident gender-based bias in favour of white men in STEM academic careers. The denial of these benefits for white women further impacted their longevity of staying on the island, due to the high cost of living, which is driven by an elite tourism industry in Hawaii, made evident by the fact that 35% of the respondents in the survey had a second job to sustain living on the island (Karides *et al.*, 2020). White women hired on lower salaries and unable to use local networks to find inexpensive housing and second jobs are therefore disadvantaged and face greater challenges compared with white men to meet general living expenses (Karides *et al.*, 2020). Utilising an island feminist perspective showed how white women were being disadvantaged both by their gender and by being on an island. This analysis would have been missed if there had not been considerations of both gender and islandness, therefore demonstrating the need to use an island feminism framework to demonstrate how white women are affected by the social structures on island communities compared with white men.

Similarly to Karides *et al.* (2020), a study in the Shetland Islands found a similar island commitment to the economic benefit of tourism rather than addressing gender equality (Budge and Shortall, 2022c). Lerwick's Up-Helly-Aa is a traditional Viking fire festival which

celebrates the end of the long, dark winter nights in the UK's most northern archipelago, the Shetland Islands. It is the largest fire festival in Europe and an important tourist attraction for the Shetland Islands. It is also a very masculine event. Women were not allowed to participate in the main parade, an issue which has recently come under increased scrutiny, and despite the festival's 150-year history, it was only in January 2023 that women were permitted to take part (BBC, 2022a).

Each year on the last Tuesday in January, roughly 1000 men carry burning torches through the streets of Lerwick. They are led by a group dressed as Vikings, who pull a traditional longship that is then burned in the middle of a children's playpark, all whilst thousands of spectators look on. This celebration of the end of winter occurs in the Shetland Islands, an archipelago amid the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, around 600 miles away from the capital, London. It is Europe's largest fire festival, and it is a significant revenue earner for the islands (Budge and Shortall, 2022c).

In recent times an increasingly critical spotlight has been shone on the festival. It is men who take part in the main procession; the women's role, in comparison, is that of either being a 'hostess' or simply attending one of the 11 local halls (Up-Helly-Aa Committee, 2019a). The members of the squads, or 'guizers', travel around the halls after the burning of the galley throughout the night until the following morning, performing plays and dances with reference to both local and wider issues with a humorous tone (Up-Helly-Aa Committee, 2019b). The division of the roles that are played out by the genders reflects a traditional rural society, with men being the active agents and women playing the supportive role (Shortall, 2014). But, in the 21st century, this is deemed outdated as the division of activities is based purely on an individual's sex.

Budge and Shortall (2022c) found that women spoke of the difficulty of expressing a different view on a small island. When one woman publicly queried the equality aspect of the festival in a letter published in the local paper, the number of people who 'liked' her business page on Facebook reduced significantly. Having reasonable discussion was difficult. Concerns for women's equality were countered with a focus on the mental health gains for men. Others spoke about instances of sexual violence at the event and how local police did not take it seriously. Following many heated discussions, the Lerwick Up-Helly-Aa Committee agreed to allow women to participate in January 2023. As the question of women's participation in the

main event is documented to have first taken place in the 1980s, the length of time it took to reach this conclusion shows yet again the need to understand island traditions, customs and societies to fully grasp their implications for women's equality. This furthers the case to utilise an island feminist framework to comprehensively examine such issues that are pertinent to island women.

However, the island feminism perspective is not without criticism. Although there is a recognised need for it by some scholars, it may be argued that the use of traditional feminist frameworks would work just fine, and that there is nothing to gain from using a new or generally untested framework. A further criticism is that Karides (2017, 2020) highlights how island feminism seeks to combine both islandness and feminism; as already highlighted, there are existing critiques regarding 'islandness' within the discipline of island studies. This would call into question whether nissology, which has a much greater focus on the participants themselves, would have been a more appropriate position than islandness. This would have been more in line with some feminist approaches, which state that the only way to completely eradicate the power imbalance between researcher and participant is by ensuring it is only those with lived experience who should be allowed to delve into certain topics (Legard *et al.*, 2003; Little, 2002; O'Reilly, 2009). Furthermore, Gandhi (2023) highlights in her book review of *Gender and Island Communities* (Gaini and Nerlsen, 2020) that whilst there is engagement of gender and islands, the publication would have been improved by further analysis of postcolonial theory alongside more intersectional theory, which is evident in feminist politics. Gandhi (2023) argues that the book chapters only examine women in the broad sense and ignore any intersections of race and class; thus, the chapters do not acknowledge these social categories and how they impact the daily lives of islanders. This highlights a wider issue, that whilst intersectionality theory principles are used by island feminism, as it focuses on the intersections of gender and island spaces, it can ignore other social categories, which are the cornerstone and foundation of intersectionality theory, and can therefore be 'flattened', as discussed in the previous section, which focused on some of the key critiques of intersectionality (Hopkins, 2017). Therefore, whilst the foundations of island feminist theory are grounded within contemporary feminist theories and advocates for the examination of women's experiences in island settings, the manner in which it is utilised should be critically analysed, to avoid it just being used in a Western-centric style, as highlighted in Gandhi's (2023) review, as this effectively goes against the very principles within which island feminism is grounded, including postcolonial feminism. This is reflective of the wider field of island

studies, as whilst Nadarajah and Grydehøj (2016) called for island studies to be a decolonial project, an analysis of the articles in *Island Studies Journal* highlighted that there remains a significant difference between Western and non-Western articles and scholars, in terms of the published research and their impact (Grydehøj *et al.*, 2023). This demonstrates that even when principles and calls are in line with a postcolonial ideology, if this is not put into practice in terms of outputs and research, the sentiments are essentially worthless and will not effect change.

However, although these are valid criticisms, there is much to defend about this conceptual approach. The purpose of any research is to identify existing issues that have not been fully analysed by previous researchers, and effectively to add to and expand the knowledge of society. By using this emerging framework of island feminism, this thesis examines whether women in the agriculture industry experience barriers on the Scottish and Canadian Atlantic islands that are specific to living on islands. Extensive consideration of how island life differs from that of the mainland is given in this study, as are the subsequent impacts of these differences on equality for women. By using an island feminism perspective, this has meant that both the impact of island space on women's inequality in the agriculture industry, and how being on an island means that social issues can be more pronounced, may be fully understood.

To conclude, the rationale for adopting the island feminism framework in this thesis has been outlined. It has introduced the emergence of island feminism, its origins and its role in addressing the gaps in both island studies and existing feminist perspectives. The framework's potential is defended against critiques, emphasising its value in analysing the interplay between gender and island spaces. The foundational paper by Professor Marina Karides in 2017 introduced island feminism as a response to the fact that the interaction and intersection of gender and island spaces is consistently overlooked in island studies and mainstream feminist theories. The concept encompasses analysing islands on their own terms, providing a critical perspective on gender within and across islands. Island feminism is seen as addressing the lack of engagement in island studies regarding gender, and emphasises the need to understand the unique characteristics of islands and how they impact on women's experiences. The theoretical underpinning of island feminism draws from existing feminist frameworks such as intersectionality, queer theory, postcolonial feminism and indigenous feminism. Each theory's relevance and contributions to island feminism are discussed, showing how they collectively shape the framework's perspectives on gender and islandness.

In summary, this section establishes island feminism's significance in contextualising women's experiences in island settings. By integrating existing feminist theories and addressing the current gaps in gender analysis within island studies, island feminism offers a novel approach to understanding how gender and island spaces intersect to influence women's lives. Therefore, this makes it the most appropriate and the most logical framework to guide this thesis.

2.3.2 Islands and agriculture

Historically, the interaction between agriculture and women can be seen as complex. Abrams (2005) depicts that in the Shetland Islands, although working on the land was always seen as 'men's work', it was predominantly the women who actually carried out the majority of the farm tasks. This was because the men were away at sea for most of the summer months, which coincided with various crofting tasks, such as sowing the crops and cutting the peat on the hill. This was similar to daily life in the early 20th century in the Hebridean islands, where although the man was always viewed as the breadwinner, it was the woman who was 'head of the hearth' (Mackenzie, 2019). Some may then argue that this created a much more equal island society, with all being expected to carry out physically demanding work regardless of gender. This demonstrates that women were being seen and occupying the public space on islands, during a time period often defined by Victorian ideology that sought to move women into the private space of the domestic home only (Thompson, 1985; Abrams, 2005; Shortall, 2000). However, despite women's contribution to the land, there was still a division of labour according to gender: it was only in 'the absence of men that women could demonstrate their multiple skills' (Abrams, 2005, p.96). This demonstrates that women were always viewed as a substitute for men, rather than the leaders or main crofters. Therefore, a gender divide was always present on the islands, regardless of the fact that it was widely acknowledged that women were just as capable as the men in many respects.

The importance and relevance of this thesis' topic may be seen in the current demand for research into how gender interacts with the agriculture industry. The 2017 Women in Agriculture research report takes a broad sample from both the mainland and the islands of Scotland (Shortall *et al.*, 2017). However, mainland life is quite different to island life, as is evident from the recently introduced Islands Bill, which has given increased power to local island councils, due to their differing nature to mainland Scotland (Islands (Scotland) Act

2018), highlighting a recognition at a legislative level of the individualistic development needs and communities of Scotland's islands, such as accessibility to services and markets. From this, the five-year National Islands Plan was published in 2019, which seeks to change the historic feeling of islanders of being 'on the periphery of public policy' (Scottish Government, 2019e, p.5). This was used as a catalyst for the recently signed Islands Growth Deal, a £100 million investment by the Scottish and UK Governments, highlighting the recent interest and commitment to investing in local island communities (UK Government, 2023). Similarly, the Scottish Government has demonstrated a long-standing investment into increasing gender equality across Scotland, including in the agriculture industry. This was evidenced by the Women in Agriculture research report, the subsequent taskforce set up to implement the recommendations from the report and the substantial annual financial commitment by the Scottish Government to address inequality in the sector.

Although the Scottish Government's Women in Agriculture report demonstrated multiple barriers to women in agriculture and included participants from the islands, it did not include a specific island component. This is despite the fact that 40% of working occupiers and spouses are women, but on the islands, only 22% of owner occupiers[2] are women (Scottish Government, 2019f, 2021a). This statistic, however, should be critically analysed. In the 2016 Scottish Agriculture Census report, there is a footnote that notes that 'spouses' are included in the working occupiers statistic (Scottish Government, 2016). This is to better reflect the number of women who work in the agriculture industry, which can be viewed positively on a surface level. However, not reporting the number of women who own agricultural land in Scotland is problematic, as although it may be well intentioned and well motivated, it can obscure the data and thus the true representation of women's position in the industry. This is evidenced by the fact that only 7% of agricultural holdings are run solely by women occupiers (Scottish Government Agriculture Statistics Department, 2019). However, this statistic is not reported in the Scottish Agriculture Census or the publicly available data files on the website. It was only provided following an email request to the Scottish Government Agriculture Statistics Department. This presents a wider issue of how sex-disaggregated data should be reported and presented, as although the data may exist, if it is not made easily accessible to the public, it can inadvertently prevent appropriate analysis by other bodies that use it as evidence

[2] An owner occupier is defined as a person who both owns the land and works it (Crofting Reform Act (Scotland) 2010).

for both research and government reports. This hidden data was only discovered following a conversation with my primary supervisor, Professor Sally Shortall, who questioned the use of the 40% statistic in this literature review. It was through her involvement with the Scottish Government's Women in Agriculture taskforce that she was aware that the statistic was a misrepresentation, and the percentage of women occupiers in Scotland was much lower in reality. Therefore, as a researcher who has completed extensive research training, I was ready to accept this number and present it in this thesis. This demonstrates the deeply problematic nature of presenting uncritical data, which can distort the reality of individuals. Whilst there may be good intentions behind adding in the spouses' data to better reflect the contributions women make to landholdings, it equally prevents the acknowledgement that women still encounter obvious barriers accessing and inheriting land in Scotland. Therefore, with the current initiatives and interest in island work and promoting gender equality, this confirms the gap alongside the need for this research in the Scottish island context and natural extension of the existing work.

From the Canadian perspective, Kubik and Corman (2017) present the problematic nature of the Canadian federal census, which does not accurately capture the invisible nature of women's household work on farms, as although questions regarding household labour, including caring and domestic work, were included in the 2001 and 2006 censuses, due to the discontinuation of the long-form census in 2011, this information was no longer included. From a Canadian island perspective, there was a survey launched by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries of Prince Edward Island to discover the barriers that women face in the agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries industries on the island (Government of Prince Edward Island, 2020; Yarr, 2019). The report highlighted that only a third of respondents believed that there were existing barriers encountered by women in the agriculture industry, whilst half of the male participants believed that there were no such barriers (Government of Prince Edward Island, 2020). This suggests a lack of public awareness of this issue, as the proportions of female occupiers in the agriculture industry in Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland island are 20% and 25% respectively, below the national Canadian average of 30% (Statistics Canada, 2022). Therefore, the lower proportion of female occupiers in the Canadian Atlantic islands compared with the mainland directly contradicts the public perception that there are no barriers to women in the industry; if there were none, the number of female occupiers on the islands would reflect or surpass the national average in Canada. This highlights the current demand for research focusing on

women's experiences in the agriculture industry whilst residing in an island community, and the parallels of this demand between the Scottish and Canadian islands.

The founding fathers of sociology, such as Weber and Durkheim in their examination of industrial capitalism and social processes, noted that comparative analysis is the bedrock of analysis identifying social patterns (Hantrais, 1999). The use of comparative analysis in international rural research has been deemed challenging due to differences in scale, population density and the very definition of 'rural' in different countries (McAreavey and Brown, 2019; Lowe, 2012; Shortall and Alston, 2016). However, it does serve as an important methodological tool; rural research comparing US and UK contexts has demonstrated that their rural populations may be placed in parallel with one another, which allows for the identification of social patterns and differences (Lowe, 2012; Shortall and Brown, 2019). As has been discussed, there are multiple similarities between Scotland and Canada, in terms of their current governing political parties' ideologies, investment in gender equality and the multiple islands that are part of their countries. Therefore, it is appropriate to use an international comparative case study approach to research inequalities faced by women in the agriculture industry in the islands of Scotland and Canada, as their populations can also be viewed as being in parallel. Furthermore, by comparing two cases, the Scottish and Canadian Atlantic islands, this research will be in a stronger position to contribute to the emerging theory of island feminism, as it will demonstrate its appropriateness and applicability across multiple island and international contexts (Bryman, 2004).

The comparative approach in this study allows an exploration of parallels and differences of the current barriers faced by women in both the wider Scottish and Canadian contexts. It also allows for an exploration of the different barriers that women in agriculture face between and within island communities. This case study comparative approach is also appropriate, as it is in line with wider island studies methods and gender in agriculture research (Tickamyer, 2020; Karides, 2017). This is further discussed in the methods chapter.

This thesis will focus on factors such as the various land tenure systems on the islands and socio-cultural differences, such as the importance of tradition in the community, and whether these impact on agriculture communities. It will be analysed whether these features have a greater influence on gender equality on farms than geographical location. To do this, four Scottish island groups are examined in this research – the Inner Hebrides, the Outer Hebrides,

the Orkney Islands and the Shetland Islands – providing a representation of the various archipelagos. It should also be noted here that in the Scottish context, the term 'crofting' will be used interchangeably with 'farming'. Crofting is defined as a:

> 'system of landholding, which is unique to Scotland, and is an integral part of life in the Highlands & Islands' (Crofting Commission, 2023).

This is a historic land tenure system where small plots of land, typically rented from the landlord, were used to sustain households in the islands and highlands of Scotland (Scottish Government, 2023). Most crofters tended to have other employment, such as going off to fish, as the men did in the past, or more recently, any job that can be done in combination with running a landholding. Crofts are very important in the islands, demonstrated by the fact that up to 65% of households in Shetland, the Western Isles (Outer Hebrides) and Skye are crofting families (Scottish Crofting Federation, 2023). Interestingly, there are different numbers of crofts across the islands: for instance, in the Inner and Outer Hebrides, there are 6,103 rented crofts and 258 owned crofts, and in the Shetland Islands, 2,129 tenanted crofts and 1,193 owned crofts; in comparison, there are only 65 tenanted crofts and 394 owned crofts in Orkney (Scottish Government, 2021b). This demonstrates that although crofting is seen as an integral part of Scottish island life, the extent of this varies across the islands. This is in part due to the land quality in each of the islands; for instance, in Orkney, the ground is typically of high quality and can grow crops. Therefore, Orkney is made up of farms that can typically support crops, sheep and cows. Many of the farms would have historically been made up of multiple crofts but have since been merged to form larger farm units. In comparison, on other islands, such as Lewis in the Outer Hebrides, the ground quality is poorer; therefore, it is more suited to native sheep breeds and still has a large crofting community. This highlights the variations of landholdings across the Scottish island groups themselves. Therefore, during data collection, both crofters and farmers were interviewed and included in the analysis. If this thesis had only focused on the Scottish islands, a greater comparison between farmers and crofters would have been drawn; however, as this is a transnational comparative case study, this meant that limited analysis was focused on the potential differences. Instead, greater emphasis and analysis was placed on women's experiences and barriers in both the farming and crofting communities on the islands, which is the overarching aim of this thesis.

The Scottish Government is aware that more research is needed on this topic, and they are supportive of this thesis. For the Canadian element, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland were examined. This allowed for a comparison to be made between the two Canadian Atlantic islands and the selected Scottish islands.

2.4 Conclusion

To conclude, this literature review has provided an overview of the global issue of women in the agriculture industry, whilst focusing on the parallels between the barriers experienced in the Scottish and Canadian contexts. The islands themselves are then looked at, with an outline of some of the perspectives of the relatively recent island studies literature. Overall, this demonstrates the requirement and the gap in the current knowledge base that this thesis seeks to fill, and the relevance it poses in today's society, which continues to strive for gender equality across all sectors. The following chapter will discuss the methodology and methods used to investigate and collect the data for this thesis.

Chapter 3: Methods

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and subsequently discuss the chosen methodology and methods that were used to collect the data for this thesis. The methodology is the guidelines and framework that supports the chosen methods in a theoretical context (Millar and Brewer, 2003). In comparison, the methods are the tools and approach that are used to investigate the chosen research topic, which in this case was qualitative interviews. Firstly, there will be a general overview of the methodology surrounding the method, followed by an explanation of how it was an appropriate framework to use in this instance. The discussion will then turn to how alterations had to be made to initial research plans, including the challenges of undertaking the method during the unprecedented global pandemic – COVID-19 – as the research was conducted during 2020–2021, when multiple lockdowns and restrictions of movement were in place to prevent the spread of the virus in both Scotland and Canada. Such challenges included conducting the research online and accessing participants, interlaced with the fact that they were residing on remote, rural islands. This itself came with additional difficulties; for instance, poor internet connections, as the 'digital divide' is evident in rural areas across Scotland and Canada and came to the forefront during COVID-19. Furthermore, there is discussion of the positionality of the researcher, and how this intersects within the research itself. It is considered how reflexivity is key in this case to limit any bias through the research process. The various sections below will discuss all these factors and the method that was utilised to overcome the challenges in order to produce a high-quality piece of research.

3.2 Methodology

The methodology followed a feminist epistemological approach, taking in the newly emerging feminist island studies perspective. The appropriateness of this method when examining gender and agriculture is discussed by Tickamyer (2020, p. 240), who highlights that:

> 'The prescriptions of feminist epistemology and methodology can be validated in the history of agricultural research'.

This is due to women being historically ignored in much of agricultural policy, and traditionally seen simply as 'farmers' wives' (Shortall, 2014). A feminist methodological standpoint

allowed for this subject to be studied in a manner that distances itself from historic failings to address the contribution of women in the agriculture industry. It provides the correct framework for the data to be interpreted. Furthermore, the need for reflexivity in this chapter, due to the researcher's own positionality, which is discussed in section 3.8, aligns with feminist epistemology and methodology (O'Reilly, 2009).

In terms of how the methodology informed the methods, or research tools used, it was decided that carrying out semi-structured interviews would be the most appropriate method. Although unstructured interviews are advocated by many feminist scholars, as they reduce the power imbalance and allow the participant to fully guide the conversation (Legard *et al.*, 2003), considerations such as the researcher's time and abilities had to be taken into account when deciding the method. The following sections will highlight how they were appropriately applied throughout, and the challenges faced during the research period.

3.3 Research design

In this section, the rationale for using case studies will be considered. This will be followed by the original design of the research, which will be discussed. This is felt to be important to highlight from the outset, as extensive changes had to be made in order to ensure this research project could be completed on time. The reasons and consequences of the decision to change from in-person research to online and phone interviews will be discussed throughout this chapter and extensively in section 3.7. By highlighting the impact of COVID-19 on the research design, this also explains why certain decisions were made and justifies them. These changes included moving from the original plan to visit the islands in-person to get a sense of place and space, and to conduct in-person, one-to-one interviews with the participants. The reason why this could not happen and how plans were subsequently altered will then be discussed.

3.3.1 Case study approach

This is an international comparative research project that utilises a case study approach comprising the Scottish islands and two Canadian Atlantic islands. A case study can be defined as an in-depth investigation and subsequent analysis of a social phenomenon in a community; this technique is commonly used both in island studies and in agriculture research examining gender processes (Grydehøj, 2015; Tickaymer, 2020; Orum *et al.*, 1991). This has included the use of case comparative studies to consider how the cases, which in this research will be the

Scottish and Canadian islands, differ or are similar, to then identify if these characteristics impact on the concept or phenomenon being researched, which in this instance is women in the agriculture industry on the islands. The use of this approach in agriculture research has resulted in 'depth of information on gendered processes, especially on context and intersectionality in keeping with feminist principles' (Tickamyer, 2020, p.244). Therefore, considering that this thesis is concerned with research whether and how gender and islands intersect and impact on the barriers that women in the agriculture industry face, a comparative case studies approach is appropriate for this thesis.

3.3.2 Plan A

Initially, when this PhD research began in September 2019, the research plan was to conduct in-person interviews, focus groups and spend time in the field sites, both on the Scottish and Canadian Atlantic islands. This was to enable the researcher to gain a sense of place of the area, which is important when conducting research about locations the researcher has never previously visited. However, the spread of the COVID-19 virus resulted in the first UK lockdown in March 2020. Over the next two years, there followed various lockdowns and restrictions, which meant that physical travel to the islands was not possible. Although there were brief interludes during that period where travel may have been an option, it was not felt appropriate to conduct in-person research, due to the high-risk factor of bringing COVID-19 into these areas. This was particularly the case since this was island research, and many of the Scottish islands were sheltered from COVID-19 at the start of the pandemic, since there was greater control over who could enter and leave the islands. This reduced the initial number of COVID-19 cases recorded in the islands. Although this was seen as positive, it put pressure on communities and individuals, including businesses, not wanting to be responsible for bringing COVID-19 on to the islands (Glass *et al.*, 2021). There was fear of the social backlash people would face from their local community if they brought the virus with them from elsewhere. For instance, in March 2020, ahead of the lockdown in the Shetland Islands, a couple who were the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the islands had returned from a holiday to Italy and attended several events at the weekend in Shetland before feeling unwell. These events included a music concert, a birthday party and a swimming gala, which led to a spread of the virus in the island community. Following a confirmation that they had tested positive for the virus, and the closure of schools in Shetland to try to contain its spread, the couple felt they had to take to social media, where in a lengthy Facebook post they detailed how they had

followed the guidelines issued to them, in order to counterbalance negative comments, 'dispel nasty rumour and wild speculation that spreads all too quickly' (Marter, 2020). This highlights the pressure felt by residents in the island communities during the pandemic to avoid being responsible for infecting their fellow islanders. In terms of the international component of this research, Canada also had strict lockdown policies in place over 2020 and 2021, with Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland only allowing those who lived there on to the islands.

The Canadian element of this research was further restricted, as the funding for this came from the Canadian Rural Policy Learning Commons Research Grant. This research funding ended in July 2021, and although the initial dates to conduct the research were able to be delayed for a year, they could not be delayed any further. Therefore, after consultation with supervisors, Canadian contacts and the funding body representatives, it was decided that this section of the research would also be conducted online. The funds originally allocated for travel-related expenses were instead used for transcription and recruitment costs.

The research plans were therefore subsequently adapted to use purely online methods. The reasons for this were to ensure the project could be completed on time, as during the research period it was not clear how long the COVID-19 pandemic would last and the length of time the restrictions both on domestic and international travel would be in place. Therefore, it was decided that the best course of action to ensure completion and adequate data collection was that methods should be moved online. This resulted in Plan B, which will now be addressed.

3.3.3 Plan B

As mentioned, the original plan was to travel to both the Scottish islands and the two Canadian Atlantic islands to conduct in-person, semi-structured interviews with individuals in the agriculture industry. Due to COVID-19, online and telephone methods were instead used for the interviews, in order to ensure that the data collection period was utilised as efficiently as possible and this thesis could still be completed to its original schedule.

The chosen online methods for the interviews were Zoom and phone interviews. Zoom is a video platform that became popular during the pandemic lockdown. People can communicate by live video link in real time, replicating in-person communication via a digital screen. Multiple people can use the same link, which is distributed to the relevant people by the host.

By offering participants the choice of Zoom or phone interviews, this allowed those who did not have a stable internet connection to take part. As Zoom is a video platform, it takes up a lot of bandwidth, which for those who do not have good internet connections results in poor video quality, frozen screens and a disconnect in conversation. This was a key consideration, as the research was focused in remote, rural areas of Scotland and Canada, where there can be poor internet connections (Philip *et al.*, 2017; Council of Canadian Academies, 2021). Additionally, it also accounted for 'Zoom fatigue', which was reported throughout the pandemic, where tiredness, sore heads and dread were reported and thought to be linked to the large-scale switch to using these online video platforms for work and socialising during the pandemic (Nesher-Shoshan and Wehrt, 2021). This was evidenced by the participants in this study; for instance, one person stated they wanted to do a phone interview as they were 'sick of Zoom', highlighting how it was key to offer the choice of interview methods in this case.

Although interviews remained the key data collection method, due to COVID-19 the execution of this practice was altered from being in-person to online. These came with certain advantages and challenges, which became evident throughout the research and are discussed in depth in section 3.7. The following section will depict the justification for using interviews and why they were an appropriate method tool to use in this particular research project. The challenges that came with carrying out the interviews online meant that it was decided that focus groups would not be a viable option to collect data. The various connection issues experienced by the researcher and the participants meant that it would have been very difficult to run a focus group that would allow all participants an equal opportunity to contribute to the discussions and maintain a flow of discussion without people dropping in and out or trying to reconnect. This would likely have been a very disruptive experience and, therefore, the quality of data that would have been able to be collected would not reflect the effort or time that it would have taken to organise and run the focus groups.

3.4 Interviews

As stated, the chosen data collection method was one-to-one semi-structured interviews. The interviews ranged from 40 minutes to 1 hour 20 minutes in length. They were in-depth interviews and followed a schedule, as can be seen in Appendices C and D.

This method of data collection was selected for a variety of reasons, firstly to fit with the feminist structure and perspective of this thesis. Interviews were used to understand the lived realities of women in agriculture on islands. Therefore, it was appropriate to conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews that allowed the participant to guide the conversation (Bryman, 2004; Gill *et al.*, 2008). Although many feminist scholars utilise unstructured interviews, as it is believed to reduce the power imbalance between the participant and interviewee (Legard *et al.*, 2003), semi-structured interviews were deemed most appropriate in this instance. The rationale for semi-structured interviews was because there was a clear set of themes from the existing literature that the researcher wanted to explore with women on the islands. There was flexibility and the interviews were adapted as additional topics emerged. For instance, follow-up and prompt questions such as 'Can you tell more a bit more about that particular experience?' or 'How did that make you feel?' if the participant brought up a particular experience or opinion that the research had not foreseen. These included, for example, the positive impacts of the pandemic lockdowns on the efficiency of farm and croft holdings. Furthermore, throughout the interview, the importance of silence was emphasised, in that when there was a pause by the participant, the researcher did not seek to immediately fill it. This left valuable flexible thinking time for the participant to add any further comments. This is important in an interview, as the participant needs space and time to think and reflect on their comments. By allowing them this space, this enriched the data, as on several occasions the participant did go on to add valuable reflections to their previous comments.

The interview guides that were used can be found in Appendices C and D. Two guides were used to reflect the differences between the Scottish and Canadian interviewees. As can be seen, both groups were initially asked how they came into the agriculture industry, about how they first became interested in agriculture – for instance, if they had grown up on a holding, or had relations whom they had helped in the past. This allowed for an easing into the conversation and rapport to be built up between the participant and the researcher.

With the decision to conduct online interviews in both the Scottish and Canadian contexts, a total of 33 interviews were carried out: 23 in Scotland and ten in Canada. Of the 33 interviews, 23 were done via Zoom (16 in Scotland, seven in Canada) and ten by telephone (seven in Scotland, three in Canada). Each interview was recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. This was to ensure that everything was captured and allowed for full analysis of the data. Once transcribed, the recording was deleted in line with the data protection management

plan and the ethical considerations by which this thesis is bound. The complete interview transcripts were subsequently analysed. The analytical technique used to do so is discussed in section 3.9.

The switch to using online and phone interviews from in-person interviews was not a light or easy decision, as demonstrated previously in this chapter, although the use of this method of interview is not uncommon in research and, in some cases, may be seen as preferable (Johnson *et al.*, 2021). In this instance, it ensured the project was completed on schedule and allowed for data to be collected even during a global pandemic. To some extent, by using the Zoom technology, it allowed for a replication of in-person interviews, where, if the internet connection was stable enough, the participant and the interviewer could still see each other's expressions and facial cues. One question that was asked of the participants at the end of the interview was if they would have answered any questions differently had the interview been done in person. The majority answered 'no'; because they had experience of using the technology in both a professional and a social capacity, they felt comfortable communicating with others in this manner. This was interesting, as it highlighted how the pandemic had forced people to adapt to new and available technology with which they would have otherwise not have previously engaged. This raised questions and demonstrated the emerging potential strength of using online research methods, perhaps even compared with pre-pandemic options. The majority of people who were in a position to adapt and use these technologies have embraced them and now feel comfortable using them. Phone interviews have been widely used for a number of years, whilst online video interviews are relatively new. Whilst not having the same replicable features, since the researcher obviously does not see the participant's face and relies on voice and tone cues, the telephone can still serve as a decent stand-in where in-person or online interviews are not possible. As this research project is based in remote rural settings, where internet connections can be poor, it was important to offer the option of phone interviews also. This ensured inclusivity, and those who did not feel it was possible due to their internet infrastructure or simply preferred to do phone interviews could also be included in the data sample.

Therefore, by switching to online and phone interviews, this allowed for in-depth data to be collected. Although there were multiple challenges faced throughout the process, which will be discussed later in this chapter, this did result in rich data being generated during a challenging research period.

3.5 Sample

In terms of the sample, a total of 33 people who are involved in the agriculture industry were interviewed, across both the Scottish and Canadian islands. This broke down to five or six people from each of the Shetland Islands, Orkney Islands, Inner Hebrides and Outer Hebrides for the Scottish islands. In the Canadian context, there were six from Prince Edward Island and four from Newfoundland Island who participated. There was a mixture of those who worked full-time or part-time and those who supported their spouse or parent on the holding. Additionally, the sample was made up of both those who owned or rented the land and of both arable and pastoral holdings. This variety of participants reflects the diversity of holdings in the study areas. In order to gain a breadth of opinion, it was felt that the sample should be inclusive and not exclude any particular criteria, as the aim of the research was to examine the existence of barriers faced by women in the agriculture industry both within and between the islands and was not necessarily focusing on certain categories within the agriculture industry. Both men and women were invited to participate in the interviews to provide a valuable insight into how the relationships between men and women are shaped in the various island cultures and to understand the persistence of gender inequality in the agriculture industry (Budge and Shortall, 2022a). The purpose of involving men in the interviews was to understand their perceptions of the inequalities faced by women in the industry and whether men believed barriers existed in their island agriculture community. This was to examine if there were any differences in the perception of and beliefs concerning gender-based barriers between men and women. Furthermore, some participants had additional roles and off-farm work. This included government positions in the Department of Agriculture and established agriculture organisations such as SAC (Scottish Agricultural College) Consulting. This again meant that the data captured a broad sample of experiences of those who also worked in the wider sphere of the agriculture industry and not only those who worked solely or directly on farms or crofts. The influence of the participants' off-farm work on their answers will be reflected upon throughout the thesis.

To gain access to participants, snowball sampling was used (Bryman, 2004). This is an appropriate sampling technique, especially in rural settings, as it ensures that the potential participants could be reassured by their peers about the process, as interviews can be seen by some as a daunting experience. Therefore, as this topic – which may be viewed as potentially

emotive and controversial, due to both the denial and acceptance of the barriers by those in the agriculture community, evidenced in the media – looks at gender equality in an industry whilst simultaneously examining small rural populations, it was an appropriate technique. Furthermore, as reiterated throughout this section and the overall thesis, the recruitment and research took place throughout the pandemic, where people were experiencing a once-in-a-lifetime phenomenon. The stress and uncertainty that people felt throughout those years, and continue to experience to an extent today, have affected many and it is thus not unreasonable to assume that some individuals' capacity to engage in any extra work, such as taking part in studies and interviews, would be lessened. A table of the participants can be seen on the following page. Full details of participant information, including each interviewee's participant number, can be found in Appendix E.

	Gender		Age brackets				Lead Farmer			Interview method	
Scottish Islands	Women	Men	18-30	31-45	46-60	61+	Yes	No	Joint	Online	Telephone
Shetland Islands	4	2	2	1	0	3	3	2	1	4	2
Orkney Islands	4	1	1	3	0	1	2	2	1	2	3
Inner Hebrides	6	0	1	2	2	1	1	1	4	5	1
Outer Hebrides	5	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	3	6	0
Canadian Atlantic Islands											
Prince Edward Island	4	2	1	1	4	0	1	3	2	5	1
Newfoundland	3	1	0	3	1	0	2	0	2	2	2
Total	26	7	6	12	8	7	11	9	13	24	9

Table 1: Participant background information

3.6 Recruitment

A further key reflection from the sample was that it was challenging to recruit people even with snowball sampling, especially with the interviews and recruitment being online rather than in-person. As the farming calendar is so busy, this meant that, at certain times of the year, such as lambing and calving or planting season, many farmers were not available to participate. A further point that became very apparent throughout the data collection process was the importance of confidentiality when studying and working with those from and residing in remote, rural islands. This is of course key in every research project, but even more so when dealing with small communities. For instance, during an interview one person spoke about their experience of being on a committee on the island, but then requested that when the data was reported, the island where they were from was not to be stated. This was because she believed her identity would be obvious since she was the only woman on a particular committee, and she did not want her fellow islanders to be able to identify her. Therefore, when reporting the data, a high level of caution and sensitivity was vital. This was ensured by referencing island groups and large age brackets to prevent anyone being able to be identified. The specifics of recruitment of participants in Scotland and Canada are detailed below.

3.6.1 Canada

The recruitment of the participants for the Canadian study was challenging. For the Prince Edward Island contacts, a research assistant was employed in order to recruit the six participants. The research assistant was a Masters student at the University of Prince Edward Island who also worked part-time for the agriculture department in the local government. A snowball technique was used to further this recruitment, which led to those suggesting others who might also be interested in the project. For the Newfoundland participants, a call was sent out via the Newfoundland Young Farmers association, which included a brief description of the project and the researcher's contact details. This meant that those who were interested could then get in touch; those who did were then offered an interview date and time suitable for their own workload. Again, a snowball technique was also utilised here, where those interviewed were asked if they could recommend anyone else who might also be interested in taking part in the research. This was important, as some then went on to recommend their peers who subsequently got in touch. Interestingly, some of the participants stated, 'Yeah, I know you interviewed [so and so]'. This demonstrates the impact of using the snowball technique to prove that the interview was a safe and confidential space in which they and their peers were able to speak freely about their thoughts and opinions for the research project.

3.6.2 Scotland

Recruitment for the 23 participants from the Scottish islands was mainly achieved through existing contacts and subsequently through a snowball sample. As reiterated, the need for confidentiality is key, especially in remote, rural islands where anonymity can be challenging. This was highlighted by a participant who summarised it as 'Everyone knows your business here'. This demonstrates why using a snowball sample for the research was preferable, as it meant that participants who had already taken part could then reassure their contacts that there would be a high level of confidentiality and their conversation would be private. On the other hand, the small community did result in participants already knowing who had been interviewed, due to talking to other islanders. For instance, a participant stated: 'Oh I know you have already interviewed ***', and another: 'I hear you are also going to interview *** – they are my relation'. These types of interactions highlight further the importance of a high-level confidential approach by the researcher. Additionally, it demonstrates the unique aspect of carrying out research in remote rural island locations, where many will have intimate knowledge of others in their local community's daily lives.

Participants were also recruited using through recommendations passed on by SAC Consulting. Representatives based in the island offices were emailed with details of the project and asked if they would be happy to recommend anyone to take part in the interviews. This was met with a mixed response, with some representatives coming back with recommendations while others did not reply. Again, as this was during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is understandable that some did not reply due to increased workloads, adapting to working from home rather than the office and the mental adjustment of living during a worldwide pandemic.

One advantage of conducting the research online was that the researcher did not physically go to the homes of the participants, which is sometimes preferable or more convenient for interviewees. This meant there was a higher level of anonymity for the participants. For instance, their neighbours did not know that the person was being visited by someone from outside the island, or that a car unknown to the village was parked outside someone's house. This may seem like a trivial aspect, but the researcher recognises the power and influence this has in typical island life. It again demonstrates the need to use the island feminism framework, where nuances such as being aware of inquisitive neighbours can impact local relationships, especially for island women. Therefore, the use of online interviews prevented the interviewer from being physically present or any other indications to the participant's peers and neighbours

that they were being interviewed or involved in a research project. When undertaking this type of research, which is both topical and can be seen as emotive, the highest level of anonymity is key for both the researcher and the participant. This is an advantage of online and phone interviews in remote, rural areas.

3.7 Research challenges

There are certain advantages to conducting online and phone interviews compared with travelling and carrying out in-person interviews. As demonstrated, it can increase the level of anonymity and confidentiality for participants, especially in the case of small communities. Furthermore, online research is cheaper, more environmentally friendly and less time consuming in carrying out research, especially international research. For instance, by not having to travel to the islands, this meant that multiple interviews could take place over a shorter timeframe, as there was no travel time involved in going to the islands. Rather, in theory, one interview could be completed in the morning with a participant from the Outer Hebrides in Scotland and another in the afternoon with someone from Prince Edward Island in Canada. This would have been physically impossible if doing in-person interviews. In terms of environmental impacts, it is obviously more climate friendly to conduct online interviews, as no aeroplanes or cars had to be used to collect the data. Furthermore, by conducting all the research from home, this obviously reduced the costs that are associated with travelling to an island, including accommodation. This highlights that there are clear advantages to using online techniques, in comparison with traditional in-person methods. Shapka *et al.* (2016) yielded similar results when comparing online and in-person research in terms of themes generated and their depth.

However, there were certain challenges that had to be overcome whilst conducting the research. Firstly, rapport building is a challenge that comes with both online and phone interviews. This is because the researcher cannot facilitate the normal preliminary small talk prior to the interview starting to the same extent that occurs when conducting in-person interviews. For instance, had the interviews been conducted in person as originally planned, it is likely that the researcher would have been shown around the agricultural holding. This would have provided informal time where rapport could have been built between the researcher and participant. The inability to do so, which usually comes naturally when doing in-person research, was a key point that was mentioned by several interviewees, who, when asked if they would have answered anything differently, commented that they would have shown the researcher around, had a cup of tea, etc. This indicates that informal conversations would have been had, highlighting that, by doing interviews online, this type of data and understanding will have been

lost. For example, one participant spoke of how they were having a delivery of fertiliser during the interview and showed the researcher the truck outside their farmhouse via Zoom; this led on to a conversation that they had to reduce their order due to high prices, including transport of the fertiliser from the mainland to their island. Therefore, there was a very limited amount of participant observation that was able to take place during the interviews. This meant a loss of in-depth rich description of the study site. Although surface information of areas can be gathered using existing literature and statistics, it does not fully replicate the ability to describe the study site using first-hand information gathered from being fully immersed in a community. Such data would have allowed for an even deeper insight into the island community and essentially the element of place. Therefore, this represented a clear shortcoming of the research taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–2021.

A further challenge that took place throughout the data collection at the start of lockdown in the UK in March 2020 was that the researcher moved back to their family home in the Shetland Islands. In their home and temporary office space, the internet connection was poor at times, especially when other family members were also trying to use the internet to work from home. This presented further complexity and methods issues when carrying out research about a rural area whilst the researcher was situated on a remote, rural island themselves. A great deal of consideration was taken regarding participants' internet connectivity, by offering to also carry out phone interviews, which a number of participants did choose. This was due either to their internet connection not being very good or them simply being tired of Zoom. Poor internet connectivity was an issue faced by those who were being interviewed. For instance, one participant had to go round all their household members and ask them to turn off their internet, as the connection kept dropping throughout the call. Multiple participants had to do some or all of the interview with their cameras switched off and sometimes the researcher had to turn their camera off periodically also. This reduced the quality of what had previously been seen as quite replicable to in-person interviews where one could still maintain eye contact and observe some form of body language throughout the interview. By losing the video, this further removed the online interviews from the in-person experience. Furthermore, unstable internet connections disrupted the flow of the interviews. This occurred to such an extent that in the data analysis section of this work that an entire code is dedicated to connection disruption, where back and forth phrases such as 'Hello…? Can you hear me…?' are noted. This was sometimes so extensive that the call had to be disconnected and completely reconnected. This constant disruption throughout the interview resulted in a lack of flow, which in turn could be argued

prevented the full potential of in-depth data being collected. This is a common issue that occurs in online research as opposed to in-person interviews (Johnson *et al.*, 2021).

Phone interviews were offered as an alternative to those who felt their internet connection was not stable and those who simply preferred that option over doing an online interview. However, the phone interviews were not without challenges themselves. Issues such as poor signal were a constant; for instance, one participant stated they were having to balance on the back of their sofa to ensure their signal did not drop out during the call. When a participant was in an area of poor phone signal, this led to some interviews having to be stopped and restarted several times in order to complete the conversation. This, as experienced in the online interviews, was a frustrating process and again meant the flow of the interview was reduced, inhibiting the richness of data required for this thesis. These issues occurred at a similar rate during both the Scottish and Canadian interviews, highlighting a wider cross-Atlantic issue in rural areas, where there continues to be a lack of investment in quality and reliable internet and phone signal infrastructure. This is despite a much greater reliance on technology in modern-day society, which is only going to increase with the ongoing move to home working first enabled by the pandemic.

Furthermore, the proposed move to digital house landlines in 2025 will have a further profound effect on those who do not have a good phone signal in their homes (BBC, 2022b). It will create issues similar to those experienced by the researcher, which led to frustration for both parties involved and did not enable a smooth interview, as it had been initially planned and presented. The lack of signal in these remote, rural islands could potentially be a further issue and inhibit communication for people living in these areas.

These challenges that occurred during the data collection process highlight a much wider issue of the existing digital divide in remote rural islands, which was evident on both sides of the Atlantic. It was also an issue the researcher experienced, at times having to use their phone propped in a window to act as a hotspot when the internet was running slow or not at all. This will be further elaborated on in the positionality and reflection section of this chapter. While carrying out the interviews online and over the phone did yield the end result of rich data, it added a stressful component of having to ensure the connection was stable throughout, a consideration that is not an issue when doing the interviews in-person. Therefore, although there are some very evident advantages of conducting interviews online, there are some clear challenges and considerations that go alongside it.

A further issue, which is connected with the switch to online research compared with in-person data collection, was the lack of rich, detailed description of the islands. This is especially the case as the researcher had never been to any of the Outer or Inner Hebrides or either of the Canadian islands in this case study. This meant that the context of place was completely missing in the data collection process. This prevented any description of the study locations being carried out, apart from the farm on which the researcher was based throughout the entirety of the data being collected. The nuances of the areas are therefore missing, especially in the Canadian case, as the researcher has never visited the country before. Therefore, the culture and experience of being in the country have been missed.

3.8 Researcher reflections and positionality

Positionality is a concept that will be discussed extensively in this section. First and foremost, to be aware of one's own position in the culture and community that is being studied is important in feminist research and debate.

In this thesis it is a key consideration, because the researcher grew up and continues to help out during busy periods on the family farm in the Shetland islands. This is a farm that the researcher's two sisters continue to manage today. This puts me, the researcher, in the position of both having some agricultural experience and seeing it from the perspective of a woman. Therefore, this gives me the unique experience of doing research from within a community. I have experience of dealing with poor internet access and dealing with interruptions such as escaped animals, 'Are you busy?' and birthing sheep during the lambing season. These distractions were a reflection of what the participants being interviewed had to navigate on a daily basis, giving a unique insight into how these daily occurrences were negotiated on farms in both the Canadian and Scottish islands. Therefore, the researcher could demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the interviewees themselves. Because of my agricultural background, this enabled me to have a full understanding of the terms and phrases used by the farmers and crofters, which meant there was an uninterrupted flow throughout the interview rather than having to stop the participant and ask them to explain certain terms. This gave an 'insider's' perspective, which some note is an advantage during research in terms of access to participants and the level of trust, but must equally be balanced with the drawbacks of being an 'insider', which include being too close and may cause issues such as lack of distance from the subject (McNess *et al.*, 2013).

Positionality is a debated topic, with some arguing that the very position of the researcher is the most effective way to conduct research (Legard *et al.*, 2003). Some feminist scholars argue that after many years of power imbalances, it should only be those with direct experiences who should then conduct such research, rather than utilising an outsider's perspective, which may ignore local knowledge (Little, 2002; O'Reilly, 2009; Legard *et al.*, 2003). This debate is therefore important to consider. Consequently, there are other arguments that would suggest that being too close to the research subject itself might create biases and may prevent that all-important objectivity, thus impacting on the quality of the research (Bryman, 2004). In order to examine the impact of positionality within this piece of research, at the end of the interview the participants were all asked if they would have answered anything differently if:

- The interview had been conducted in person rather than online.
- Someone else had done the interview – someone with no agricultural experience.
- A male researcher had carried out the interview.

Interestingly, these questions met with a mixed response. The majority of the participants reported that it would not have altered their answers, only that they would have had to explain certain terms or phrases in more detail if someone with no agricultural experience had conducted the interview. In terms of if a man had carried out the interview, this was met with a mixed response, with some stating that they hoped they would not have altered their answers, and others, who were all female participants, going to the extreme of saying that they would not have taken part if a male researcher had wanted to interview them. This is a crucial point to raise within this section: the importance of reflexivity and being aware of one's own positionality as a researcher. Furthermore, this demonstrates the need to consider how island space is gendered and the impact that this has on women, showing the importance of using the island feminism theoretical framework. Although it cannot be stated whether mainland women would answer differently, neither of the government reports in the Canadian or Scottish context include this reflexivity analysis, so this cannot be compared. The fact that island women did express these views demonstrates the impact of gender on their willingness to contribute to the topic. Therefore, in order to make a comprehensive comparison with mainland women, there would need to be further work in this field that would require the researcher to reflect upon their own positionality.

This issue arose alongside the poor internet access experienced by the researcher in the Shetland Islands, which was put under increased pressure as many people in their local village and

household were also working from home. Throughout the research period, a reflective diary was kept in order to note these incidents. Dated 6 November 2020, an entry reads:

> *'Day 3 with no/limited internet access. Wifi hasn't been working for past days. As I have had various meetings, I currently have my phone set up in the window as that's the only place I get signal, to use as a 4G personal hotspot on my family's iPad and my own laptop'.*

This demonstrates the constraints that were present throughout the research process. The researcher was experiencing similar connectivity and therefore fully understood the frustrations of the participant in being able to engage in the interview, although unable to be in the physical presence of the participant; the similar experiences aided the level of understanding of the context for the participant.

As the researcher also conducted research in their native home island of Shetland, there was a need to be aware of the implications of undertaking research where people knew who the researcher was, and
with whom they had existing relationships (McNess *et al.*, 2013; Taylor, 2011). Therefore, this means it is likely that this may have impacted on the answers they gave, alongside the fact that the researcher's sisters are well known in the farming community, as they manage the family farm and have appeared on television a great deal, featuring as young successful farmers. This was evident in the fact that many of the interviews conducted in the Shetland Islands indicated that there was no sexism in the agriculture industry in the islands, with multiple participants referencing the researcher's sisters as examples of young women in the industry. On the face of the issue, though, this could also have led some people to be more comfortable in the researcher's presence rather than having to build rapport. The researcher was able to speak and understand the local dialect. This was advantageous, for instance, when transcribing; the use of local words by older participants might have been tricky for those who were not from Shetland or who were not familiar with the distinctive Shetland dialect. This takes the form of both Scots and Norwegian influence; words such as 'peerie', which means 'little' in the dialect, would have been hard for an outside interviewer to understand. Some Shetlanders expressed that the need to 'knap'– which means to speak in English – can be difficult, and would remove them from their natural way of speaking. Therefore, when the participant was able to speak in their natural tongue it meant they could feel more comfortable during the interview.

3.9 Data analysis

All the interviews were transcribed and then subsequently analysed using thematic analysis. This section will discuss how this was carried out.

Thematic analysis involves a deep reading of the transcripts, where the researcher can be fully immersed in the data (Bryman, 2004). The transcripts are then coded; in this case the coding process was deductive from the literature, where the codes are generated from the data gathered alongside pre-existing codes being decided upon prior to the analysis. To carry out this technique, the computer programme NVIVO was used to assist with the categorisation of the data. It allowed for neat storage of the codes and annotations to be added to a piece of text. This allowed for analysis of the text itself to be carried out whilst the codes were being generated. This was beneficial for the organisation of the data. Additionally, it allowed quick comparisons within the themes themselves: for instance, whether the participants whose data had been coded into the theme were from Canada or Scotland, and their age and island of residence. These factors allowed for easier access to the demographic data that had been collected through the participant background sheet, which participants completed prior to the interview and can be seen in Appendix F.

The background data generated was key to collation as it allowed for comparisons of gender, age and whether the participant was from a particular island group. The last point was interesting, as a common theme discussed was the 'insider–outsider' perspective, which on an island brings a further dynamic to that typical phenomenon observed in rural areas. This will be further explored in the subsequent discussion chapters of this thesis – the different treatment people experience if they are from the island and have an established reputation in the local community – and it provides an interesting example of the importance of the collection of this background information. Additionally, as the barriers faced by women in the agriculture industry in the islands is the key focus of the thesis, it was imperative for the participant's gender with which they identify to be recorded. It also recorded that both men and women were interviewed, as it was important to hear from all perspectives. There were seven women and three men interviewed from the Canadian Atlantic islands and 19 women and four men from the Scottish islands, a total of 26 women and seven men. A criticism of the project was that it was cisgender participants who took part. One participant highlighted the different experiences of those who are transgender or who identify as non-binary in the agriculture industry compared with cisgender women, as this differs from what is seen as the traditional heterosexual farming family model that is evident in the agriculture literature (Hoffelmeyer, 2020). This oversight

will be critically analysed further throughout the discussion section of the thesis, especially in the future consideration and application in this area. However, the focus of this thesis is the persistent inequality that women experience in agriculture, and to see if this had a particular expression in the islands. This required a focus on men and women and heterosexual relationships.

3.10 Ethics

This research was conducted in line with the anonymity guidelines and approved by Newcastle University's ethics committee. When research plans were altered due to COVID-19, having to carry out the interviews online rather than in person, the ethics were subsequently edited and were approved. Prior to the interviews being conducted, all participants had to complete a consent form and read an information sheet and background information sheet, all of which can be viewed in Appendices G, H and F respectively. These documents were necessary to ensure participants knew their rights and were able to make an informed decision to take part in the interviews. Furthermore, the researcher explained to participants the purpose of the interview, their rights to withdraw at any point during the interviews and their right to choose not to be recorded. The researcher ensured the participants were comfortable and appropriately informed before starting the interviews.

The data management plan was approved and reviewed each year by the Newcastle University PhD panel, in line with the University's and GDPR guidelines. The recordings and transcriptions were stored on a password-protected laptop, to which no one apart from the researcher had access; the laptop is also equipped with bio-security measures, where the researcher's thumbprint is required to access the device and files. This highlights the high level of security on the device. Once the recordings of the interviews were transcribed, they were deleted, to ensure complete security for the participants.

Chapter 4: Surviving in the Past

4.1 Introduction

The next three chapters focus on the results generated from the thematic analysis of the interview data. From this analysis, it became clear that the logical method of structuring the emergent themes was to split the results into three chapters. This was because when the participants spoke of the barriers faced by and experiences of women in the agriculture industry during the interviews, they continuously categorised them into three different time periods. The first, and foremost, was the historical barriers women in the agriculture industry faced, namely in the 19th and 20th centuries. The second chapter focuses on the present-day barriers that interviewees felt were most prominent and in line with their own experiences and perceptions in the industry. The last of the results sections examines the future directions for women in agriculture. This includes suggestions by the participants of how remaining barriers can be overcome, with a critical outlook at the effectiveness of existing schemes.

This initial combined results and discussion chapter will examine the historic barriers that women in the agriculture industry experienced, combining the results generated from the thematic analysis of the interviews and the relevant literature. The following sections address issues that came to light during the interviews, including but not limited to women's work on holdings, traditional communities and patrilineal succession. Other discussions include the historic contributions of women in the agriculture and crofting industries across both the Scottish and Canadian islands. This will highlight how although women at that time were being shifted to private space, in line with Victorian ideology and the development of the urban middle class, on the islands the women were very much in the public sphere due to their contributions to the landholdings. This interesting phenomenon will frame this chapter and introduce the importance of analysing the position of women in the agriculture industry using an island feminist theoretical perspective, which is:

> 'guided by specific interest in islanders' local and subaltern strategies that remain resistant to hegemonic discourses and practices of power' (Karides, 2017, p.32).

The historic contributions and acceptance of women in public spaces, namely in the fields, on the islands was due to the islands' limited population and their wider economic dependence on the fishing industry, which in turn helped to shape women's social equality in their local

communities. This was unique to the island spaces when compared with their mainland counterparts. It is an example of the resistance to what was viewed as the hegemonic discourse of women during that time period, therefore reinforcing the appropriateness of using the island feminism framework. However, it will be analysed why, despite this historic acceptance of women in the public sphere on islands, there remains a lower percentage of women land occupiers on the islands compared to their mainland counterparts in both the Scottish and Canadian contexts. The comparisons and similarities between and within these islands' communities will be interwoven throughout, with a concluding summary in the final section.

4.2 Historic ties

In the literature review chapter of this thesis, the historic connection between the Scottish and Canadian islands was extensively discussed and the justifications for including the islands were outlined. Furthermore, the appropriateness of using a case study approach was determined in the methods chapter. This section will further these discussions and examine how the historic ties between the islands result in some similar historical experiences for women across the Atlantic.

It is well documented in the Scottish islands' literature that men would go fishing at sea in the summer season during the 19th and early 20th century, usually based at fishing stations far from their homes (Abrams, 2005; Thompson, 1985; Mackenzie, 2019). This was to provide food and income for their families. As highlighted in the literature review chapter, this meant the women were left at home whilst the men of the family were away fishing; therefore, women were expected to effectively manage and run the crofts during the summer months, whilst simultaneously managing the household and caring for the children and elderly family members. This was discussed in the interviews, as the participants were asked about the history of women in the agriculture industry in their respective islands. Knowledge of these times were highlighted by this female participant from the Shetland Islands:

> *'the women folk kept everything going when you read some of these books, say about 1900, before my time. The women folk really had a tough time because the men folk were away for ages and it was the women folk that had to look after the bairns,*[3] *and there were usually quite a few of them as well as trying to … crofting was just a*

[3] 'Bairn' is a Scottish word that means child.

subsistence type of thing. You had a cow for the milk and all this stuff, and it all had to be done and the bairns had to do whatever had to be done' (Participant #6).

The general expectation was for women to take up the work on the croft whilst the men were away at sea. The motivation for this could be seen to be because of a pure need for survival, highlighted by this female participant from the Inner Hebrides:

'traditionally because crofting was … a breadline activity; the men traditionally went away to work and the women were left with a couple of cows to milk and looking after the kids, doing that, looking after the croft and getting the hay in and all the rest of it' (Participant #13).

Women did not do the work for the recognition; it was to ensure survival. This made it different from those on the mainland of Scotland, where farming was seen at that time as a masculine industry and women did not have to contribute to the same extent as that expected of women on the islands (Abrams, 2005; Thompson, 1985). Due to the islands' geography and limited population, women were left with no choice but to contribute, as there was physically no other choice in the matter. This highlighted the differences that occurred on the islands compared with their mainland counterparts. Abrams (2005) refers to an archival quote where a visitor spoke of his shock when he realised that women were able to work and therefore perceived Shetland to be much more advanced in a social context than the mainland in terms of gender equality. This demonstrates the differences in societal norms that were occurring in the islands during previous centuries, and therefore the importance to study them on their own terms. This is especially the case for women; that due to the islands' geographical positions in the sea and their isolation, this arguably resulted in greater gender-social advancements in some spheres than on the mainland.

In addition to women having to manage the landholding and household during the summer, their workload could be increased if tragedy struck, and their husband, father or son(s) were lost at sea, such as in 1832 where due to exceptionally strong winds, 105 Shetland men and 17 boats were lost at sea (*Scotsman*, 2008), leaving many women widowed and children orphaned on the isles. Therefore, the 'tough time' Participant #6 referred to in the quote above refers to the volume of work, alongside the anxious wait for their partners' safe and hopefully profitable return to the croft in the autumn, which was difficult for island women. Interestingly, some would argue that this is reflected in how women are widely seen today; being expected to take

on both the household and care work. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the gender division of household tasks and childcare became more evident (Vilcu *et al.*, 2021; Maria, 2021; Daly, 2021). The connection between the household duties expected of women in today's society will be further discussed in the following chapter, which examines the current barriers women face in the agriculture industry.

Yet, even though women were expected to care for the household and the landholding, they were not seen as the main farmer or crofter in the Scottish islands. They were always seen as being in a supportive role, as described by this female participant from the Inner Hebrides:

> *'women have always been part of the farm, but quite often they are quite happy to be in the background and they're the ones controlling it all and making all the decisions. It's the man at the front and it's his name on the paycheque, the male farmer may go on about what they're doing on the farm etc. but the woman's actually sitting in the background smiling knowing exactly that she's the boss'* (Participant #16).

This is a key point which will be discussed throughout this and the following sections and contributes to the framework of this chapter: that, even though it was historically acknowledged that women played an important role in managing and contributing to the physical tasks on the landholding, they were not seen as leaders, rather always as supporters. This is despite, as some argued, island communities being more socially advanced than their mainland counterparts. It could also be argued that this quote reflects Goffman's (1959) 'frontstage' and 'backstage' identity performances, where what occurs in the public sphere on the landholding, with men being the leaders, is different from that of the private farm household sphere, where the reality is that women have more power and influence on farm-related decisions (Riley, 2009). Although this would suggest the increased agency of women in the farm household, the impact of women being shifted into the private sphere had repercussions in terms of their contribution to the holding and aided the 'invisible woman' narrative (Sachs, 1983; Alston, 1995; Shortall, 1992).

The expectation for women to run the household and holding whilst men worked off-farm was also evident in the Canadian Islands during the same time period. This female participant referenced the early 1900s experiences of women on Newfoundland Island:

> *'Historically people in the province worked seasonally at the fishing or in the woods, everybody had really big families so typically women just stayed home, they were homemakers. They worked really hard which is what I always found fascinating, particularly in this area back 100 years ago the men would go fishing and the women would have 10 children. Everybody had sheep or cows or goats, something for milk and chickens. The women actually made the hay 100 years ago here. They used to cut it with a sycn and pile it up in pooks. A pook is like a, the hay triangle. So the women used to make all the hay and look after all the livestock and for whatever reason that was expected then, the women were expected to do the garden, weed[ing] the garden was women's work too so I don't know how we went 100 years from when the women looked after all those things to all of a sudden you can't shear your sheep'* (Participant #31).

The similarities between the Scottish and the Canadian islands are evident; that in previous centuries, women in the agriculture industry were visible yet were not given the full recognition for the work and essential roles they played on the holdings, as they were still seen as being in supportive roles, as summarised by Abrams (2005, p. 96): 'only in the absence of men that women could demonstrate their multiple skills'. In the participant's quote above, there is confusion about how women went from doing the work on the croft to then not inheriting the land, or not being expected to 'shear your sheep' in more modern times. This highlighted a shift from women contributing towards, and at times running the holding, to then not being expected to be able to handle such physical tasks. The apparent shift in thinking and influence will be discussed throughout this chapter, and how the historic view of women in agriculture being an integral part of the crofting community and key to working the land has altered significantly over the past 100 years. Attitudes towards women in agricultural families has shifted over time from women being expected to manage both the households and holdings to not being deemed up to the task of working and running the holding. This shows a 'U shape' of events; of women being expected to work in the industry to them playing a solely supportive role and not being as involved in farm or croft tasks; this mirrors the wider Victorian ideology and shift from women occupying a public space to a private one (Shortall, 2000) to the present day, where there has been a questioning of why women are not more visible, and a focus on how they manage to enter this space to then become women who are leading and managing holdings in their own right (Shortall and Marangudakis, 2022). The lack of recognition and impact of mechanisation on women's historic work on farms and crofts will be discussed in the following section.

4.3 Women's work on agriculture holdings

As discussed in the previous section, it was widely recognised, both in the literature and throughout the interviews, that women in the Scottish and Canadian island groups worked on the holdings and contributed both physically and in a decision-making capacity. This therefore presented an idea that women could be seen as more equal on the islands in the 19th and early 20th century, during a time when women did not have the same legal rights as men, including the right to vote in parliamentary elections (Thompson, 1985; Abrams, 2005; UK Parliament, 2022). As mentioned, it is widely acknowledged that, by necessity, women were capable of and permitted to do the tasks on the agriculture holdings that men would have traditionally been expected to complete. This is an example of women being in public space, by being visible in the fields on the island farms and crofts, during an era where Victorian ideology was being pushed on to women by the state and society to solely occupy the private space of their households (Thompson, 1985; Shortall, 2000; Abrams, 2005). The different experiences of women on the islands to the social norms on the mainland highlight the importance of using an island feminism perspective, which argues for the importance of understanding how the different genders interact in island spaces and their subsequent influence on the local community, and thus the position of women on the islands. In terms of the agriculture industry, the conflict of the necessity of women's work and wider patriarchal societal expectations highlights the balancing act of the awareness of women's abilities, yet a denial of their skills, to then transfer to an acknowledgement of women being leaders in the field. Instead, they were viewed to be in supportive roles. This demonstrates these impacts on today's farming and crofting women, who are still expected to occupy much of today's private domestic space, despite decades of work and evidence of their capabilities working the land.

Throughout the interviews, the participants were asked about this perception. Question 4 in Appendices C and D asked the interviewees what they thought of this idea: that women were historically seen as equal to the men on the island because they were always expected to work on the crofts, due to the men being away at sea. This was highlighted in the 2017 Women in Agriculture report, which found that there was a perception in Scotland of crofting being more equal, as women were dominantly perceived to be involved in the decision-making for the holding; however, it was found that 43% of the survey respondents wanted a larger role in decision-making (Shortall *et al.*, 2017). The results of this line of questioning were varied, with some hesitant to answer and others giving mixed responses. For some, it was evident that women had always been involved in the industry, and to suggest otherwise would be verging on insulting, as depicted by this female interviewee from Orkney:

> *'Yes, I think so, I mean the women are definitely respected for what they do'* (Participant #7).

This highlights that women were very much recognised for the work they put in and continue to be so today. Using the word 'respected' would indicate that they were not only recognised, but had the respect of their peers for the work they carried out on the holding and that this work was valued by others in the farming community, including the men, rather than the idea that women were simply seen as a support system for their male counterparts.

However, there were other participants who highlighted how women had consistently been undervalued in their roles. One woman participant from the Outer Hebrides in Scotland spoke of her experience and perception of the historical lack of recognition that women received in terms of their crofting work:

> *'My mother and my husband's parents, his mom worked really hard on the croft so when the men would be like wherever she would be, down in the macher she'd be harvesting and taking the sheaves and doing all that kind of really physical hard labour. In the past, women worked really hard, and I don't think they got the credit for it. Like the men did. The women just got on with it, and then they still had to come home and look after the kids and cook and do everything else as well as doing all the work on the croft. Like milking the cow and doing the hens and do whatever else that involved, and I think in the past, they weren't being recognised or actually how much work was being done by the women'* (Participant #23).

This quote supports the opinion that women played a key role on the crofts and were expected to take on physically demanding labour for which they were then not given credit, as well as their household work being invisible. The phrase that women 'just got on with it' again frames women as being supportive of their husbands and households; they did not complain or challenge the norms, even though they were expected to do work both on the landholding and in the household.

This was underlined by another female participant from the Shetland Islands:

> *'When I was younger usually it was the men folk that were supposed to be the crofters but I don't think they could manage without the help of the females because they usually had a second job because I mean before my time even they were going to the fishing or something, whaling even but they probably had the croft at home when they were away at the fishing or whatever. It was the women folk that had to keep the croft going'* (Participant #6).

This highlights the reliance on women's contributions to the holdings, to the extent that they would not have been viable without their efforts; that it was '*the women folk that had to keep the croft going*'. This underlines women's vital contributions, even though it was during a period when women were not typically seen in the public sphere. Therefore, although women were always seen as key, this raises the question of why women were not seen as leaders or crofters in their own right and why agriculture remains to be seen as a male-dominated industry. Again, this is an example of the U-shape of events that have taken place, of women being seen in the public space of agriculture on the islands in past centuries, to today when there are still fewer women occupiers on the islands than on the mainland in both Canada and Scotland, as highlighted in the literature review.

One point that was raised for this change in attitude and perspectives of women in the crofting and agriculture industry was the increase of mechanisation on holdings. Less physical labour is required now on farms, as discussed by this female participant:

> *Historically yes, there would have been a big input from the female side of things, but I think that's changed as things have got more efficient, I suppose maybe less labour intensive on the farms over the years, just with improving systems. I think just for a bit of security, a lot of females have moved to go and get extra work to bring in extra money and probably its more so male orientated on the farms I would say* (Participant #8).

Furthermore, because there was a reduction of labour intensity on the holdings, the need for women to help also reduced, as discussed by the same female participant from the Orkney Islands:

> *I remember when I was a child myself you know it wasn't at all unusual to see women on the croft but I think that was at a stage when there was still a lot of hands-on activity going on and everybody had a part to play and I think again ironically, the women*

seemed to take a lesser role as the whole operation became more mechanised (Participant #8).

The mechanisation of farm labour, and shift towards using tractors, combine harvesters and such has led to scholars deeming it the 'masculination' of farm machinery (Riley, 2009). This was the case to the extent that Saugeres (2002, p. 148) stated that male farmers:

> 'have appropriated agricultural mechanization, defining it as another masculine activity from which women are excluded'.

The exclusion of women from this space with the rise of machine use introduced in the 20th century can thus be seen as detrimental to women's equality on farm holdings. The reduction of women's labour in the fields reduced both their visibility in the industry and created a further divide between men and women on farms, in terms of their expected labour and contributions. Women's work was then shifted back into the private sphere, to the household domestic tasks, and they were also typically expected to do the book work associated with running the farm business (Trauger *et al.*, 2010). This notion was highlighted in the interviews in both the Canadian and Scottish islands.

Furthermore, the shift to more women taking on other off-farm work, rather than the men being away working on the sea, was a similar story across the islands, which was a theme that came to the forefront during the interviews. In the Shetland Islands in Scotland, the oil boom in the 1970s in the North Sea prompted many women to take advantage of the newly generated higher-paid jobs. These jobs were viewed as less demanding and more financially rewarding than working on the crofts. This male farmer from the Shetland Islands illustrates how this altered women's work:

> *'Well things would have changed up here, with the oil era. The croft would have been put on the back burner because there wasn't the money in it. Women would have gone to Sullom Voe and got a job doing the cleaning, cooking or made-up beds in the camp for, probably two or three hundred pounds per week. At that time at the airport, that would have been a better paid, that would have been an oily job too in a way, that would have been £60 a week for wage. So that would have altered things greatly. There would be various ones who thought the women were never the same after the women couldn't work the same after the oil era. Simply because they didn't have to stick in to make a*

lot more money, it all came a lot easier. And wouldn't want to go back to hard graft' (Participant #1).

This highlights another change of perception by this male participant, that women were 'too smart' or did not want to go back to hard work. This was a common perception that came across in the interviews, that when asked why there were not as many women compared with men in the agriculture industry, some interviewees replied that it was because women were 'too clever' and strategic to not go into farming, as it generally does not generate much income and is a hard job. Farming was described as a hard job in terms of its unreliability, due to the reliance on ever-changing food markets and dependence on the weather systems, which can have huge impacts on the ability to make a profit. This perception purports that women are choosing not to go into agriculture, rather than outside forces or structural issues impacting on their ability to do so. The position of these participants places individual responsibility on women to choose agriculture as a vocation, effectively denying that there are additional barriers in place for women compared with men. This quote also describes how women in the islands went from being viewed in the public space – being seen on the crofts – to going back into private space by doing jobs that reflect typical private household duties, such as cleaning and making up beds as described by the male participant. The viewpoint that women could not then go back to working on the crofts because they could not work hard is essentially calling island women lazy. Therefore, this male participant is at the same time calling island women 'too clever' and insinuating that they are too lazy to do agricultural work. This demonstrates a justification by a male farmer who attempts to put the blame on women rather than recognise the patriarchal structures that are in place.

This section has demonstrated how women on islands in the agriculture industry were historically seen as different to women on the mainland, due to the expectations to help with, and even manage, the physical tasks on the landholdings, when their husbands were fishing at sea. This was common on the islands both in Scotland and Canada and demonstrates how, due to smaller populations, typical gender structures and expectations during the 19th and 20th centuries had to be compromised to ensure survival on the islands. This particular phenomenon might have had the ability to transcend the gendered expectations of women and give them the ability to be recognised as leaders in their own right on the islands. Yet, they continued to lack the resources – primarily that of owning land – to reach that goal (Shortall, 2000). Therefore, due to the combination of mechanisation on farms and other income-stream options becoming available, women were not seen as much in public spaces on farm holdings over time. This will

arguably have impacted on future generations of farming women, whose work has moved them back into private space; yet they are subject to the perception, such as that of the male above, of being 'too lazy' and 'too clever' to consider entering the agriculture industry full-time. This perception was an evident theme, although it was also discussed that women do continue to face barriers. This will be further discussed in the following chapter, which examines the current barriers that women in the industry face.

4.4 Recent history

Returning to the focus of this chapter, which examines the historical perception of women in the industry, it was clear that women continued to be seen as playing a supportive role, even when they were effectively leading. As mentioned, there were references to past generations, to the 19th and early 20th century. In another more recent historic sense, there were also references to the immediately preceding generations, when a participant would refer to their parents, for instance, and how much has changed, socially and technologically, even within a short time period. Although the events of the last generation may be classed as recent history, they are still in the past and so appropriate to include in this chapter. In the previous section, it was discussed how women were historically viewed as playing supportive roles to the male farmers, despite evidence that women did most of the work due to their husbands spending large amounts of time away from home fishing at sea. Although, in more recent times, men do not have to undertake this dangerous off-farm work to support the household, participants spoke of modern examples where women would still be left to undertake much of the farm work. This was a similar picture on both the Scottish and Canadian islands, highlighted by a more recent example when a female interviewee's father worked as a chief engineer on the Newfoundland ferry:

> *'He would be away for two weeks at a time or a month at a time, he was always away during lambing season. He was always gone when the calves arrived. He was always gone when it came time to shear the sheep … So it was my mom and my grandmother, and when I got older, I helped, but I remember my grandmother up into her 80s, helping my mom deliver calves and helping shear the sheep. And it was by hand back then. With the hand shearers not electric and when it came hay season that was done when my dad was home, but everything else was done by the women'* (Participant #32).

Here the participant refers to what can be a reflection from the past; of men working off the holding and, in their absence, the women being expected to take on the farm work. Key markers in the farming calendar were routinely missed by the female participant's father, such as calving

and lambing. Interestingly, the participant notes that the haymaking was also left until the father returned off-shift. This highlights how the women on the holding were seen as capable of managing caring tasks, such as calving and looking after the sheep, but when it came to a job that required the use of machinery, such as driving the tractor for haymaking, this was left for a man to do. The gendering of farm tasks, with women expected to take on caring roles and men machinery-based jobs, is evident in existing literature (Riley, 2009; Shortall *et al.*, 2017). This example demonstrates that these norms were evident in an island context in recent history, despite women showcasing their abilities in the past and there being a perception that on the islands there was greater gender equality compared with the mainland, as discussed previously.

The inability to question these norms, connected to societal expectations, prevented women from gaining recognition. This perspective was highlighted by a female participant on Newfoundland Island in Canada, who spoke of her observations of her grandparents who had previously managed the family farm. During the interview, she spoke of how although it might have been perceived that her grandmother and grandfather did equal work on the holding, in reality, the grandmother still had to do the household duties:

> *'So, my grandfather and the farm, he did the brunt and the majority of the work. But in between cooking meals and tending to children, my grandmother was in the field working just as much as him side by side, she had to leave the work in the field to come in and prepare supper while my grandfather kept working. Both of it equal. Yet to me. But it was never viewed as equal. She was never given credit where credit was due ever.'*
>
> *Interviewer: 'How did she find that, was she aware of that?'*
>
> *'That was just so natural for her. I would be the one to see the way she was treated, she was never asked questions about the farm machinery, knew just as much about it, she knew, just as much about the plants as my grandfather did. But he was the owner and the manager of all of it, yes. But she did just as much work as well, besides having to leave and come in and cook meals. That was it'* (Participant #33).

The interviewee spoke of her frustration of seeing all this happening, and when reflecting on it, believing that there had been injustice done to their female island forebears. As repeatedly mentioned, the participants recognised that the women did just as much work and viewed them as equals in the field with the added responsibility of completing the traditional domestic duties

in the household. This resulted in what Riley (2009) terms the 'productive-reproductive dualism' of farm women, who enacted a dual identity of preparing meals in the inside reproductive domestic space, but also were expected to contribute to the outside productive farm space. This demonstrates the power imbalance for women, that it was men who owned the resources on farms due to patrilineal succession patterns; therefore, women did not have the economic power that property ownership would have brought them to be viewed as equals in the industry (Shortall, 2000). Furthermore, the gendered division of labour is a key factor in the normalisation of inequalities that farm women faced on holdings (Alston and Wilkinson, 1998; Shortall, 2016). Similar discussions of how this relates to present-day women in agriculture, and how the COVID-19 pandemic affected this, will be discussed in the following chapter.

As the previous paragraph has discussed, in the Canadian islands, there was a historic perspective of women helping on the holdings while also being expected to look after the household. This was echoed in the Scottish interviews. For instance, a female interviewee in the 65+ age bracket was asked about her experience of living and working on a croft with her husband. Interestingly, although she did a lot of the work, she did not attend any farming organisation meetings. When asked why this was the case, this was met with a pause and then:

> *'Well, I can't mind there being many when I was young but there were probably some folk that went but I don't know why, I've never given that a thought actually. It was like it was just sort of meant to be that it was the men folk that made the decisions, or … I don't know. The women were probably busy and all without having to go to the meetings, there were bairns to look after and knitting to do. Just everything like that when I was young … Busy. They were not idle, the women folk.'*
>
> *Interviewer: 'So, do you think you would have ever been interested in going to the meetings?'*
>
> *'I don't know. I never sort of thought about that … I've never been the person for being sort of the leader as you would say, taking part like that … It's just not something we were brought up with, I never thought about that. But I think it's good now that the women folk are taking part and being leaders. Why not, because I mean they've done it for a long time, they kept the thing going because if there hadn't been women doing the crofting that would have stopped'* (Participant #6).

When asked if she had ever thought about attending a meeting, the participant replied that she had not, and there was a sense that, historically, there was a presumption that men would attend these meetings. This highlighted how engrained this mentality was, that the men were the ones who were expected to take on the leadership roles rather than the women, who may have been equally involved in farming tasks, which has been evidenced throughout this chapter. Again, this demonstrates the shift of women to the private space, that they were not expected or encouraged to participate in the public sphere of agriculture organisations (Alston, 1998). Equally, this quote recognises that a minority of women are now taking on more of a role in leadership positions, even if in the participant's mind they personally had never thought of it as an appropriate role for themselves. The emphasis that women '*were not idle women folk*' highlights a need to reassure the interviewer that women, again, did not just sit around and do nothing all day. On the Scottish islands, women knitted to generate additional income and contributed to completing the work on the croft, even though they were not seen in leadership positions (Abrams, 2012). This shows that, although women were not visible, they were present in contributing to the holding and the crofting work. This would link to 'invisible labour', the domestic and often unseen work that women are expected to complete in the home, which will be discussed more in depth in the following chapters of this thesis. This was a strong theme evident throughout the data analysis. Furthermore, this highlights a similarity between the Scottish and the Canadian islands, where women were expected to help in the fields, yet their household tasks were not reduced or shared amongst the male household members. This demonstrates a gendered division of labour in agricultural households, despite island-based literature and interview data providing evidence that women did much of the field labour in the past. Again, the complexity of the island spaces for farm women has been depicted here, that even when women demonstrated their abilities in their communities, the patriarchal structures such as patrilineal land succession overrode the physical evidence of island women's abilities.

The differences between the islands and mainland perspectives were highlighted in the literature review section and therefore informed the interview scripts. A Canadian perspective on this was highlighted below by a male participant from Prince Edward Island:

> *'I can only speculate because we are an island, here we have ... we face different challenges. I think in other provinces, the farming was more sustaining, people made a living at farming and historically it has been mostly men. The men did not have to go away to work, just to go back years, the men didn't have to go away to work, so they worked in town, or they worked on the farm ... Women had to do those type of jobs, in other areas*

where people farm the men were around more. So, it just became a man's job, to take care of animals or to do the farming. Also, women didn't have to do those types of things, I think a lot of it, women like agriculture, they like their animals, but here was kind of something that you had to do you had to take part in it, in order to survive' (Participant #24).

This attitude of being 'tough enough' again highlights how women were perceived to be hard-working individuals on islands, seemingly more so than their mainlander counterparts. The need on the islands for women to work was due to necessity and the very survival of those in the island communities. With harsher environments and more intense weather patterns, this made it a much more challenging life than for those who were located on the fertile plains of Fife on the Scottish mainland or Saskatchewan province in Canada. On the mainland, women would also have been more involved in these places historically; the difference was that men did not go away to work, and therefore women would never have had the chance to be in the public sphere of agriculture. For instance, women in Canada dominated the dairy industry until state involvement resulted in a push for men to reclaim their position, resulting in the loss of work for women (Shortall, 2000). Throughout the interviews, there was a persistent reiteration of how the island women in the past were tough and demonstrated their capabilities of working the land and their determination to survive. This links with how women were then perceived to be more equal in some instances, due to their expectations of working on the holdings (Abrams, 2005; Thompson, 1985; McKenzie, 2019). Yet, as demonstrated, women were still not seen as leaders in the field or the wider industry on the islands, despite being viewed in public spaces and not being limited to the domestic sphere during the initial phase of Victorian ideology. Island women were always viewed to be in supportive roles and not in formal leadership positions or independent landowners. This links to the existing literature, where Alston (2021, p.144) advocates that women in agriculture should not be seen as helpless or victims; rather, it should be emphasised that gender-related barriers are caused by 'differential social and cultural norms and expectations that shape the lives of women and men in various societies'. This is pertinent to this research, as women on holdings on both the Scottish and Canadian islands in the historic context were not weak, they were 'tough', and it was the existing structures and cultural norms that prevented them from becoming leaders or independent landholders on their islands.

4.5 Traditional communities

A theme that occurred throughout the analysis and one that is fitting to be included in this historical chapter is that of culture and tradition in communities. This was a theme that arose

especially when the participant was asked to describe their community. This aimed to gauge how the participants perceived their islands and the local society, and any considerations of how gender interacted with their local agriculture community. There was a mixture of responses, with some on different islands stating that they saw their community as a mix of being both outward-looking whilst remaining traditional.

Looking to the existing literature, it would point to the fact that traditional rural communities are strongly associated with the rural idyll, where peripheral areas have been seen as peaceful, relaxing and prosperous areas since the Victorian era and very much an English phenomenon (Castree *et al.*, 2013; Commins, 2004). The disparities of the roles of men and women are historically much more evident in rural areas, with it being deemed a 'masculine space' (Brandth and Haugen, 2010; Dahlström, 1996). The construction of gender disparities in a rural community are due to the traditional activities associated with the rural landscape, such as agriculture. There remains a continuous association between rural areas and masculinity in line with these traditional communities, making them a 'container for the operation of gender roles' (Little, 2002, p.71). This may result in the broader acceptance of gender inequalities that are experienced in rural settings. Additionally, it stems from the domestic idyll, which coincides with the rural idyll, where women were traditionally viewed in the 'acceptance order within a village', by staying at home whilst the men were the breadwinners of the family in line with Victorian ideology (Little, 1986, p.3). This maintains the emphasis on the 'sense of community' in the area, which Little (1986) highlights as being viewed as only possible within a stable family home. Within this research context, the previous sections discussed how, historically, both in recent history and previous centuries, women were broadly expected to remain at home and follow what were perceived as traditional stay-at-home patterns. However, in island communities, as mentioned, women were also expected to work outside on the holding whilst their husbands were away and manage the household. This would therefore counter what are seen as traditional rural area ideologies, including the Victorian rural idyll. This again demonstrates the need to consider why and how island spaces shape the experiences of women using an island feminism lens, which considers how the:

> 'intellectual sensibilities of island place and constructs of gender as intertwining forces that contour the particular conditions of life' (Karides, 2017, p.32).

Therefore, how life for island women differs from that of women on the mainland.

In the context of the interviews, the participants had mixed reactions when asked how they viewed their community. Some were hesitant to use the label 'traditional', whilst others were quick to define their islands as such. This is likely, as some interviewees felt that the word 'tradition' has connotations of backward, sexist behaviour and pushes negative stereotypes that are typically associated with the islands. Although some participants sought to distance themselves from what they felt was a negative and outdated narrative regarding rural island communities, others felt that their communities did embody this concept. Examples were given of sexist festivals in the islands, such as the Lerwick Up-Helly-Aa festival, which is celebrated in the Shetland Islands – a festival which has, in its 140-year history, only recently allowed women to take part in the procession in January 2023 (Budge and Shortall, 2022c; Johnson *et al.*, 2019) – and how these types of traditional celebrations can impact on wider island ideologies. Tradition was also spoken about in terms of practices on farms and crofts; for instance, the tradition of only men taking part in certain group activities. An example of this was given in Newfoundland, Canada, where a female farmer was told they would not be allowed to help put their sheep to the island's summer grazing, as it was traditionally only the islands' farming men who were allowed to do this task. The wider perception of tradition and the community being traditional was summarised by the female participant as:

> *'They're really old fashioned where I am in Newfoundland. Very, very old fashioned. Like the women stay home and they cook, and they clean, and they certainly don't have sheep'* (Participant #31).

These traditional viewpoints and societal expectations in the local community therefore have a knock-on effect on how women are then seen in their society. This demonstrates how traditional practices and ideas have transcended the historical context and impact on the modern-day agriculture community. The idea presented here that women still cook, clean and do not own sheep indicates that the traditional ideologies and expectations are still in place regarding women in the agriculture industry in Newfoundland Island in Canada. There were some interviewees who associated these traditional practices as an excuse to exclude women in this island context. This is further extended to the wider community and how the impacts of traditional norms affect young people, which can effectively prevent a wider transformation of gender and island, as highlighted by this female participant:

> *'There needs to be a paradigm shift in the culture on how we raise children in order for that to change and until that happens, I don't know. Because I've always found that, when*

it's come to gender, when it's come to the gender roles then we are very traditional, in my province' (Participant #31).

The use of tradition to justify the exclusion of women on the island is an example of how those on islands can justify:

> 'embedded beliefs and practices on islands means clinging to hierarchies around race, class and gender and continuing patterns of discrimination' (Karides, 2017, p.35).

This is evident here, where traditional practices on Newfoundland Island, such as domestic gender roles and expectations in the household, are embedded within the local community. Examining this from an island feminism perspective means one can untangle how islandness is being used here to 'legitimise unfair and unequal treatment' of women (Karides, 2017, p.35); that what are seen as normalised and unchallenged patriarchal structures on this island remain unchecked and instead are perceived as legitimate behaviour due to the traditional culture and gendered roles on Newfoundland Island.

Interestingly, in comparison, the participants from the other Canadian Atlantic island in this study, Prince Edward Island, broadly reported that there was a mixture of a traditional culture that is modernising, as highlighted by this male participant:

'I would say we are fairly traditional. I would say that the male/female dynamic we are fairly, we are moving forward fairly well, fairly progressively … I would say in the last ten years it's really kind of flourished and blossomed and we as a culture are still trying to catch up, I think we are not as far along as we should be, but we're learning and growing is I guess is how I would put it' (Participant #27).

Another male participant put it as Prince Edward Island (PEI) being a:

> *'traditional community that is in transition. And to kind of even add to that qualifier, that PEI is [a] traditional place, in transition sometimes actively, sometimes with resistance, so I definitely think we are transitioning to become a much more global province'* (Participant #24).

This highlights differences in perception, with Newfoundland being seen as a much more traditional island community than Prince Edward Island, whose community is seen to be moving towards a more progressive and inclusive society. However, it should be noted that both the Prince Edward Island quotes used here are from those who work in the government department of agriculture. Thus, it is not a stretch to argue that it is likely they would present a more equitable society, to fit with the wider government's agenda and ideology; whereas those who do not work for the government would not have to adjust to this pressure. They might feel able to present ideas that would not necessarily fit with the overall message proposed and pushed by officials. This demonstrates the need to critically analyse, not only the words of the participants, but the potential agendas and influences which they may be under, both in their professional and personal spheres.

This inter-island comparison in Canada is one that was also evident in the Scottish islands, and one that was expected. This is based on the traditional perspective of the Western Isles, which make up the Outer Hebrides in Scotland in this sample. In this group of islands, religion was viewed by most participants to be of significant influence in their communities. Some interviewees even went so far as to state that religion reinforces traditional practices and norms in the islands. There is much media attention on how, on Sundays, some people still do not hang their washing out, and children are not allowed outside to play, as a mark of respect to the Sabbath (BBC, 2014). However, in this sample, 43% of those in the Outer Hebrides described themselves as religious, compared with a much higher 55% of participants who were based in Shetland and Orkney, which make up the Northern Isles. It should be highlighted that, as the sample size is small here, this may not be reflective of the wider cohort of religious people on the islands. The 2011 Scottish census statistics state that approximately 17% of those in the Outer Hebrides identify as following the Christian religion, compared with only 8% in Shetland and Orkney (Scottish Census, 2013). This indicates a religious divide between the various island groups in the Scottish islands, where there is double the percentage of people following the Christian religion in the Outer Hebrides than in Shetland and Orkney. Although this of course does not necessarily relate directly to traditional practices or create a society more likely to be patriarchal, the historical influence these wider socio-cultural influences would have had on the society and continue to have today is evident on some of the islands. This was highlighted by Thompson (1985), who discussed the differences between the Shetland Islands and Western Isles, as the Shetland women were seen to be more equal and spoke as men did, whereas during interviews, women in the Western Isles did not speak whilst their husbands were telling stories and it was after the men left that they would speak freely of their contempt for men on the

island. Thompson (1985) argued that this reflected the strong religious society in the Inner and Outer Hebrides that meant women were under the strict social rule of the male elders. Furthermore, Bruce (2014) argued that the ability of a shared religious culture does impact communities, from islanders' private lives to social norms. This highlights the historic socio-cultural differences of the treatment of women on the various Scottish islands.

This difference was further highlighted as, at the time of carrying out the interviews during 2020/21, there were no female councillors or any female ministers in the Western Isles. This only changed in May 2022, when two women were elected to the local council, ending the ten years of an all-male council on the isles (Brown, 2022). This highlights how these historical practices remain influential on the islands and how this has a knock-on effect on the local community. The relevance for this thesis is, as demonstrated by the literature, that women were traditionally seen as supporters rather than leaders, and this would then have a trickle-down effect on the ability of women to inherit or gain access to land. This is reflective of the historic literature, where Little (1986, p.5) discussed how this ideal was reinforced with the roles that the husband and wife play, in that the man is likely to be on the local council in a leadership position whereas the woman is more likely to be involved in 'voluntary activities and charity work'; thus, the 'women's role is supportive rather than competitive'. Although this literature is from almost 40 years ago, the fact that until only recently there were no women on the council in the Western Isles demonstrates that this traditional pattern is still reinforced in many remote rural communities today. This was highlighted by a female interviewee from the Outer Hebrides:

> *'generally, men here in particular, I think it is to do with the church, a general strongly Presbyterian view. I mean … women are not … they're not really encouraged to participate in any formal management situations … Western Isles has no female councillors on our council ... You have no female elders in the church, you have no female ministers here, even though there are plenty of female ministers in the Church of Scotland throughout the rest of the country'* (Participant #22).

This female participant then went on to discuss that there were plenty of women who were more than capable of being councillors, using examples of local voluntary organisations that were very well run and well acknowledged to be a success:

> *'If you look at those organisations, almost all the chairs, all the people who ran them are women and those are women who are actually strategically managing these, it's not just running a wee*[4] *community kind of association or club. These are big … they're the biggest employers in the area by far and it is local women who run them. So, we obviously have plenty of confidence'* (Participant #22).

This demonstrates the patriarchal structures that remain in place in the islands, and the wider impact this has on existing organisations. The participant later discussed how this is viewed as a barrier for older women; she also pointed out that the younger generation, in her mind, did not see it as much of a barrier, as young people would be more likely to break such traditions and stereotypes.

Conversely, tradition was also seen as something that participants were proud of, interlinking with the strong sense of identity. The multiple meanings of what the word 'tradition' is and can mean was discussed by this male participant from the Shetland Islands in Scotland, who suggests that it can have negative and positive connotations and meanings:

> *'Shetland is steeped in tradition and for goodness' sake, we burn a galley every year, like 20 times a year. There are traditions going yearly like go into the hill to cast peats … it is steeped in tradition. But due to like the globalization of the world. It's not narrow minded; you know Black Lives Matter was kind of a good example of that. I'd say it was in like every window and every house almost had, the Shetland stands with Black Lives Matter. Because sometimes folk would like take tradition as a bad thing. As in narrow minded, because obviously like depending on what the tradition is it could be that you're narrow minded. But tradition can mean so many different things'* (Participant #5).

The participant uses the example of the 'Shetland Staands Wi Black Lives Matter' protest, where people in Shetland showed their solidarity with the global movement in response to the death of George Floyd in the United States in 2020 (*Shetland News*, 2020). This highlights how that although their community is 'steeped', in their words, in traditions that they are evidently proud of, it can still co-exist with progressive societal norms; that the strong sense of community, which is usually attributed to traditional practices and events within rural areas, can be utilised to support modern-day movements. This discussion of how 'tradition' is used

[4] 'Wee' is a Scottish word that means small.

both as a tool to hold communities together and to enable existing patriarchal structures will be continued in the following chapter, where the influence of these practices on the current barriers for women in agriculture will be discussed.

4.6 Historic land succession

Although this chapter has largely delved into a past where participants referenced their grandparent(s) or past generations, it is important to also recognise more recent history. Whilst much of this chapter's focus has been on the 19th and early 20th centuries, women in the agriculture industry were only increasingly recognised in the 1980s academic literature (Gasson, 1980; Sachs, 1983; Shortall, 1992, 1996; Alston, 1995). This period was when the participants in the 46–60 and 61+ age groups were starting out or already working in the agriculture industry. As will be discussed in this section, these participants frequently referred to how much progress there had been throughout their own lives to demonstrate that while issues of inequality were apparent during the 1800s, this might have been expected, due to social norms at that time. However, following the initial wave of feminism in the UK, and the waves which subsequently followed, the natural expectation was that, as rights for women progressed, recognition for the roles of women in the agriculture industry would similarly reach new levels. This did not happen (Shortall and Adesugba, 2020; Alston *et al.*, 2018). Even the small progressions for women that have occurred in the industry should not be overstated (Azima and Mundler, 2022). This transition and these experiences will now be discussed.

It was evident throughout the interviews with those in the 46–60 and 61+ age groups that they broadly recognised that there had been some progression for women in the agriculture industry. However, in the past they had themselves experienced barriers in the sector, even if they did not recognise them as such at the time. The lack of recognition of women's roles and contributions were highlighted by participants in both the Scottish and Canadian island groups. Those women who started their agriculture career in the 1980s and previous decades felt that they had, in their past, faced significant barriers, including access to land. One woman from Prince Edward Island summarised her experience of gaining access to land as a farmer's daughter:

> *'So, at my own situation I was married at 19 and I had three younger brothers and it was unknown if they would enter the farm or not. My husband and I felt that if we joined my father's farm at that point in time, that whatever we did, even if successful, with three boys, my brothers would not leave the farm. So, a kind of a different scenario,*

whereas in Wayne's family if the oldest son wanted it the rest were told you know either they had to negotiate their way in or they were told they had to do something else. And I felt as a girl, and this could be wrong, but my husband and I had a feeling that we wouldn't be able to say no, no we don't want that, any of my brothers or any of my brothers to join. So, we took the opportunity; if I had been my father's oldest son then I would have assumed the same rights as Wayne's older brother is, so that's kind of a difference' (Participant #29).

This demonstrates that at that time women were still not given the opportunities to gain access to land. Land was expected to be inherited by the eldest male in the family. Another female participant from the Canadian islands spoke of her experience: that when she was growing up it had always been expected that their brother would take on the farm, and she only considered it to be a potential career when her brother announced that he did not want to go into the agriculture industry:

'I have a younger brother and I think he was always expected to be the one, the farmer in the family and so I hadn't really considered it as a career until my mid-teens when he announced that's not what he wanted to do. So, there were not very many women, that would have been in the mid-80s, announcing to their family this is what [their] career aspirations are, so I hadn't really considered it until he said he wasn't interested. Funny, I only recently thought if he had never said that then I wonder where I would be today. It would never really … would have been probably, it's probably not something I would have thought of' (Participant #25).

This, again, demonstrates the significant historic barriers to women entering the agricultural industry, which included access to land. This has been well documented in the literature, and patrilineal land inheritance practices are viewed as one of the key barriers against women entering the industry (Shortall *et al.*, 2017; Dunne *et al.*, 2021). The assumption by women, as shown by this female participant, that they would not be considered to inherit the land means they do not consider it as a career for themselves; even though, as in this example, women have the ability to then go on and manage a successful farm business.

This issue was also evident in the Scottish islands, where this male participant spoke of how he had witnessed the detrimental impact it had had on their neighbour, who was simply expected to take on the farm because he was a man, whereas his sister would have been a much more appropriate person to be given the holding:

> *'At one time it was just expected it was the son that would take over the farm. In some cases that was just plain wrong because I know folk that are in their 70s now that the son took over the farm, he will now admit in his 70s, "I should never have been a farmer ... [I] know it was expected of me, so I just did it" and his sister would actually have been keener'* (Participant #10).

Furthermore, similar to what was evident in the Canadian islands, this female participant from the Outer Hebrides always knew that her brother was always the one who was going to take over the farm. Therefore, she had no interest in farming from the beginning, since she knew there was no possibility of her taking over the land:

> *'I have a brother, the farm, it's inevitable it's going to be his, so it was never something that I had to be interested in because I never was going to inherit it. I guess ending up in sort of crofting, even in a very minor way, it's strange, it's just life, isn't it?'* (Participant #20).

Interestingly, this woman has still ended up in the agriculture industry, even though she knew she would not inherit her own family's land. She therefore saw agriculture as something she did not have to show an interest in when she was younger. This is an example of women 'deselecting' themselves from the farm when, through socialisation at childhood, girls are discouraged by their family members to take part in farming activities and therefore are less likely to choose to go into the industry (Fischer and Burton, 2014; Shortall *et al.*, 2017). It is widely recognised that due to historic succession patterns favouring the eldest male in the family, many women's opportunities to go into the agriculture industry are due to having a related job or 'marrying into' an existing holding (Shortall *et al.*, 2017). This highlights the historic issue of succession and land access for island women.

This raised an interesting point, as some of the participants argued that women were seen and were given recognition for their historic efforts in the agriculture industry; however, this section has highlighted that women still faced barriers in terms of land succession. Furthermore, the impacts of mechanisation and the 'masculination' of farm machinery demonstrated a further gender divide, which would have resulted in the socialisation of young girls to deselect themselves from agriculture activities on holdings. This will have effectively contributed to women not entering the agriculture industry. This will be further discussed in the following chapter as to how succession and land access remain a barrier for women in the modern-day

agriculture industry on the islands. This directly contradicts the narrative that was proposed by some interviewees and in the literature, that women were seen as equal to men and thus communities on the islands are less traditional. The traditional succession patterns were evident on the islands, which has impacted them to today, where there remains a much lower proportion of women who are occupiers on the islands compared with the mainland in both Scotland and Canada. This again demonstrates the need to acknowledge the differences of island spaces, which provide a complex culture and set of norms that continuously contradict one another.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the historical context of women in the agriculture industry on the Scottish and Canadian Atlantic islands. There have been several key themes that have been identified in this chapter. Firstly, the importance of using the feminist island framework has been demonstrated, due to the unique position of island women throughout past centuries as a result of the spatial factors of island communities, including their peripheral nature. This led to women being viewed as apparent equals on the islands, where they could utilise their skill and tenacity during an era where women were being shifted into the private space of the home. The island women were thus effectively defying the social ideologues and restrictions being imposed by the emerging middle class. However, another key theme countered this perception, as these island women were not seen as leaders or land managers, despite their well-earned reputation as equal farm workers. Over recent centuries and even more recent decades, women were continuously denied land access through patrilineal practices and patriarchal ideologies. It is clear that women's work was undervalued in the islands, both on the farm and in the household, and due to the caring work that women were expected to undertake. This is reflected in the wider literature and challenges the perception of island women being seen as equals in the islands, as women did not have the resources – owning land – to enable the full transition to be seen as equals to their male peers. The impact of this will now be discussed in the following chapters, and how the legacy of barriers continues to affect today's women in the agriculture industry on the islands on both sides of the Atlantic.

Chapter 5: Striving in the Present

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter identified several of the historic barriers that women in the agriculture industry experienced in both the Scottish and Canadian Atlantic islands, and provided a context for the complex situation of women in the agriculture industry on the islands. There were evident similarities between the Scottish and Canadian islands that were discussed throughout the analysis, such as succession, alongside some differences, including the influence of religion and whether participants viewed their community as being traditional or not. The focus of this chapter is to examine the present barriers faced by women that the interviewees reported experiencing or witnessing, as well as the problematic perception of there being no barriers for women in the industry. Here, the differences between the island's socio-cultures are more apparent, as is how traditional communities are viewed by their residents, influencing progression such as the number of women on committees both in agriculture and more generally on the islands.

Firstly, the general challenges and differences of farming on the mainland of Scotland and Canada compared with the islands in terms of agriculture will be discussed. This was consistently mentioned throughout the interviews, including both the benefits and drawbacks of farming and crofting on an island. These involved close-knit communities and higher feed costs, further demonstrating the need for this island-specific research. The geographical and physical factors of islands therefore shape the need for the agriculture community to work together on an island more so than on the mainland, as there is a reliance on informal and formal networks. This can become complex when they are intertwined and dependent on social relations, especially through a gender lens. This demonstrates the need to use the island feminism framework, to consider the explicit impact of island spaces and islandness on the experiences for women on islands. It is here that the chapter turns first, followed by the barriers, which become apparent during the thematic analysis. These barriers include the issues regarding the 'exceptional woman' ideology, patrilineal succession practices, women being seen as 'only' women, traditional agricultural organisations and gendered childcare expectations. The importance of examining these issues through an island feminism perspective is discussed throughout; it seeks to

> ‘research and increase opportunities for islanders that historically have been discriminated or marginalised, improving island life for all’ (Karides, 2017, p.35).

In this context, women in agriculture on the islands have been historically and are currently discriminated against, which will be demonstrated throughout this chapter. As the research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, when there were lockdowns in both Scotland and Canada, the penultimate section is dedicated to the impact of the coronavirus. Although a new phenomenon, it merits its own examination regarding the effect it has had on the agriculture communities, including gender equality in the industry on the islands. Finally, a conclusion is drawn regarding the current barriers and how they compare both between and within the island contexts, followed by how the subsequent chapter seeks to examine what the future holds, with suggestions from the participants on how these barriers can be resolved and a critical look on what is currently being done.

5.2 Island issues: remoteness

To reiterate previous chapters: islands are different from the mainland. This is due to many reasons, not only because of their physical separation from the mainland by the sea. The physical distance does, however, create some practical issues. When the participants were asked how the islands were different from the mainland in terms of farming and crofting, there were immediate responses. These answers included costs, transport, weather and poor-quality ground. How these disadvantages were experienced in the Canadian and Scottish islands will now be discussed.

In the Scottish islands, the cost of transport and imports were key challenges highlighted by most of the participants. This is because getting goods onto the islands, such as fertiliser, animal feed, bedding and even services such as sheep shearers, are more expensive than on the mainland because of the freight costs. One female participant in the Scottish islands, in the Inner Hebrides, spoke of her frustration of having to rely on the ferry to get their animals to market:

> *‘We sell all our calves and lambs as store, which means we sell them to other farmers to finish because our grass stops growing in September. So that is quite stressful because it costs so much to get a float here and we have one float a year. Whereas if you’re on the mainland you take your lambs, cast ewes and gimmers at different sales, but we have it all in one day. Then occasionally the boat will suddenly be full, and they*

won't be able to get the float on or the weather will be a bit choppy, and they will refuse to carry them. So, it would be an accumulation of three weeks of us getting all the lambs and stuff ready and getting them down to the pier, and it can be cancelled at the last minute and then often it's not that many sales we can go to. So, if you can't get the sale you've chosen it just makes it harder and harder' (Participant #15).

These factors all add to the pressures for farmers and crofters on the islands. Furthermore, it is not only the cost and difficulty of getting stock off the island. This female participant also spoke of her experience of '*being at the end of the line*' for services. She gave this example of trying to get someone to clip their sheep:

'Last year, for example, our shearer kept putting back and back the time they were coming over. So, it got to sort of the beginning of August, and I started to get lots of blowfly strike in the sheep' (Participant #15).

Not having these services or skills available on the islands can therefore cause animal welfare issues. This again varies between the islands themselves; the populations in the Scottish islands range from 21,031 to under 50 people (National Records of Scotland, 2015). Farmers who are located on the sparsely populated islands naturally struggle with a lack of services due to a lack of skilled labour. Therefore, they are reliant on specialist services, like the sheep shearer in the example above, to travel to the island. As a result, there is a constant reliance on ferries for both exports and imports of goods, services and stock. Islands with lower populations were included in this study but, due to privacy concerns and to ensure the participant cannot be identified by their peers, the specific islands are not reported, and island groups are used instead.

As already mentioned, the ferries are greatly impacted by the weather and thus, so is their ability to move goods and livestock in and out of the islands. Furthermore, the weather, which typically has higher wind speeds and more rainfall, creates an overall harsher climate on the islands compared with the mainland due to a lack of any natural barriers and being geographically isolated. This results in a shorter growing season, which was seen as a disadvantage of farming on the islands; for instance, this male participant from the Shetland Islands spoke of his perceived issues compared with his mainland counterparts:

'Down south [the Scottish mainland] it would be a lot easier working. Basically, for the length of the seasons and our distance from market would be a disadvantage, for here all the costs are higher taking stuff in' (Participant #1).

The harsher climate experienced on the Shetland Islands and the salt in the air from the sea can also damage the grass and crops grown on the holding, as described by this female participant:

'I think some of it is probably the climate, it's that bit colder here also because of the salt. We are surrounded by sea, the salt which would sometimes blast the grass if you got a gale from the west, that would have an adverse effect on the crops. Not just the grass, whatever crop is growing' (Participant #2).

Moreover, it is not only the crops that can be impacted by the harsher weather and higher wind speeds, but the animals are also affected:

'We're severely beholden to the weather I'd say, I mean that applies to a lot of the west coast of Scotland but, we just we get some really, really brutal storms here that can be really very hard on the stock' (Participant #15).

The phrase used by this female participant from the Inner Hebrides here of being '*beholden to the weather*' summarises how the islands are vulnerable and reliant on outside forces, such as the weather, emphasising the challenging nature of farming and crofting in comparison with the mainland. Furthermore, there are no or very few trees for shelter on the islands in Scotland due to the harsh weather conditions.

Throughout the analysis of the interviews, a consensus was that farming on the mainland was perceived to be 'easier' than on the islands. The weather and harsher climate were a clear disadvantage felt by the majority of those interviewed from the Scottish islands, but there were also other disadvantages. The ferries and physical location of the islands can limit the options for the landholder:

'You feel quite powerless as a producer here because really the only option is to sell stuff as a store. And if I was on the mainland, I would definitely be selling some of our stuff direct to customers. But because for us the nearest abattoir is two journeys away, so, we'd have to get it there bring it back here, to package it and get it back off to the mainland. Just not financially viable' (Participant #15).

The use of the word '*powerless*' by this female participant from the Inner Hebrides again highlights the volatility and precarious nature of farming and crofting on the island in comparison to their mainland counterparts.

Another male participant from the Shetland Islands highlighted how higher costs and the physical distance from where the produce can be sold impacted their ability and opportunities as an island producer:

> *'It would be field sizes and areas generally. Down south it would be a lot easier working. I suppose for the length of the seasons … and our distance from market would be a disadvantage, all the costs are higher up here taking stuff in'* (Participant #1).

The '*distance from market*' this participant refers to varies between the islands themselves, especially in Scotland. That is because of the journey length of the ferries that carry the animals to the mainland markets. For example, the ferry from the Shetland Islands to mainland Scotland runs once a day and takes 12 hours, whereas the ferry from the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides to the mainland takes just 2 hours and 45 minutes (Promote Shetland, 2022: Outer Hebrides Tourism, 2022). This highlights that although the transport issue is a unifying problem and one which is felt across the islands, the physical distance from the mainland varies across the board. The impact therefore may be felt differently depending on the island itself.

For some, the collective impacts of being on an island in comparison with being on the mainland could be summarised as simply being harder than farming on the mainland:

> *'I suppose the biggest one is just like on the mainland. They have far more scope for how they want to farm, because they have so much more growing days in a year and it's vastly different. In terms of temperature. I suppose that is the first thing that sticks out to me. It's just that they have a lot more opportunity and scope to do different things in farming. Whereas up here you don't have a huge scope to try and work within the kind of agricultural worlds, at times you do have to diversify yourself out in different ways up here. That I feel that it's slightly different to [the] south. I suppose that was kind of the biggest thing I took away from farming in [the] south is just that they have it, well I don't want to say the word easier but it's the first one'* (Participant #5).

The '*more scope*' this male participant from the Shetland Islands refers to both the diversification products and what can be grown and kept on the land, which has already been referred to concerning the weather. This also relates to the land quality on the islands, which also varies between and even within the islands themselves. For instance, on one of the Scottish islands, in the Outer Hebrides, high quality land on one side of the island is referred to as the 'Maher', which can support cattle and crops such as barley; whereas the hill areas are only able to support a native sheep species, as described by this female participant:

> *'We have, so a lot of our cropland is on the Maher, which is really in island terms is very good quality land, maybe not compared to the mainland, but still really good. So, we're quite fortunate to have got both, so our cattle in the summer are grazing more the hill ground and, in the winter, they're back on the Maher.'*
>
> *Interviewer: 'A few people have spoken about the massive difference between the west and east side of Uist?'*
>
> *'Yeah, and it's [the] same across all of the Uists, that very fertile west side and then the hill ground on the east side is kind of moorland and very peaty and not such good quality. So, loads of people have cattle on the west side, this is better ground for cattle than sheep producers on the east side of the island, just because the ground doesn't really suit cattle because the ground is too boggy'* (Participant #23).

This demonstrates how the very location of the land within an island can hugely affect the animals and crops that are then produced. Therefore, even if a holding has a larger area of land in terms of acreage or hectares, the quality of the ground itself has a much bigger impact and again determines the scope of the agriculture business.

In terms of the Canadian islands, similar issues were highlighted, if a little more extreme. For instance, temperatures and growing seasons were referenced in terms of challenges. However, in comparison with the Scottish islands, where there are high winds and rain in the winter, one male farmer in Newfoundland spoke of how they regularly see icebergs floating past:

> *'Yeah, it can be kind of nuts here; you can get snow in the middle of the summer, especially when the icebergs come through. Everybody thinks icebergs are so pretty, 15*

kilometres around an iceberg is 15 degrees less and it just sucks the heat out of everything' (Participant #30).

This highlights that although the islands may be on similar lines of latitude, the weather is extremely different. They have also been impacted by climate change, with the global rise in temperature. This was referred to by one female participant in Newfoundland Island, where they spoke of how this is affecting their holding:

'Our weather is influenced a lot by the sea. And it changes dramatically right now we're actually warmer than we've been in a while, like last year, Newfoundland was warmer than Florida, which never happens. And it did. So we, we can see the effects of climate change dramatically here with the amount of icebergs, with the different bugs that we're getting, so new pests are being introduced because of our warming climate, but it's also enabling us to grow more varieties of vegetables, because it's warmer but originally it was, it's very cold, like last year, this time I was shovelling a path to my greenhouse to get into the blades of snow' (Participant #33).

The warmer climate referred to here by the participant highlights how they are seeing both advantages and disadvantages, with new varieties of pests and diseases being introduced; however, it is also lengthening their growing season. This has presented new opportunities for growing crops and varieties and demonstrates the adaptability and resilience of island farmers to their changing environment.

Regarding islands, although most of the islands involved in this case study can only be accessed by a ferry, Skye in the Inner Hebrides in Scotland and Prince Edward Island in Canada are both attached to their respective mainland via a bridge. This has provided relief in some ways, as demonstrated by this female resident in Prince Edward Island:

'I know years ago, and this would have been before I lived here, there was definitely a sense of isolation before we had the bridge. Everything, all transportation was by ferry and in the wintertime, we had a ferry that was an icebreaker, but it could get closed for bad weather for stretches at a time and you really were stuck here. That gave people a special sense of identity and resilience and I think the agricultural community would have felt very self-sufficient because there were times when you could literally be cut off from the rest of the country, but we do now have a bridge that does also close due to

weather and stuff sometimes, not very often but that can happen as well' (Participant #26).

Although this arguably means less disruption, as these islands are not reliant on ferry crossings that can be cancelled due to rough seas, this should theoretically eliminate the risk of goods being transported in and out of the island being impacted by weather. The same female resident from Prince Edward Island elaborates on this:

> *'That can affect agriculture, suddenly trucks of supplies are stuck in New Brunswick for a couple of days because the wind is really high, and they won't allow high-sided vehicles to cross the bridge when the wind gets above a certain speed. So that's another thing that would be very different here from other places is that high winds can actually cut us off from our supply chain sometimes and vice versa, getting stuff off the island sometimes you're stuck on this side unable to send ... sometimes things are time sensitive when you have perishable products. Those are things that come to mind when I think about being on an island and how that affects us as participants in the agricultural industry'* (Participant #26).

The high winds which prevent the trucks from crossing can therefore still impact on island agriculture. Whilst islands connected by bridges do not have to rely on calm seas for their imports and exports, they still face similar weather-related issues faced by those who are dependent on ferries.

In terms of the differences perceived by islanders in both the Scottish and Canadian contexts, there are evident differences from their mainland counterparts. Harsher climates, reliance on infrastructures – whether those be ferries or bridges – and the increased cost make for a more challenging environment overall to produce crops and care for stock. These factors have also created adaptability and resilience in the islands, which was summarised by one male participant that farmers and crofters are '*creative and stubborn'* (Participant #5). These challenges also mean that islanders must work together, through community-owned agriculture stores, community-owned grazing and even moving livestock off the islands. For example, to reduce freight costs, island farmers and crofters may come together to share transport. Therefore, the relationships between islanders must remain positive to sustain these arrangements, as they are vital to reduce costs and thus ensure the viability of their businesses. This would provide an explanation as to why traditional practices and attitudes are harder to

challenge on the islands, as they fear disrupting the fragile yet important relationships with neighbours and other producers in the agriculture community, viewed as a central issue for conflicts in small island communities (Baldacchino and Veenendaal, 2018). This is a potential reason for why there are more pronounced gender-based barriers for women on islands; how gender intersects with the reliance on informal networks and relationships in island communities will be analysed in this chapter. This furthers the need to use an island feminism framework, which focus on this intersection of islandness and gender (Karides, 2017). It will be considered how they relate to the barriers presently experienced by women in the agriculture industry.

5.3 The 'exceptional woman' ideology

Although the general challenges of farming and crofting on the islands have been discussed, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the barriers that women specifically face in the industry within the island contexts in the case studies. It is to this subject this thesis now turns.

As part of the interviews, following general introductory questions concerning how the participant entered the agriculture industry, their motivations behind this and any challenges they faced being on an island, interviewees were asked their opinions regarding the current women in agriculture discussion, evident in both the mainstream and the farming media. In Scotland, this was highlighted by the 2017 Women in Agriculture report, which was commissioned by the Scottish Government, and the subsequent follow-up reports from the research and ongoing programmes associated with the Women in Agriculture agenda (Shortall *et al.*, 2017; Scottish Government, 2022b). The Scottish Government committed £300,000 in 2022 to support women in agriculture, via training programmes and research projects into tackling rural childcare issues (Scottish Government, 2021a). Similarly, in Canada, there has been a focus by the media on the role of women in the agriculture industry and recognising the contribution that women have always made. As mentioned in the literature review, the Canadian Government has equally invested in women-only training and programmes, such as the Farm Credit Women Entrepreneur Program (Government of Canada, 2019).

Every participant was asked about this and whether they thought the barriers that had been highlighted in the high-profile research and media reports, which, although it included islands, did not specifically focus on them, also applied to the island they lived in. The majority spoke of the barriers they had experienced as women or had observed, whether male or female. However, some participants pointed to other factors that they believed have a much greater

impact on a person's inclusion in agriculture communities and ability to fully participate in the industry. The latter will be discussed in the following subsection.

5.3.1 No barriers for women

As mentioned, some participants sought to distance themselves and their island from the narrative that gender is the key barrier to women in or entering into the agriculture industry. Instead, they focused on what they perceived to be more prominent barriers; these other factors included a person's age, which this male participant from the Shetland Islands pointed out as having a much greater influence in terms of being respected by your peers:

> *'I would think that if you were up in Shetland then all the women would be treated equally as bad as a man would be.'*
>
> *Interviewer: 'You say Shetland in particular, would you say that there is a difference in other places then?'*
>
> *'I'm not really experienced, but there wouldn't be any active discrimination against women up in, you would be judged on your merit I would think. Yup, how it should be. A young boy could be thought of as little as a young girl would be. You have to prove yourself'* (Participant #1).

The quote highlights the need to prove yourself, which is as important if you are a young boy or girl. It is your experience and your ability that will be judged by other farmers, rather than being determined by an individual's gender.

Furthermore, there was some resistance by women who felt the focus on gender was degrading, as there was a feeling that '*women had always been involved in agriculture*', which reflects the analysis in the previous chapter of this thesis. This female participant from the Inner Hebrides spoke of her experience and perception that she had not been treated any differently because of her gender and her rejection of the barriers in the industry:

> *'I've been quite vocal on that because from my own family I was never ever made to feel that in terms of the croft that I couldn't do something because I was a female. It was like you can go on the tractor, you can do this, or climb up there, you're small you get up there'* (Participant #13).

The personal experience of this female participant emphasised that she had never experienced any discrimination during her time on the holding in the Inner Hebrides and that the work was divided depending on a person's ability, rather than their gender:

> *'But anyway … so certainly as a female I was never made to feel that there wasn't any role specific, gender … I don't know the term you use but it's like something about gender roles, isn't it? It was more … it wasn't more it was totally … so you're either strong enough, or nimble enough, or adept enough to do the job. So, people were picked or asked to do things according to their ability not according to their gender. And I've found that though I guess people know my family and everything … I've found that being the only female in the fank*[5] *and maybe if a sheep runs by you or you don't catch it or anything, I've never ever felt I'm … what's the word … I'm discriminated against because I was a female. Now that's quite interesting because I've worked with people that educationally have much better qualifications than the people that they've worked in the fank with. They would patronise you'* (Participant #13).

The comparison between being '*patronised*' and working with those who have '*better qualifications*' is an interesting point. This would suggest an expectation for people who have more qualifications and are therefore better educated to treat women as equals, rather than patronise or look down upon them. However, in this participant's experience, it is those who are seemingly less qualified, i.e. those in the *fank* with her, who treat with her more respect. This could go alongside the assumption that those in rural areas do not have high qualifications and therefore have a more traditional mindset. This would be a stereotype for those in rural areas in comparison with those residing in urban settings. This raises an interesting point and connects with the benefits of being 'known' and an insider to island communities, which will be discussed further on in this chapter.

There was also a rejection of what is seen to be a mainland narrative about the barriers faced by women in the agriculture industry. This male participant cites examples on his own island, the Shetland Islands, of prominent women in the industry who in his mind show the lack of barriers in place:

[5] Fank: Scottish word for hill.

'South seems quite different, but I think it depends on where you're at. I mean I've met various different female farmers, one farm that … it had three daughters and they all wanted to get into it but because the older two wanted to … they got the farm but the youngest one she went into farming but because there wasn't room for her on her farm she was working at a SAC [Scottish Agricultural College] college farm so I've seen … I've never quite seen the barriers that have always been reported.'

Interviewer: 'So, in your experiences, do you think these organisations have been welcoming to both men and women in the same way?'

'Oh yeah, I would feel so, there is the manageress of the abattoir and there's all these various lasses that come and help like on a sale day at the marts. And there is never kind of a stigma, I wouldn't say there's such a stigma, of "oh she's a woman so she can't do it", there's even a woman director of SLMG [Shetland Livestock Marketing Group], there is the manageress of the abattoir, there's plenty of role models or folk to look up to, to say "well look she's a woman and she's in a high position and she's worked hard". I say this in a very positive way, but the men just treat her as one of their own. I mean, there's no stigma of "oh she's a lass" or "she's a wife". They're no in their own group, it's all one team, one effort. So no, I could have never really found any issue with folk not thinking that women can't do the job because you can find plenty of men who can't do the job. So, in some ways, whoever's wanting to do it already has that kind of bit more respect than others. Because, like, if you see someone's trying, then that's the main thing (Participant #5).

'*South*' is a common way for islanders in the Shetland Islands to refer to mainland Scotland; as a native I can be certain that I have used this phrase myself on many occasions, highlighting the extreme peripheral nature of the islands. The participant here is keen to separate the Shetland perception from that of the mainland, as they perceive the barriers to be very different from those reported in mainstream media outlets and existing research. This participant also points to the 'exceptional' women in this case, by giving examples of women who are seen as leaders in the local agriculture community (Shortall *et al.*, 2020).

Interestingly, there was more emphasis by the Scottish island participants to distance themselves from this 'mainland narrative' than their Canadian counterparts. This would connect to King's (2009, p.57) critique of 'islandness', where:

> ‘the key characteristics of which are usually listed as smallness, a strong sense of local or island culture and identity (typically implying some tension with a larger “mainland”), peripherality, and a sense of being bounded by water’.

However, this would suggest that islanders are suffering from ‘isolation and inward-lookingness, whereas many islanders are very outward-looking, by their very nature as islanders’. Therefore, the ‘islandness’ perception of having a traditional mindset is viewed as patronising and as a shallow analysis to island residents. This attitude of being closed-minded and unwelcoming to women in agriculture is exactly the opposite of what this participant and the others mentioned in this subsection are trying to convey: that women have had a historical involvement in the industry, and by highlighting examples of ‘exceptional women’, they are using this as evidence and arguing that although they acknowledge that women face barriers on the mainland, which is the tension to which King (2009) refers, women are not subject to the same negative experience on the islands; that instead, those on the islands are outward-looking and more progressive than their mainland counterparts. However, by using examples of women who have worked hard and the very few which are in leadership positions proves the exact opposite and is in line with the ‘exceptional woman’ phenomenon; that women still must prove themselves to be taken seriously in the industry and work harder, as they are not seen as the norm (Shortall *et al.*, 2017, 2020). This reflects analysis in the previous chapter, where although women were recognised as contributing to the croft work historically, they were not seen to be the leaders and were only allowed to lead in the absence of men (Abrams, 2005).

In comparison, in the Canadian participants’ group, there was only one participant, a male farmer from Newfoundland, who mentioned that women did not, in his opinion, face any cultural barriers in the industry. The lack of women in the industry was more because of physical barriers they experienced due to their genetic makeup, which impacted on their ability to carry out certain farming tasks:

> *‘There is a lot of things that I can do that somebody smaller can’t do right so I can see where some of that isn’t just … isn’t just a perceived concept, it’s just I can lift more than twice my body weight … trying to get a female to lift twice her body weight … you don’t find many girls that can do that. It’s more her genetic makeup than it is … there are so many tools out there now that you don’t need to swing a pick or shovel, or an axe*

anymore, there is a machine to do it right so I would say it's going to change rather quickly' (Participant #2).

This would again link with the mechanisation of farms, which could have theoretically reduced the gap between the labour carried out by men and women. But, as already mentioned in the previous chapter, the 'masculination' of machinery has meant there is a further distance between the genders. The work still remains gendered despite, as this participant mentions, the potential for physical barriers to women to be eliminated due to machinery.

A smaller proportion of people in the Canadian Atlantic islands in this sample stated that there were no barriers faced by women. This could be for several reasons, including that there has been a well-publicised report by the Scottish Government in recent times that has been extensively reported on in the national press and local media, raising the profile of the issue whilst also sparking debates and strong feelings on the subject from both sides. Additionally, the Canadian sample size was much smaller than the number of Scottish participants. The explanation for this was discussed in Chapter 3, which may have meant those who held views that women did not experience any barriers were not caught in the sample. To confirm this viewpoint, secondary literature can be used to highlight that the public's view is that women do not face any barriers on Prince Edward Island. This was reported in a survey that was conducted by the Prince Edward Island agriculture and fisheries department in 2020, where a key finding was that:

> 'The public perception of the extent of gender-based barriers does not align with the lived realities of women which asked about public opinion regarding women in those sectors' (Government of Prince Edward Island, 2020, p.6).

The statistics showed that only one-third of the public believed that there were any barriers to women entering or going into the industry, whereas half of the respondents stated that they had either experienced or had been witness to women being subject to gender biases. This would highlight that the majority of the public in Prince Edward Island would also hold the view that there is a lack of barriers for women going into the industry.

5.3.2 Evident barriers

Whilst it was key to recognise those who did not believe that there are existing barriers for women in the industry, there is a very evident theme and the majority of all those interviewed

stated that in their view and experience, barriers do exist and people are treated differently because of their gender in the agriculture industry on the islands. Although it has already been mentioned that there was a denial by some of the existence of the barriers, there were also clear cases of discrimination towards women. For instance, this long-time female crofter from the Outer Hebrides assertively stated this when asked if she thought that barriers existed in their local community:

> *'Undoubtedly, I think these things are with us for a while still, but I think they're getting less. Your question was do you think they exist, and I have to say yes, I do think they exist but if I compare with where we are today with where … the answer that I would have given to that 30 years ago there's no comparison'* (Participant #18).

The comparison of the past and the present is interesting: these differences were addressed to some extent in the previous chapter, which examined how in the past there were undoubtedly barriers for women in the industry; for instance, social practices and expectations of women having to look after both the holding and the household, usually whilst their partner was away working off-farm. The previous chapter also discussed barriers that were evident in the more recent past; for example, participants spoke of their experiences in previous decades, such as the 1970s and 1980s, where there was also great social change in terms of women's rights occurring within societies themselves. However, as argued by Azima and Mundler (2022), there should be caution regarding this illusion of progression of women, that percentage increases of women in agriculture should not override the absolute number of women who own or manage landholdings, as this remains minimal.

A clear theme that was expressed throughout the interviews was that there had been some progression over the past few decades when compared with much further back in time for women in the industry. This female participant from the Inner Hebrides in Scotland highlighted how the family croft and the expectation placed upon children who inherit it have also changed, alongside society:

> *'Oh definitely! Definitely! I think it probably … one of the big things that has changed in that time is the kind of expectation that the eldest male, even though he might have been living in Glasgow, London, wherever, all his life would come and take over that croft, that doesn't happen, it just doesn't happen, for the most part, it doesn't happen*

so I think if there is … I think … family structures have changed. The socioeconomics of crofting communities have changed' (Participant #18).

Another male participant from Orkney spoke of how over time they had witnessed a change in the number of women working in the industry and essentially being visible:

'Even ten years ago, we have farmers in Orkney, ladies I can think of on a few farms where the lady of the house is the farmer and the husband maybe works away, or whatever. But actually, having young ladies employed as farm hands, and I can think of a couple of ones like that now, yeah that didn't exist ten years ago I don't think. I can't think … if there was then I apologise if I'm wrong with that but it's certainly more common … mark my words I think it will become common, I really do' (Participant #10).

These broader changes in society, in terms of women's work, have also impacted on the agriculture industry. For example, it is not only more common to see women running farms but also working in other roles, as described by this female Canadian participant from Prince Edward Island:

'There are female lenders at the bank, there are agronomists. Like the female has entered every area. You know all the agriculture areas so, and like I, the mindset of my parents and Tom's mother, my mother, all of the farm women, were stay-at-home farmers' wives. And so now, now the people at the desk you know when you walk into a dealership, they've come from the time frame when both men and women worked and both changed the diaper, both were responsible for childcare, so society has changed a lot from the early 80s to now. So, in that respect, it has made, there has been tremendous progress, there are women in all kinds of fields and occupations and hold positions' (Participant #28).

This quote highlights how through the feminist movements in the previous decades there has been a progression in other fields of the agriculture industry, not only farming itself. Therefore, the current generation of bankers, agronomists and salespeople have witnessed all genders being farmers, not only men. The participant is highlighting here that this normalisation of women in these roles and essentially in positions of power and influence would therefore reduce barriers, such as banks being difficult when dealing with women, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, it also became clear throughout the analysis that despite these initial changes

and progression for women in the industry, there remain barriers in the islands. This is in line with existing literature, where despite the women's liberation movement and the various waves of feminism that followed, the progression for women in the agriculture industry did not materialise to the same extent (Shortall and Adesugba, 2020; Alston *et al.*, 2018).

This subsection has discussed the results from those who held the view that women did not face the barriers that have been documented and recounted in academic literature and the media. Overall, this perspective was more prominent in the Scottish interviews than the Canadian ones. As already highlighted, there was a smaller sample size due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which created difficulties in recruiting participants. The need to distance from what some islanders described as being mainland narratives was interesting and connected to 'islandness' in island studies. The following sections will now go on to depict the results and outputs from those who did believe that there were barriers existing for women in the agriculture industry.

5.4 Succession

Whilst there may be a perception of increased equality, as discussed in the previous subsection, the statistics do not bear it out. From 2018 to 2021, there has only been a 2% increase in the number of female owner occupiers in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2018, 2021a). In Canada, there was a similar increase of only 2.8% of women farm operators from 2016 to 2021 (Aclan and Chen, 2021). Land access and patrilineal land inheritance practice is widely cited in the literature as a key barrier for women (Dunne *et al.*, 2021; Shortall *et al.*, 2017). Yet, even with this awareness, traditional practices continue and the reasons why will now be discussed in the islands' context.

Succession is often seen as a controversial subject in farming and crofting communities. This is mostly due to emotional and family dynamics reasons, as inheritance is always seen to be a sensitive issue. When there is an emotional attachment to the land due to family traditions and history, it can heighten what can already be seen as an emotive topic. In Scotland, to try and combat this issue, there have been campaigns and encouragement from farming organisations and media for farmers to plan and write their wills (Cooper, 2015; Farm Advisory Service, 2022a). With only 50% of farmers in Scotland having succession plans in place, in 2021 the Scottish Government made funds available up to £1,000 for each farmer to put towards getting advice and the legal costs associated with planning and making a will (Farm Advisory Service, 2022b). This is to ensure that what can be difficult conversations are had before the landowner dies and no will or succession plans are in place. Furthermore, succession can also create

tensions within families, especially when there is a crisis within the family unit. This female participant from the Orkney Islands in Scotland spoke of how a divorce is putting strain on their partner's family farm, which is threatening their future ability to farm:

> *'My partner has a farm and we hope to … he's currently got family problems so it's all a bit of a mess but he hopes to maybe rent some land and we have a few sheep of our own but hopefully get more and start up … he's kind of got family problems with his father so it's kind of wrecked the family farm, it is on pins at the moment because there's a divorce happening. So, we're planning on maybe trying to start again'* (Participant #9).

Having to '*start again*' can be costly as farmland is expensive; therefore, disruption to the succession plan due to family dynamics can also hinder the progression or future careers for farmers. This is especially true for young people who want to enter the industry.

In the previous chapter, issues regarding succession for women, in the context of the past, were discussed. In recent Scottish research, land access was highlighted as the key barrier for women in the agriculture industry (Shortall *et al.*, 2017), showing that although there has been progression in many spheres of the industry, there remain barriers in place for women. This was evident in the research, where many of the participants had faced issues in their career in terms of accessing land due to patriarchal structures, which resulted in land being passed to the eldest son in the family, rather than the person who might be most suited or interested in the holding. This female participant from the Outer Hebrides provided an example of how this impacted on crofts in the Scottish islands, of landholdings going to ruin or not being worked due to the person inheriting it not being interested, threatening crofting structures. She did so by using an example of her grandfather leaving her uncle one of the crofts:

> *'So, the youngest son was left the croft as he was the only one that's still at home … actually, in hindsight, he never did anything with it [the inherited croft], and it just went to kind of rack and ruin, which is a shame'* (Participant #23).

The same participant went on to discuss how lessons are not always learned from history, as a similar situation arose of the land and croft being passed by her father to the eldest son, her brother, who was not interested:

> *'So, kind of funny, I hadn't really thought about it, but you know, I was, I'm one of three, and I was the girl with two brothers. Neither of which are interested in the croft but then my dad still gave the croft to one of my brothers, where there's no interest in it. I'm guessing it's just very traditional'* (Participant #23).

History is repeating itself here with the croft going to men who are not interested in working the land. The croft then goes to waste and either family members have to buy it, or it lies derelict for many years. This would have negative repercussions, such as an increase of debt for the holding and pushing back improvement to the land. It also demonstrates the depth of the embedded patrilineal land succession structures in island communities, to the extent that land is being passed to those who are do not manage it appropriately, rather than to a more capable woman.

Throughout the interviews, there was evidence of a change occurring, with it being stated that women are more likely to be inheriting land if they are interested in it. Interestingly, those who have children stated that they would be happy to give the holding to either their son or daughter. For example, the same female participant as above said:

> *'But I would like to think that, and certainly, I've got a son and daughter and I don't know, if Bethan [her daughter] wants the croft then we will probably give half, we've got a number of crofts so maybe some will go to my son and some to the daughter. You know they should have equal, well, being a woman, so you know. It shouldn't just go to the son, it should be, you know that everything is split equally because they're our children'* (Participant #23).

This shows the change of attitude over three generations, the interviewee's grandfather and father had previously just given land to the sons instead of the person who was most interested and suited. This had a detrimental impact on the land and the use of the croft was not at its full potential, therefore damaging the local crofting community.

This was a widespread view held by other participants, including this female interviewee from Orkney Islands, speaking of the dangers when the land is left to an unwilling party:

> *'I always think there's no point in just passing it down to the eldest son if they're not interested because it's just going to go to wreck. Whereas if it's somebody that's*

interested and keen and enthusiastic then that's where they should be focusing' (Participant #8).

It is not only the land that can fall to its detriment; this female participant from the Outer Hebrides also highlighted the impacts on the person who inherits land and feels it is outside their capabilities:

'I think that's what leads to … if you stick with the stereotypes and what not you end up with underutilised land or misuse. I don't know, I could be talking absolute rubbish but is it any wonder we end up with high suicide rates amongst farmers whenever people maybe inherit something that not really that bothered about or not interested in, it's not their passion' (Participant #20).

A recent study of over 15,000 farming people in England and Wales highlighted how over a third were possibly or probably depressed (Royal Agriculture Benevolent Institution, 2021). Male farmer mental health is a concerning and multifaceted issue, which includes masculine identity and the sense of self of farmers (Hammersley *et al.*, 2022). Although there is currently no evidence of the association between male farmers feeling pressured to take on the land and then developing mental health issues, this is an interesting point made by the participant and one that would merit future research, to further highlight the importance of the landholdings being passed on to someone who is both keen and has the ability, which would prevent them being a burden on someone, which then impacts on their mental health and well-being.

There remain barriers for women in the Canadian islands, as highlighted by this female participant from Prince Edward Island:

'I talk to lots of women nowadays who say I would have liked to have been a farmer, but you know my brother's a farmer, so it wasn't really an option for me' (Participant #25).

This situation occurred for one of the other female participants from Prince Edward Island:

'So, in my own situation, I was married at 19 and I had three younger brothers and it was unknown if they would enter the farm or not. My husband and I felt that if we joined

my father's farm at that point in time, that whatever we did, even if successful, with three boys my brothers would not leave' (Participant #28).

This participant is referring to the fact that she did not feel that she and her husband would keep a secure part of the business if they entered into their family's farm business, as they knew her brothers would be given priority over them, as she was a woman. Therefore, she did not see it as a viable or long-term option for her and her husband, so they decided to set up their own farm business, separate to their families' farms. Later in the interview, this participant revealed that none of her brothers entered the family farm, yet her and her husband's farm is now worth over $1 million.

It is not only generational succession that can be a barrier to women gaining access to the land. One female participant from the Outer Hebrides stated that she believed she was not offered any more land in her area because she is a woman, as over the years she has put advertisements for land in the local paper multiple times, but has not received any offers of crofts or holdings. She compared her situation with that of her brother, who does not have as much experience of crofting, yet is consistently offered land in the next village:

'I kind of wonder, if we put my husband's name on it, would we get, we did put both our names, so we did like Edith and Terry Smith or Terry and Edith Smith I can't remember what we wrote, but you do wonder, like if we put just his name, would it be. But he's not the crofter, I'm the crofter. You know I'm the core tenant and I'm on the grazing committee and all that kind of stuff and I'm the grazing clerk so I'm pretty well connected to people. I do people's forms for them, not a lot to hand in stuff like that, but we still don't get offered crofts.… my brother gets offered way more croft land than I would get offered and he hasn't, he does have sheep now, but he hasn't crofted for half as long as I have. And he gets offered way more than I would' (Participant #19).

This highlights another issue of land succession, that the local community itself can impact on progression, as current landowners may demonstrate an unconscious bias towards existing men farmers by giving them preference over what may be a more capable woman farmer. It is also an example of structural occupational closure, where the embedded structures of the farming community and the expectations of men inheriting the farm prevent women from gaining access to land, therefore preventing women from either entering into or advancing in the agriculture industry (Shortall *et al.*, 2020). This issue would be more pronounced in island communities,

due to the small populations and the intertwining of gender and island space (Karides, 2017, 2020), as those in island communities would also know who the applicants were and would prejudge them as to whether to give them land, including identifying their gender, which would create the unconscious bias illustrated in the quote above.

This leads into the following section, which considers how the women participants had been treated and the perception of some of the men participants who had witnessed women being treated unfairly due to their gender; that essentially, even when women farmers ran successful businesses, they were still reduced to being 'only' women.

5.5 Women are women

Throughout the analysis, a consistent theme which emerged across both sides of the Atlantic was that despite some wider social progression, women were still seen as women. The meaning of that phrase is when people cannot see past a person's visible gender and make stereotypical assumptions and judgements based upon pre-conceived ideals and bias. In this context, women farmers were not seen to be capable to complete agriculture tasks as well as men, due to it being seen as a masculine occupation.

There were instances of how as children they were treated differently, or the same until the expectations of inheriting the farm became all too clear once a son was born. This was evident from this female interviewee's experience on Prince Edward Island:

> *'Being a daughter, so this will touch on one of the first things that, that is a barrier to a girl. If there are sons, generally they have the opportunity to farm at the family farm whereas the daughter is expected to marry and move away'* (Participant #28).

This perception of women having to pursue other avenues of employment, as preference is given to the male heir, is a common practice highlighted both by the interviewees and in the existing literature (Shortall *et al.*, 2017; Dunne *et al.*, 2021).

However, there were further examples regarding the treatment of women and young girls in the agriculture industry that participants also felt were barriers to themselves and others. They spoke of their current situations when those in the industry treated them differently because they were a woman. This extended to salespeople and even buyers. A woman farmer from Newfoundland Island in Canada, who is head of the farming operation, spoke of her experience:

'It's automatically they go to the man. One day, for instance, I was out, and my husband wasn't even farming with me, I was out there grading as I had an order for 50 pounds of potatoes. So, the gentleman that wanted the potatoes showed up, him and his buddy, and I'm in the warehouse grading them off, I say you guys hang on a minute now I'm almost done, your potatoes will be ready, so I picked them off the scales because I'd weighed them up. Picked them off the scales and I brought him over to him and he said he assumed, because I was a woman, I couldn't lift 50 pounds, or that there wasn't 50 pounds in the bag, he said there's not 50 pounds in that. I said, "well I can put it back on the scale if you want to". He said, "no I'll take it", so anyways he's across a pallet from me, so I just toss him the 50 pounds sack, anyway he hit the deck' (Participant #32).

The consistent undermining of women can have an impact on their confidence levels and how they feel within their local agriculture community, due to assumptions and pushback just because of their gender; again, being seen as 'only' women. This can impact the women's well-being and make them feel like they do not belong in the agriculture community (Charatsari and Istenič, 2016; Shortall *et al.*, 2017). This was underlined by a female participant from Prince Edward Island:

'I went to a trade show, and I was looking for a piece of equipment for the farm that cost 70,000 dollars, I had one of guys that works for me, we happened to be at the show together. And we stood there and talked to the salesman and I mean he didn't, I was the one who was coming to buy it and he just kept on asking the guy who works for me all the questions … it's funny because a week later that group of women met and there was another woman involved in potato production in our group and she farms with her father and she said, "oh I was at such and such a booth and I was trying to talk about this piece of equipment and this guy was completely ignoring me". So, we had the exact same experience as he … she made the point saying, "well I buy all the equipment on our farm. I will probably never go to that company ever again". So, you could be talking about a 20,000-dollar piece, a 70,000-dollar piece, or a 400,000-dollar piece, so if you know if you offend the person who is going to buy it there is a lot of other equipment dealers, you just go to the next person. Until you find someone you want to purchase from, so there is an economic consequence for people who can't accept that, perhaps

it's not always the male who is going to make the decision and sign the cheque' (Participant #25).

These two examples were from the Canadian set of interviews. These quotes highlight discriminatory practices by men towards women farmers. The detrimental impact for men and agriculture companies is also captured here, when they do not have gender bias training, as it can result in a loss of income and sales for the organisation, or an '*economic consequence*' as termed by the participant.

In the Canadian islands interviews, examples of how people were treated based on their gender in the wider agriculture industry highlighted how this creates barriers especially for women, as they are still perceived as not being lead farmers when with a man. However, progression of this was also acknowledged by this other female participant from Prince Edward Island:

'That is an issue that equipment dealers and banks and the seed salesman, even the other farmers. There was a farmer that we rented about half the land that we cropped, and this gentleman would come to the door, and he would ask if Wayne's home. I would say, "no, he's in the back field, can I help you?" Oh no! They won't even deal with you; they will only deal with the man. With the equipment dealers that were like that too. It's a lot better today, I'm 58 so I'm talking about, I'm relaying to you what it was like when I was 25, it's not like that today. Today I can go in and do any of the deals and I'm fully respected and my husband doesn't have to be there. So now, I'm not sure if that's because of the size of our farm or the amount of business they do with us. Or if they have made progress on accepting women or not, I can't really tell you. There would need to be someone who didn't have a large account or didn't provide a large amount of business there and was a woman for me to really know how far they've come' (Participant #28).

This quote provides conflicting evidence: the participant has seen progress over her career as a woman farmer, as she is now well known and has a respectable reputation in the local industry. This 'respect' that she has gained over the years is the result of her hard work; essentially, she is another example of the 'exceptional woman' ideology. In the previous subsections, which examined the perception of there not being any barriers for women, one participant said that young people or anyone entering the farming industry for the first time would need to prove themselves; a person would be judged based on their ability and not their gender, and this would

impact their ability to be seen as a respected member of the agriculture community. However, it is shown here that women have to prove themselves even more in the industry, that they have to work to build up their reputation, yet men are not expected to do the same (Shortall *et al.*, 2017, 2020).

This point is reiterated here: the same female participant from Prince Edward Island credits her success to being married to a male farmer, that the existing reputation of a man meant that they could progress, and highlights that if she were single, she would not be able to farm to the same extent that she has:

> *'I do feel that had I been a single woman I would not be where I am. Because I wouldn't have been given the opportunity. The fact that I was married to a man and that man's family had a reputation, so when you went somewhere you had the reputation of both of our fathers of paying their bills and operating their farms. That also gave us entry, especially with some of the equipment dealers, so they would tolerate me and I'm pretty sure if I had just saved them money and wanted to do the whole thing myself with employees, I would have, it would have been if not impossible, more of a bigger battle. The fact that I had a husband, and I came from a farming background, and they knew that I worked every day in the trenches. That I milked, that I calved, that I drove the tractor. That I planted, that I spread manure, I operated the harvester, that there was no job I couldn't do, they did deal with me'* (Participant #28).

This female interviewee is from Prince Edward Island in Canada. Collins' (2011) study into being a single woman on Prince Edward Island highlighted attitudes on the island which were suspicious of women who were not married and did not have children, particularly by a certain age. Therefore, not fitting into the traditional narrative in this island community meant they felt isolated and their standing in the local society was impacted. This directly reflects the women's sentiment quoted above, that she would not have been able to progress if she had not been married or had an existing reputation in the islands. Again, that she must prove herself as a woman, which is not expected of her male counterparts, as she does not mention her husband having to meet similar expectations to be accepted into the farming community. Essentially, a person's identity and their standing in the community impacts how they are viewed by their peers in the agriculture industry, which is more pronounced in an island setting. This demonstrates the importance of using an island feminism framework, which considers how embedded beliefs 'are defended as "local" or "island ways" to explain persistent inequalities

and resist progressive change' (Karides, 2017, p.35). This allows for a full understanding of how women on islands experience discriminatory practices, which can then be diminished or explained away as just being part of island life.

This was underlined by another female participant from Prince Edward Island (PEI) who spoke of how they believed that being 'known' on the island meant that she did not experience as many barriers from their local farming peers:

> *I mean PEI is pretty small and again I would say this is one of the benefits when I took over the farm is that everybody here was very familiar with our family and our company and I think they knew that I was going to be trained to fill in for my dad so I was, here I found, everywhere I go at that time, people already knew who I was. When I was working in Ontario the farming community is large but at the same time I, you know there wasn't that familiarity with your peers and I think that made it a little bit more acceptable here to be amongst male peers, you know, people already knew who I was. I often got referred to as "oh you're that girl farmer" and people knew who I was or that I was coming. That I was going to learn the ropes and run the business going into the future'* (Participant #25).

This is an example of how belonging and membership can be enacted in island communities There is also a distinction of what constitutes someone as a 'real' islander, in the context that it can depend on how long someone has lived on the island, and if they have moved away and then come back, this can even disrupt this pattern and how they are viewed in the local community. Furthermore,

> 'the community serves both as the audience to the enacted identity, as well as the judge as to whether or not that identity is granted through membership in the group' (Gibbons, 2010, p.188).

The islander membership can bring about not just a feeling of being more integrated into the community, but that which brings 'political and economic benefits' (Gibbons, 2010, p.188); this will be in terms of those who are seen in the upper hierarchy in the local communities. These benefits are clear here, in the Canadian island context: being both married and having an existing reputation reduces the barriers for women. This makes those who are not from or are not guaranteed this island membership to be seen as an 'outsider', and thus results in women

having to prove themselves more than their counterparts who may be married or already have access to that membership. This relates to the emergent island feminism theoretical perspective and the importance of considering how established feminist theories interact in island spaces (Dávalos and Zaragocín, 2022; Karides, 2016), as this is an example of how being a woman on an island and in the agriculture community means that they have to prove themselves more than a man, whilst also being under the constraints of traditional island expectations and structures; for instance, being married versus being under suspicion if you are single, and the knock-on effect this has on your economic and social standing within the community. This demonstrates the importance of this case study and how the experiences of women in the agriculture industry on an island differ from the mainland, and thus the implications this can have for the overall progression of women in the industry on islands.

This was evident for a female participant from the island of Newfoundland, who spoke of her frustration of having to prove herself as she were seen as an 'outsider' in the local farming community:

> *'Well, it's hard because there is an "us versus them, I'm an outsider and not an insider" mentality here, so a lot of people give me a bit of guff, I'm sure, it's maybe just because I'm the only woman on the entire peninsula that runs a farm or because I'm not from here, I don't know'* (Participant #31).

This 'insider' and 'outsider' mentality that is evident in island studies and communities can therefore make it harder for women to integrate into the agriculture industry (Gibbons, 2010; Baldacchino and Veenendaal, 2018; Collins, 2017). As the participant mentioned, women can face the double barriers of their gender and being an outsider, which is underscored in island communities. This again illustrates the need to examine these relationships and existing structures using an island feminism perspective, where social conditions inhibit women in an already traditionally masculine occupation, which becomes more pronounced in an island context.

This was an issue that was also evident on the Scottish islands, where again the need to work harder and push yourself as a woman was referred to by this female participant from the Orkney Islands:

> *'I feel I have to work ten times as hard as everyone else, my time is divided between the kids and home and work, you know you're pushing yourself the whole time which is*

quite sad because nobody would question … they might question one or two men in the room you know … guys but if I'd been brought up on a farm and I was a bloke I could walk into a room and nobody would query my presence, I could guarantee it. Yeah, it's sad, isn't it?' (Participant #11).

This highlights a similarity between the Scottish and Canadian Atlantic islands in this study: women feel that they must prove themselves, whereas men do not have to. Furthermore, although new entrants can be seen as an asset to the farming industry, this female participant from the Inner Hebrides spoke of the disadvantages of again her lack of experience:

'Coming from outside agriculture, in some way that gives me an advantage because I've had a fresh mindset, but at the same time, it's a disadvantage because it can make me quite naive. If I mean if I have an idea and I said, "oh would that not work?" The reaction can either be, "oh that's a very good point I never thought of that", or it could be, "what do you know, that would never work, try doing this for the last 50 years". So, but that's maybe more an outsider issue rather than a youngster issue' (Participant #16).

This highlights that this was an issue that was felt by participants in both the Scottish and Canadian Atlantic islands; that in the current day, women are still treated and judged differently compared with men. A third issue raised here is being a young person: this will be further examined in the following chapter. A further disadvantage of being seen as an 'outsider' would be missing out on informal networks. Examples of these practices were brought up in the interviews, such as by this female participant, also from the Inner Hebrides:

'There is a sort of a grapevine of, so there's no organisations, but there's a grapevine of talking done at the pier, like unofficial. There's like residents' meetings and trust meetings where a lot of the same folk will go, tends to be the older ones. But there's also like the unofficial, Chinese whispers type thing, where people when they're down at the pier they'll talk about stuff, and it's somehow fed into these things as well. So, you'll get this group of people [who] will never go to any official meetings but stuff will be discussed in that circle' (Participant #15).

This refers to the political and economic benefits people receive if they are part of the 'in-group' in communities, as seen in the Canadian examples (Gibbons, 2010; Collins, 2011). People within these groups can effectively have more of an influence than those who are on the official

committees, as in the example above. As reiterated throughout this thesis, practices of gender exclusion and discrimination can be more pronounced in island communities, due to their peripheral nature and the constant balancing act in which residents find themselves of trying to enact progressive change but retaining good relationships with their neighbours. The influence of the group at the pier demonstrates the importance of these informal networks, emphasising that 'islandness, often characterised by communality and informality' (Karides, 2017, p.35) is evident in this example.

Furthermore, women can miss out on training and other opportunities if they are not part of these informal networks, as referred to by this female participant from the Shetland Islands:

> *'I would guess that women do have the same access in a sense, but it's maybe not directed or geared toward them. It's maybe the men who get the communication and the correspondence about any training. I would guess but I don't know.'*
>
> *Interviewer: 'So, they might tell their pals and kind of hear through more informal networks?'*
>
> *'Yes, I would guess so'* (Participant #2).

This again provides evidence of women not having access to the informal networks available to them, facing double barriers if they are perceived as both an outsider and a woman. This highlights the detrimental impact on women, which is evident across both the Scottish and Canadian islands, that due to patriarchal structures existing on the islands women have more challenges to overcome than their mainland counterparts. The level of influence women may have is determined by existing structures and conditions in place in traditional island communities. This again highlights the need to examine these practices from an island feminism perspective, which aids understanding of how gender s negotiated in island spaces, and it is evident here how they can impact the progression of women in the agriculture industry (Dávalos and Zaragocín, 2022).

Although these examples highlight the detrimental impact of being an outsider, the benefits of being an insider are also evident in these small island communities. They can be harnessed by women, such as this female participant from Prince Edward Island (PEI):

> *'So yes, coming from a small community where everyone sort of knew your family, I found that everyone knew who I was before I got there. But then having to deal with, or at that time if I was dealing with people who were buying the crops we were growing in neighbouring provinces, then that was when I would sort of run into the barriers or roadblocks of being a female. Because they were always looking to talk to the male farm manager or the male salesperson … I found here on PEI where I was, it was very sort of acceptable to my peers that I was female. When I got outside of these borders and started dealing with people who didn't have any idea of who I was or where I came from or my family connection, I found it was a little bit more difficult to get people to … not take my calls but if I was trying to sell things or they were trying to buy things they would try talk to the males around me, rather than me directly'* (Participant #25).

Interestingly, coming from that smaller community and being an insider meant that women farmers and crofters were more accepted there in comparison with when they were dealing with those outside the island. This highlights the benefit of being in a community and being 'known'. This is an example of how considering community and one's place in it can determine one's experiences and ability to integrate. Furthermore, this female participant from Inner Hebrides spoke of how her worst experiences of sexism were on the mainland:

> *'The most sexism I face actually is probably from reps and salespeople. The worst place for me is Harbro on the Scottish mainland. Yeah, and it's from women'* (Participant #14).

This highlights how, by being an insider on the island, a person can gain from the economic and political advantages that have been depicted in this section. This demonstrated a key difference between the island and the mainland perspective; that although being an 'outsider' and a new entrant is a double barrier for women, if one has the existing networks and fit with the norm, this can mitigate some of the barriers typically experienced.

This section has provided an introduction to how women are treated differently due to their gender and how this can be emphasised in an island space context, demonstrating the importance of using an island feminism theoretical perspective when examining women's experiences (Rodríguez-Coss, 2020; Karides, 2017, 2020; Gaini and Pristed Nielson, 2020). How women were treated differently and by whom will be detailed in the following sections. This will include sales reps, committees, local people and agricultural groups. The following

sections will provide further examples of the structural barriers that are in place in the modern-day agriculture industry.

5.6 Resistance to change and traditional communities

In the previous chapter, the relationship between island communities being viewed as stereotypically traditional societies and how this impacted gender equality in the local agriculture industry was discussed. The Scottish islands in the past could have been seen as forward-looking and ahead of their time in terms of equality, due to women being expected to take on much of the croft work (Abrams, 2005; Thomson, 1987). However, it was equally highlighted that many of the roles were still split by gender. This section will discuss the theme of tradition and to what extent it is still apparent in the various island communities in the present day. Furthermore, the resistance to change in the agriculture community, which is aligned with holding on to traditional practices and values, will be discussed.

On the Canadian island of Newfoundland, a clear example of this and the ongoing barriers were highlighted by a female participant's story of when she had first entered farming and at the beginning of her sheep-owning journey:

> *'So, I had gotten these sheep and the sheep were going to go out onto the island. So, they were like, "how are you going to get the sheep dropped off at my house if Ted is at work?" And I was like, "how do you mean how am I going to drop my sheep off? I'm going to drop my sheep off". So, I forced myself upon them and made them bring me to the island because they were like, "well women don't go to Green Island" and I'm like, "I don't give a fuck, if my sheep are on the island I'm going, right!"'* (Participant #31).

This highlights how this woman felt she had to push to be taken seriously and be involved in the local farming community. This was also evident in the Scottish islands, where presumptions of a person's limitations were based on their gender, such as this example from this female participant from the Outer Hebrides:

> *'Everybody on the island is assuming that cause I'm a woman, I will get rid of the cows because they do need quite a bit of brute force on occasion to handle cows because they can be quite wild'* (Participant #15).

These quotes from the Canadian and Scottish islands respectively highlight traditional perspectives being associated with a woman's physical capabilities. Previously in this chapter, mechanisation was referred to as a benefit that should impact women, as they are no longer limited by their physique, since much of the physical labour associated with agriculture has broadly been replaced by machinery. However, traditional perspectives prevail in these instances.

A clear example in the Inner Hebrides in Scotland was the exclusion of women from a local farmers' dance, highlighted by this female participant:

> *'When it comes to the farmers' dinner, it's a strict no females policy. I think what happened was they did invite some female farmers to it about three years ago, and apparently, it turned into a very wild night, and they went back to male only, I don't think that they could cope with it, plus the farmers' [wives] just weren't interested in going because they just saw it as a very male-dominated area. I just think it's antiquated, I just couldn't believe it. I know when the invites came out for that they invited Tom, but they don't invite me, which again is like 'mmm'. I have commented on it, and I know it's been noted, but yes, so things like that are you know, very, very outdated and need to be sorted. But as somebody quite new to be coming back to the islands and when you are there three years, I'm probably not the one who's going to rock the boat, but I have commented and made my feelings known, but I'm not going to push it. We will come around to it, I'm sure, yeah, and Tom said the speeches were terrible and really, really boring and I'd been bored in my mind anyway so maybe ... maybe that's best, that's one element of it that really hasn't moved on'* (Participant #17).

This is very clear discrimination against women by a formal farming event: the participant knew this and has voiced her disdain for the event, yet does not feel that they can '*rock the boat*' due to recently returning to the island and wanting to maintain relationships with the other farmers. This experience highlights Baldacchino and Veenendaal's (2018, p.342) 'intimacy theory' in island studies, where islands' usually smaller populations result in making personal and professional relationships overlap. Therefore, although people in island communities can have differences and effectively not get along, they learn to either overcome these differences or be 'forced to minimise or mitigate open conflict' (Baldacchino and Veenendaal, 2018, p.342). Islanders must learn to live with one another, despite personal differences, due to the limited populations and the likelihood that they will have to continuously have some form of relationship during their time on the island (Collins, 2011). Furthermore, the comment from her

husband that she would not have enjoyed it as a woman due to '*boring speeches*' shows an attempt at justifying discriminatory practices and trying to get her to accept the ruling idea, which is, in this case, that farming is only for men on this island (Shortall *et al.*, 2020).

This highlights the much broader negativities of island living, which can lead to an environment where there is

> 'a guardedness that one can never be completely divested of without fear of negative consequences' (Spiteri, 2016, p 300).

Therefore, negative consequences also relate to a reluctance to voice strong opinions which may go against the norm or the majority on the island, to avoid disagreement with peers. As discussed by Baldacchino and Veenendaal (2018, p. 343),

> 'Strong pressures to avoid disagreements, individuals from small island societies who openly voice their opposition or dissent run the risk of social exclusion and ostracism'.

This directly relates to the participant's experience of not wanting to '*rock the boat*' to avoid a disagreement, further demonstrating the difficulties of societal progression in island communities due to small population sizes and reliance on neighbours. When gender is also considered in this context, this highlights a further strain and pressure of pushing back on normative claims and the ruling idea, such as only men attending formal agriculture events, therefore further marginalising women. Again, this demonstrates the need to consider island studies through a gender lens and women in agriculture through an island lens, as this spatial element has proven throughout this chapter to add to the already pressured environment.

A clear example of a reluctance to change and for progression to occur was highlighted when the participants were asked about their experiences of agriculture organisations. This included a continued lack of women in leadership positions and a feeling of women being discouraged to join. This will now be discussed to a fuller extent the in the following section.

5.7 Agriculture organisations

The lack of women in leadership positions in agriculture organisations is recognised as a key barrier for progression in the wider global literature (Shortall *et al.*, 2017; Dunne *et al.*, 2021; Alston, 2003). As mentioned throughout this thesis, there are some who argue that they have seen some progression for women in the agriculture industry throughout their careers, even

though, as proven in the succession section of this chapter, that claim is somewhat over-inflated when the statistics are examined (Azima and Mundler, 2022). This included agriculture organisations to some extent, however in this case study, some were still seen as 'old boys' clubs', which is reflected in the existing research (Shortall *et al.*, 2017, 2020; Alston, 1998; Pini, 2002). One improvement can be found in terms of women-only groups, which have helped members gain confidence and access training. Although such groups and training have been in existence for several decades (Shortall, 1994, 1996), they have seen a resurgence in both the Canadian and the Scottish islands in recent years. In the latter context, this was following the publication of the Women in Agriculture taskforce research report in 2017, commissioned by the Scottish Government. From this report, one of the recommendations was to put forward women-only training opportunities and groups. The benefits and critical comments of such organisations will be discussed in the forthcoming and final results chapter. This will include participants' perception of their role in further breaking down the barriers for future generations of women farmers.

In terms of existing agriculture organisations, such as the National Farmers Union, some of the participants spoke of the decades in which they had witnessed and endured slow progression; how when they first joined, they were the only woman on a board, but now were pleased to report that there had been in the past several years an increase of women who had taken up such positions. For instance, this female participant from Prince Edward Island:

> *'So, the first three terms I was the sole lady, the only one. And it was an old boys' club, let me tell you … So, it's not just, you know in the breed association they let the women keep all the records and be the secretary, so it is improving. But there is an old boys' club in a lot of things'* (Participant #28).

Although this participant notes the progression this organisation in the Canadian islands has made, the comment '*let the women keep all the records and be the secretary*' would imply that although women are being let into the organisations, they are still not in positions of real power. Taking on the secretary role would reflect traditional roles women face, in terms of administration in farming households, where they are expected to do the bookkeeping (Shortall *et al.*, 2017). The very addition of women on the boards has come at a slow pace, as discussed by this female participant from Prince Edward Island:

> *'I also served on our processor's board. We have a co-op which produces 95% of the milk on the island and I served two terms on that. I was the only lady on that board and now there are three or four. After I had finished my term, they made it a mandate to seek out some women. They wanted at least one if not two or three so that they would have a different perspective. So that has very slowly improved and that is the way to go. Because I speak with the ladies who are on the board now, who was the second lady on the board who came on last year, she's an executive and she says a lot of the challenges that I had are challenged, but there are three women on that board now out of nine. So, things are improving'* (Participant #28).

Although this participant states that things are improving, it remains that on that board, two-thirds are still men with only a third being women. This again highlights how progression of women in agriculture is over-inflated, as the statistics tell a very different story. The attitudes and variations between these organisations were reflected in the Scottish context, by this female participant from the Inner Hebrides:

> *'On Skye, they're, perhaps, perhaps a bit more democratic, so that the FAS [Farm Advisory Service] are definitely quite democratic and the NFUS [National Farmers Union Scotland] are ... definitely the whole organisation that were sexist and but locally I'd say on Skye they weren't. You know they just wanted you for your knowledge not, nothing else. But yeah, the NFUS overall are still pretty ... neanderthal. They just sent a letter recently to people saying, about membership, and it said we've got a new family membership, and please extend this to your wives and daughters. Really? And that was just two months ago that they sent this out. So, in their heads thinking all farmers are men, which is really quite amazing'* (Participant #14).

This critique of the NFUS is not a new issue. At the time of writing, there remain no female directors in the organisation and there has never been a female elected president of the organisation, which represents Scottish farmers on a national level. In 2021, two women were elected as regional chairs; this now means there are two women out of 24 directors, only 8%, on the executive committee of the National Farmers Union Scotland (Davidson, 2021; NFUS, 2022). This highlights a continued disparity between the organisations and women farmers. A further example of this was demonstrated by a female participant from the Orkney Islands who had this experience at an NFUS meeting:

'It was one of our local hotels and the chairs were arranged in the room so there was the walkway up the middle of them and I sat on one side and it's always quite good to sit in the second or third row, that's quite a safe place to sit and then all these farmers were coming in, all men, and they kind of looked a bit … you could see them [thinking], "ah-hah, who's she", and then they went and sat on the other side of the room and then the other side of the room was full. But that was okay because they moved the chairs across. [Laughter] I thought goodness this is … so there was me and the only other woman in the room was … I forget her name now, but she was taking the minutes … So that was my introduction to the NFUS" (Participant #7).

This highlighted, again, the suspicion with which women can be met when attending male-dominated spaces and meetings. A key barrier for women attending agriculture groups and training is because they feel uncomfortable or unwelcome; this example of a women being met with animosity further demonstrates how this case study results resonates with the existing literature (Shortall *et al.*, 2017; Dunne *et al.*, 2021). Such difficulties for women to gain access to these boards are acknowledged, even if the participant themselves has not personally experienced any barriers, like this female participant from the Inner Hebrides:

'I mean I don't … it's one of these things, I personally have never felt unwelcome anywhere but I don't know whether it's because I'm a bit oblivious and maybe I have been unwelcome and I haven't noticed, or whether actually just because people are like … with being younger maybe it's easier to get into these committees because people are always keen to see young people so maybe if I'd been … if I was 50 years older than I am now would it be as easy to get into those organisations? I mean I can't imagine it would be harder but maybe you'd be more self-conscious. Personally, I've never really had a problem at all. But that's not to say I don't know of other women on Skye that have had problems. I'm not trying to pretend it doesn't exist but from my personal take, no not at all' (Participant #12).

The reasons for this in the Scottish context include childcare and traditional expectations of women (Dunn *et al.*, 2021). For instance, as highlighted by this female participant from the Inner Hebrides, meeting times are scheduled during times when people must look after their children, therefore preventing people from attending:

'I've not really noticed the difference, again, between the way I was welcomed onto a committee and any fellow male committee members, to be honest. And I'm maybe in the

lucky position where I can be more flexible with attending meetings than many women who have children, which ties them up quite a bit with certain meeting times' (Participant #16).

In the previous chapter, it was discussed how the expectations of women to take on most of the care work prevented them from attending or being fully realised as the leader on the holding. This barrier will be expanded upon in the following section, which specifically examines how a lack of childcare availability and societal expectations regarding care work continue to hinder women's progression.

As demonstrated, in the interviews it was clear that even with the ongoing progression, there are continued barriers for women in mainstream farming organisations. As well as feeling unwelcome or being met with hostility, participants also spoke of the difficulty when women are only asked to be on committees purely to satisfy equality mandates. As this further undermines a woman's position and would impact the respect of their peers if it is simply implied that they are there as a gesture of tokenism rather than on the committee based on merit. This was highlighted by one female participant from Prince Edward Island:

'One of [those] women said she was recently asked to sit on the dairy board, the milk marketing board, because they needed a female on their board. And she was quite offended by that and said no, because they if they had said you're a dairy farmer, you know you are experienced, we would like you to be on the board. They approached her like, "we need a female on the board and think you'd be good for that" and she, so yes, I think they were good intentioned, well-intentioned but the approach was very off. So, she said no right away because she didn't want to be on the board just because she was as a female' (Participant #25).

This demonstrates sexism at play here and again that women are being viewed as women. The very approach of how people get asked is important; that although the 'intentions' as referred to by the participant, in this case, may be in line with expectations of including women on boards, if they are delivered in a demeaning manner, this could effectively further alienate people – women – from wanting to join, if women are made to feel like a tick-box exercise instead of being asked to participate because of their expertise or valuable experience in the subject. The hope of participants was expressed that one day women will simply be wanted because of their expertise and experience, as described by the same female participant as above:

> *'It's the approach which the board are taking. Saying well, oh well if the diversity, inclusion, and gender are like well we need these people on our board then I would, I would hope the board would someday come and ask the female to be on the board because they have all the right attributes of experience and education. But we are not, we're not there yet. We are getting there; it's getting better but it's still a long way to go'* (Participant #25).

This progression, to be asked to be on a committee or board simply because of merit, is one which the participants all were keen to strive towards. Some felt that this was shifting in perspective. People were recognising the merits and skills women can bring to committee roles. However, this is impacted when women are approached with the wrong attitude and made to feel like part of a tick-box exercise and only as a woman. The examples above are from the Canadian context, but it has recently been highlighted in Scottish research that this act of tokenism is not seen as a productive tool by which to increase women's participation on boards. It can create resentment in organisations, effectively increasing the divisions (Findlay *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, it acts as interactional occupational closure, where through feeling that they are only seen for their gender and not their skills, women are experiencing social occupational closure through the actions of men, as shown in the example above (Shortall *et al.*, 2020).

In a previous section, the effect of being an insider or outsider in an island community and how this impacts the barriers people face in the agriculture industry was discussed. There were further examples of how being 'known' in the community can reduce the perceived barriers. In this case, being known in the community aided a female interview participant from the Outer Hebrides, who spoke of her experience of being the only woman on a board of an agriculture organisation:

> *'Amongst the group that went from Outer Hebrides, I knew them all quite well and I used to work for the Agricultural Training Board, so I used to organise training courses for crofters. When the Crofters Union was set up these were the same people that ended up getting involved in the Crofters Union because they were the people that were active in their areas already. So, I knew quite a lot of them, and they knew me as the person who came to the community hall with a lambing simulator and waited for the vet to arrive to do the course. I suppose it was just something that I accepted, you know, every*

grazing's meeting it was all men at it and actually it still is all men. I've been going to township meetings for 40-odd years, I probably didn't go when we first came here, and I've always been the woman' (Participant #22).

This highlights again how women had to prove themselves to be accepted on the board, through doing the training session, whereas there is no mention of her male colleagues having to do the same. The participant also discusses how they are still only the only woman at township meetings, despite going there for over 40 years. This calls into question the 'progression' which some cite as occurring in the industry. Even when women enter on to boards, they are met with challenges that take many years to overcome and become 'known', as described by this female Canadian participant from Prince Edward Island:

'I was there nine years before I became the chair and by the time I got to the chair, I did find it was more receptive after I had been there a very long time. But my first two or three years it was an old boy club, a bunch of old white guys farmers. It took a while for me to feel comfortable to make my views heard or known, but I got comfortable after a couple of years, it was kind of a gradual acceptance over time. I had good ideas, we could share good ideas, but it took a while, it took several years of me being there. By the time I became chair it was one of those things that, everybody knew you were part of the board, again, first woman board member, first woman chair, you know, it takes a while. I hate that designation of, you know, "oh you're the first female to do this", "the first female to do that". I was like, "can we not always point that out", and then someone pointed out to me, "well you may become a role for other young women who want to be involved in agriculture". And that really turned my mind around about doing projects like this or other projects trying to encourage females to take on more, either farm board roles or things like that. I don't mind talking to people about it and saying you know, it's tough at first but eventually, it gets more comfortable and more accepting over time' (Participant #25).

Some may argue that this highlights a slow cultural shift over time. However, when the statistics are examined, as in previous sections, it demonstrates that the overall picture of progression is minimal. Even though several 'firsts', such as the participant depicted here, have been achieved, there are still many milestones to be reached before it can be called an equitable occupation, one where women do not have to go through a 'tough' time during their initial phase on an agriculture board and instead are as valued as their male peers from the outset.

This slow pace and therefore commitment to being on a board and the time taken for this change can be very off-putting to women. This female participant spoke of her experience in the Outer Hebrides in Scotland, where the culture and traditional practices, such as expectations that people's fathers and then sons would be on the committees, made it difficult for them to be part of such organisations, leading to her resignation:

> *'I didn't feel that the board was functioning as it should, I didn't feel the governance was as it should [be], and I didn't feel that I could influence and part of the reason I can influence was because of my gender. Sadly. I wasn't taken, I was always treated with respect, and people always listened to me, but they would never have allowed me, they were talking about the vice chair, and they would never have, accepted women in that kind of position … you feel you've kind of … walked away when there's change required, but it was too, there was too much. Too much is required. I wasn't going to make the change on my own, it would need a massive coup kind of thing of about half the board changing'* (Participant #19).

This exasperation and expectation for women to have to be responsible for this change demonstrate the challenges of breaking down barriers from within organisations, especially when there are existing structural issues within the groups. This leaves women emotionally exhausted at having to fight against patriarchal structures, as seen in this example. This highlights the need for interventions and top-down support from governments to implement change.

This section has discussed how the treatment of women in existing agriculture organisations in both the Canadian and Scottish contexts results in barriers and unfavourable environments. The similarities between the areas are evident, in that both have seen minimal progression in this area, but that change is very slow due to engrained cultural norms.

5.8 Childcare

The expectations of women to be responsible for the bulk of care work for their children has been noted by sociologists and feminist researchers as a key barrier to widespread gender equality (Fagan and Rubery, 2018; European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020; Shortall and Hansda, 2020). During the analysis of the data, childcare was attributed to being a key barrier for women in agriculture in the Scottish and Canadian Atlantic islands. This included attending agriculture organisations' meetings, which is reflected in the existing literature (Budge and

Shortall, 2022; Dunne *et al*., 2021). As mentioned in the previous chapter, historically women were expected to stay at home and look after their children rather than go to such meetings. When one woman in the 65+ age bracket in the Shetland Islands in Scotland was questioned as to why her husband was never expected to look after the children whilst she attended the meeting, as she was the main crofter, it was met with stunned silence. Followed with:

> *'Well, I can't mind there being many when I was young but there were probably some folk that went but I don't know why I've never given that a thought actually. It was like it was just sort of meant to be that it was the men folk that made the decisions, or … I don't know. The women were probably busy and all without having to go to the meetings, there were children to look after and knitting to do. Just everything like that when I was young'* (Participant #6).

This highlights historic childcare expectations and the position of women in the household. Regarding the present day, there has again been a progression in this sphere; however, this was a clear theme and barrier which was repeated throughout the interviews. In terms of the interviews, not every participant had children; those who did spoke of their experiences of childcare. Those who did not have children spoke of their perceptions and observations, which will now be discussed.

In both the Scottish and the Canadian islands interviews, there was a clear recognition of the challenge of childcare for women. In a report by the Government of Prince Edward Island (2020), 50% of participants believed that 'traditionally female' tasks like childcare were a barrier faced by women in the agriculture industry. Similarly, in Scotland, the Women in Agriculture research report highlighted that the second highest barrier for women not advancing to being a farm manager was due to childcare, with 'lack of time' being the most selected answer in the online survey (Shortall *et al.*, 2017). Traditional expectations were evident during the interviews themselves, as highlighted by this female participant from the Shetland Islands:

> *'I mean, okay, most, well a lot of men are away working outside the home as well. Not all, but when they, when the wife, female partner comes home, if there's children then she's got the childcare and the making the tea so she's not so available at nights to go and do anything much. So, she's kind of between her job and her house.'*
>
> *Interviewer: 'So, would you say that domestic roles are expected of the female partner?'*

> *'I don't think, yes, she is probably expected to make the tea and get the children to bed and do the homework and that kind of thing. Which means the man can go and do something else after teatime that needs to be done'* (Participant #2).

This again feeds into the broader expectations that women still are expected to do both the childcare and the domestic duties. As this participant highlights, the wife in this instance is expected to be '*between her job and her house*' to allow her partner to continue completing tasks on the holding in the evenings. This lack of time due to domestic expectations means that they are '*not available at nights*', demonstrating women's inability to attend events and meetings. This hinders their potential to progress in agriculture organisations and attend training opportunities. This was highlighted by another woman from the Inner Hebrides in Scotland:

> *'I think probably the biggest barrier is probably once people have children that that's not something that they then can't participate either in agricultural politics or training courses and stuff like that. I think that's probably a very practical barrier'* (Participant #14).

This awareness included those who had grandchildren in this study, as summarised by this woman, who is referring to her daughter-in-law on Prince Edward Island:

> *'One of the challenges as a woman is childcare, because the milking is in the morning before any day care opens and there is milking in the evening when the day care has no pickup at that time. So that is still very much a barrier to women in agriculture because my daughter-in-law is facing it … But she, we have three grandchildren and they live next door, and that is probably the toughest part for her, of agriculture, is all the challenges around childcare and the working the hours that you have on a farm. So, I mean I help, Mike helps, we all watch the kids a bit they go to day care but it's a huge challenge for women'* (Participant #28).

The added stress in agriculture, as depicted in the quote above, is those irregular hours that are renowned in the industry; that even when there is childcare available, because of the early morning starts that occur for those in the dairy industry, for example, or even during busy periods such as lambing and calving, this childcare is needed before the traditional 8am or 9am start time of many childcare centres, which usually align with typical 9am–5pm jobs. This is an

issue in rural and agricultural communities that has been recognised by both the Scottish and Canadian Governments. The Scottish Government (2022c, p.48) report on rural and island childcare highlighted the need to provide a much more flexible approach to services, as:

> *'*in rural and island areas flexible wraparound care for school-age children is essential for parents … Many challenges faced by rural parents and providers mirror those in urban areas but are exacerbated by rural and island characteristics'.

This demonstrates the need for a more tailored approach to childcare provision compared with that in urban settings, where parents typically work more traditional hours and have a much greater choice in terms of providers. It was also recognised how childcare provision disproportionally affects women in rural areas, in terms of their ability to work, as they must typically take on low-paid, insecure work to fit around nursery and childcare provision hours (Scottish Government, 2021c). This highlights the continued gendered nature of childcare expectations in Scotland. The Government of Canada (2022a) has recently announced a $27 billion investment for early childcare provision across the nation to 'create an early learning and childcare system that is high quality, affordable, accessible and inclusive'. For Prince Edward Island, this will entail a $121.3 million investment that will create 20 new Early Years Centres, therefore opening 452 new spaces over the next two years (Government of Prince Edward Island, 2022). Although this investment and increase in childcare provision should be welcomed, a critical approach to how these spaces allow for flexible working hours will be necessary to ensure those in the agriculture industry equally benefit.

In the interviews, there was recognition that although there had been some progression for women in wider society in terms of sharing childcare, and similar ideals and values were shared by agricultural peers, because of the working practices and hours this makes it difficult for even the most progressive of farming partnerships. This was reflected by this female participant in Prince Edward Island:

> *'It is definitely a barrier to women, it's the fact that I feel society as a whole has progressed to a point where it's very shared, childcare is shared. But I feel that the dynamic within agriculture is more difficult, even if the young couple has the same values as their peers, it's more difficult to execute that with full-time farming and having small children, so it's either goes the children are in the operation all the time riding with grandad, riding with granny, feeding the cows with mommy, the playpen at the end*

of the milking parlour, in the stroller, taking grain out to the hutches, that kind of thing. Or what I see is the wife stays at the home, does the bookwork, does let's say 95% of the childcare and the housework and does some hours in the barn' (Participant #28).

The unique challenges of childcare in agriculture spaces were reflected, as this female participant also from Prince Edward Island describes the 'guilt' which women can feel and their reluctance to ask for help:

'That's part of our problem as women, that we tend not to make a fuss, we just carry on trying to get things done. To be fair, women put that on themselves, a lot of women have guilt about, "oh I want to work full-time on the farm, that means I must be out of the house at 5 o'clock in the morning", who looks after your kids at five in the morning? So, women say, "well I can't because that must be my priority". We just take that on, and we make those choices and are okay with them a lot of times because we make childcare our priority or we're reluctant to pass that off to someone else. It's tough because a lot of the barriers are barriers we create for ourselves' (Participant #26).

This blame being placed upon women themselves and being responsible links to women 'doing gender' (Shortall *et al.*, 2020), in that the wider societal expectations for women to be responsible for household tasks are expected of their gender. Women enacting this role and maintaining that issues are borne by themselves effectively dismiss the existing patriarchal structures that inhibit progression. Regarding how this is reproduced in island societies, it was highlighted by Hayfield (2020, p.115) that even in communities that are typically praised for their equal gender policies, there remain assumptions that the patriarchal family model is to be reproduced, which results in gendered expectations of childcare responsibilities, essentially that the 'sensibilities of islandness become regimes of truth in constructing gender relations'. This demonstrates the pervasiveness of how barriers and gendered expectations are furthered in island contexts and the additional constraints under which women are put in their communities.

Furthermore, in terms of being a barrier to women's progression in the agriculture industry, participants noted that many of the meetings of agriculture-related organisations, such as the NFUS, are held mainly in the evening. This is a time when most would be able to attend, especially those who have off-farm jobs during the daytime. However, as noted by a female participant in the Inner Hebrides, this results in women being unable to participate because they are still expected to stay at home with the children, similar to what occurred in the past:

> *'I can see that there's an aspect that some things are difficult to organise to be women-friendly because traditionally meetings ... the NFUS branch always has evening meetings because nobody would come during the daytime. But then the problem with that is that it means that often the women involved in the meeting, they get left looking after the children so they don't come to the meetings, so there's that aspect where I think it would be a nightmare to organise but I think for big meetings if there was a way to organise childcare so that the whole family could come, that would make it more inclusive'* (Participant #12).

The challenges that this participant mentions again relate to expectations of women to be responsible for childcare. She also highlights a potential solution to the issue. The suggestion of making larger and more important meetings more child-friendly or ensuring that there is childcare available for those attending will be further discussed in the following chapter. A critique of this suggestion would be whilst it is worthwhile having childcare provision for the main meetings, such as the Annual General Meeting, but not providing it for all gatherings, this would mean that women would still be missing out on building informal networks and relationships within the group. This is essential for them to be elected to committees and subsequent leadership positions in agriculture organisations, which is, as already mentioned, a large barrier for those in the Scottish and the two Canadian Atlantic islands.

Societal childcare expectations continue to hinder women's progression in the agriculture communities as demonstrated throughout this section; this is furthered by the added challenges of irregular hours typical in the industry. These expectations are echoed even in countries that are typically considered highly gender-equitable, such as Sweden, where male farmers typically only take 41 out of 69 days paternity leave, due to farming management practices in which they are deemed indispensable, so cannot take time off to look after their children (Eriksson and Hajdu, 2021). This highlights the extent of engrained attitudes to gendered childcare practices. Although there has been evident investment and research into these areas by both the Scottish and Canadian Governments, there remain specific island issues, due to the limited population and finite resources of childcare provision. This makes it difficult to ensure that wraparound care is both physically possible for centres with reduced staff numbers and financially viable. The barriers due to lack of childcare availability result in adding to the existing issues of a lack of women in leadership positions and their presence and ability to take up committee positions in existing organisations. These issues were then amplified due to the COVID-19 pandemic,

which saw a vast increase in both domestic and homeschooling duties during the various lockdowns in 2020 and 2021. This will now be discussed as to how it specifically impacted women in the island's communities.

5.9 COVID-19 impact

As reported by Budge and Shortall (2022a), there was a gender difference, in how people responded to the COVID-19 pandemic on the farms in Scotland, these differences were also experienced in the Scottish and Canadian Atlantic islands. It is undeniable that the pandemic hugely impacted on households across the word. This includes the widespread shift to homeworking, with offices being closed and makeshift set-ups put in place in homes. Although these were challenges faced by many, an extra impact for those on the islands included household members having to negotiate over what was already limited internet access. This issue has already been discussed in the methods chapter of this thesis, how the interviews were impacted by poor internet connections. Participants frequently dropped from the calls, had to turn their cameras off and some had to ask their family members to stop using the internet to complete the online interview. The influx of family members was common in households during the lockdowns, as those at university or who lived away from the family home returned to form bubbles with their family. This increased the domestic work and caring responsibilities in households, including homeschooling when the schools were closed, which predominately fell to women (Budge and Shortall, 2022a; Daly, 2021; Maria, 2021; Vilcu *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, the focus of this section is to discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on farming households on the islands, with a particular focus on the gender differences in caring and work responsibilities. It explores how the pandemic affected the daily lives of farmers and their families, including the challenges and opportunities that emerged. The section highlights the experiences of lead farmers, mainly men in this data, compared with the participants who were not in a leadership role, all women, and the effects of the pandemic on farmers who worked part-time on the islands. Finally, the implications of the pandemic for gender equality and the potential long-term effects on the farming industry on the islands will be discussed and how this will be discussed further in the following chapter.

A surprising theme from the data analysis was the opportunity of COVID-19 for those who were lead farmers or crofters on their holdings. It should be noted here that the islands in both Scotland and Canada could take additional steps to prevent people from entering during the various lockdowns. Therefore, this reduced the initial transmission of the virus in the island communities. This was reflected in the interviews, where the participants described feeling

'safer' than their mainland counterparts. As Budge and Shortall (2022a) found in Scotland, on the islands those who were lead farmers felt that COVID-19 had been beneficial to them; since more family members were at home this meant there were more hands available to help on the holding, as highlighted by this female lead crofter from the Outer Hebrides:

> *'Very positively, as we touched on earlier, one of my daughters and her boyfriend came back here just before lockdown last March and I had a list that long in my head of projects that I would do if I had a willing team of helpers. The weather was wonderful. As the days progressed and as lockdown continued and one lockdown led to another level of lockdown we just remained here, and everybody was working from home doing their various things and our day was planned around doing whatever work we had to do, and then continuing with the croft projects. Personally, it was just a brilliant year for growing and we did loads of maintenance'* (Participant #18).

Another female participant from the Shetland Islands highlighted how it was great to be able just to focus on her holding without distractions of outside events that she would usually attend, or even travel off to the mainland for holidays, for instance:

> *'It's been great for the farm because we've had more time about and done more jobs it's looking quite tidy; I've gotten some fencing jobs done because we've not been away because there is no chance to get away [from the island]'* (Participant #3).

This attitude of COVID-19 and the lockdowns being positive was a surprising and unforeseen result. Farmers and crofters had the ability to just focus on their holdings and were free from distractions, such as attending off-island events or other social gatherings. This also applied to those who had usually managed their holding on a part-time basis and usually worked off-farm. As with the shift to homeworking, this meant they could be more flexible; this was experienced by this male participant from the Inner Hebrides:

> *'I've been working from home for the last year which has been excellent for the croft … [referring to the lockdown] it just came at the right time as well with lambing last year'* (Participant #21).

The ability to work from home and the benefits it brought to part-time farmers was also highlighted in the Canadian interviews. As this female participant from Newfoundland

described, she would previously commute from an hour away to the farm, but during COVID-19, could then move back into her parents' home on the farm and work remotely from the landholding:

> *'When COVID hit here last year in March in Newfoundland I came out here to work. Because my parents, they're both getting older, so I came out here to help them and I've worked from home, I have lived here for a full year now, so it works really well, so I can kind of work full-time at the farm as well'* (Participant #32).

This demonstrates. in both the Scottish and Canadian Atlantic island contexts, the benefits and flexibility that homeworking brought to those who work part-time on their landholding. Furthermore, having the farm or holding brought purpose to lead farmers and crofters, as they were classed as essential workers on the islands. This meant they were not as restricted as other members of the public, who were only allowed outside for a certain amount of time during certain stages of the lockdown, whereas farmers and crofters had to attend to their livestock. Therefore, their mental health was in better shape, as highlighted by this female participant from the Orkney Islands:

> *'I think it was … you just kind of got on with it, you had to feed your animals, you had to get the land ready and such like that, so we were very lucky that way, it's not impacted on our mental health because we've been active and had plenty to occupy ourselves with'* (Participant #8).

This was combined with an unexpected rise in meat prices due to more people cooking at home and seeing the benefit of supporting local produce, as depicted by this male crofter from the Shetland Islands:

> *'But now at this stage, with the lockdown, rather as folk eating out then there would be the new generation that would actually have started to learn to cook and realise, they enjoy it, so as far as we would be concerned, both beef and lamb prices are booming and that is solely at the back of demand, within Europe as well. This year with the lead up to Brexit then it should have been flat and dismal, but as long as none of us gets it [COVID-19] with the second wave then, the longer this keeps on the better! From [the] agriculture point of view'* (Participant #1).

However, as mentioned, there was a key gender difference and it also depended upon whether the participants were lead farmers, as reflected in Budge and Shortall's (2022a) research paper. In their dataset, women who were classed as being a family member who helped (Dunne *et al.*, 2021) and played a supportive role on the landholding, there was a significant contrast in how they were affected during the various lockdowns. This was in terms of seeing them as an opportunity for increased productivity levels on the holding and the impacts of the lockdowns on their mental health. This was noted by this female participant from the Outer Hebrides, who had to close their farm diversification business due to the lockdown restrictions:

> *'I really struggled last year, my normal routine was non-existent, because our business was shut. There weren't as many people on the island and it's just that social thing, so I really struggled mentally with the whole thing because it's just like somebody pulled the rug from under your feet, those things that you normally do like see family, it was really hard. So, it probably had more of an impact on me than it did on the boys, because they just carried on doing and for them there's no difference. Because a lot of time they kind of work in isolation, anyway, working in a tractor whatever you're doing you're just on your own anyway'* (Participant #23).

This female participant recognised how she, in the supportive role on the farm, had a very different experience during the lockdowns in comparison with her husband and son, who were able to carry on with the lead farmer tasks; due to the loss of her focus, her mental health suffered.

As mentioned, despite some progression women are still largely responsible for the care and domestic work in the households. For the women on the islands who played a supportive role on the farm, their lives were altered dramatically, as there were expectations of having to take on the homeschooling of the children and the increased work of more shopping and meals to feed the increased number of people in the household. Furthermore, as described by this female participant from the Orkney Islands, the shift to homeworking meant their husband also expected them to take on the homeschooling and contribute more to the holding since they were at home:

> *'I keep arguing to Edward that his life has carried on pretty much as normal, whereas mine changed because I took on the homeschooling, and because I was home, he was able to go out and do far more than what he would have been otherwise just by himself,*

whereas I was home and just doing the kids. My job changed but the farm didn't really change, it carried on as normal … It coincided with the start of lambing, I was doing IACS forms from home, trying to homeschool, and Edward would say, "keep an eye on those ewes, they're going to lamb today". It was probably the most involved I've ever been because I was at home because of lockdown.'

Interviewer: 'And how did you find that having to juggle all those different roles?'

'Really hard. [Laughter] Really hard. I would have to leave a call or a Teams meeting to run out and catch a ewe so the computer looked out onto the lambing park and the kids would come in and say that ewe is lambing, so I'd have to leave the call and go and … the kids are too small to handle that themselves. My husband does lots of off-farm work, he works at the mart, and so he's quite often not home, so we muddled along is how you can describe that' (Participant #11).

These pressures of having to take on the homeschooling and other 'invisible labour' of the household meant tensions and feelings of frustration built up during the lockdowns. The regression of women's standing in the household was therefore evident on the islands, reaffirming the patriarchal structures on the islands.

This was a similar situation in both the Scottish and the Canadian Atlantic islands, where women also reported experiencing regression in their households due to COVID-19, such as this female participant from Prince Edward Island:

'During the pandemic one of the women in our group, she was a co-partner with her husband in their business, their farm, and when schools closed here last Spring, she has four kids, so she said all of a sudden she couldn't do her farm chores because she was the one who was expected to the homeschooling, feed the kids, feed her husband, so all of a sudden she was cooking for two but then she was cooking for six. Her farm chores had to go to her husband because she had to take on the mother role, the schoolteacher role, the cook role, the cleaning role and so it automatically went to her. And she said one day, like really frustrated, "I just wish for once my husband would offer to do lunch once for all of us so that I could do my chicken work"' (Participant #25).

This reflects similar frustrations that were experienced by the participant above; that women were expected to take on the invisible labour and homeschooling work that was a result of COVID-19. In this example, even when the participant was a co-partner with her husband in the farm business, she was still expected to take on multiple roles of cook, mother and schoolteacher. This occurred to the extent that, rather than her husband sharing the increased work with her, he took over her farm work instead. This is a clear example of regression within the household and the engrained traditional expectations of women to take on the caring roles, even when the women in the example would evidently prefer to share the farm work and domestic roles, rather than just having to be in the private sphere of the household. This demonstrates the fragility of farm women's position on the holding; that the minimal progression that may have occurred can be shattered.

One male respondent referred to an article that was published in *The Guardian* in Prince Edward Island in terms of how women had been impacted:

> *'There was an article, if you Google* The Guardian *PEI, they did a special article on women in agriculture in PEI and Atlantic Canada and I believe that was the same as the women they spoke to and interviewed. I think one described it as almost a retrogression, of you, know things that they thought they had kind of moved behind but then they had all these responsibilities on a farm then plus kids'* (Participant #24).

This highlights a similar experience of farm women in both island contexts, in terms of their domestic duties and position on the holding. When asked why women had largely been impacted by this, references to general society were included by this male participant from Prince Edward Island:

> *'I think that a lot of it is because that sort of retrogression and duties falling back to women [is] because we do exist in a very sort of patriarchal society. There is misogyny big time across society. I think the structure of farming, as I mentioned earlier, on face value maybe see changes, that structure was not created overnight … I think that's really part of it I think, you know in some ways to see the silver lining, if enough, you know proactive work in the gender, diversity, inclusion space occurs after COVID, what COVID might show, might have done is shone a light on some of that very ingrained you know, sort of patriarchal practices that came to surface during COVID'* (Participant #24).

This man depicts that these barriers and practices that were evident during COVID-19 can hopefully also be used as a method to move forward, and how these systems may respond to shocks. This will be something that will have to be monitored over the next few years as the world shifts into a post-COVID-19 society and what that will mean for women both in and out of the agriculture community. In an island context, the more pronounced gender equality issues will have to be considered, coupled with the recorded regression of women in the agriculture industry. This will be examined further in the following chapter.

A potential positive came from COVID-19 and relates to a particular barrier that women face, namely not attending meetings or committees due to having to look after children, as previously discussed. Due to the pandemic, many of these meetings were then moved online, which meant that women could attend, since they did would not have to physically travel to the meeting place and organise childcare. This was seen as an advantage for women in the agriculture industry, as it mitigated the difficulty of organising childcare (McKee and Sutherland, 2021). Furthermore, as well as this being a gender-based benefit, from an island perspective, the shift to meeting online was largely seen as a benefit for people to take part in committees and wider national organisations, as it reduced the need for costly travel to mainland-based meetings, which can be off-putting for islanders, both financially and due to the high time commitments that frequent off-island travel requires. This was highlighted by a female Inner Hebrides islander:

> *'I only really joined these committees in February 2020, so weeks before COVID come in, so I've never really been on those committees. You know, by attending meetings in person, it's always been via Zoom, so that's actually allowed me to attend the meetings, otherwise, if it was if travelling was involved, I will be at a severe disadvantage to everybody else, but that's not a gender issue, that's just geographical'* (Participant #16).

This highlights a much broader example of how the shift to online meetings means that islanders can be part of committees and give input to discussions on a regional and national level. Although this could be a long-term solution to ensure greater inclusivity for islanders and enable them to take part in these wider discussions, the infrastructure for digital access remains poor in these remote rural areas (Philip *et al.*, 2017; Council of Canadian Academies, 2021). As highlighted in the methods chapter of this thesis, there is a significant digital divide in rural areas, which was experienced both by numerous participants and the researcher. For instance,

when one participant in the Inner Hebrides was being interviewed, they had to go around all their household members, including their children, to ask them to turn off their devices that were using the internet, so that the interview could be conducted without interruption, caused by poor signal. Therefore, although the move to online meetings has opened the potential for islanders and those who live in remote rural areas to participate in groups and committees, which they would not have been able to in the past due to travel constraints and costs, the digital infrastructure in rural areas still requires extensive investment to ensure this opportunity can be capitalised on. This would allow for the reframing of events and structures and could have large benefits for remote and island communities, allowing them to have a more effective voice in national and larger organisations, ensuring a fairer representation of both islanders and women.

This section has shown both the surprising potentials and detrimental impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the islands in Scotland and Canada; how lead farmers found it useful in the context of being able to concentrate on their holdings due to the cancellation of events, having more people at home to help and the potential to join larger organisations that held meetings online, which mitigated the cost and time constraints of attending in-person meetings. However, it has also demonstrated the regression that women who were in supporting roles in the farming and crofting households experienced, and the impact the lockdowns had on their mental health. This is deeply concerning for gender equality for women in the agriculture industry on the islands; this is reflected in the literature where McKee and Sutherland (2021, p.33) go so far as to state that the pandemic 'set everything back a long way' regarding gender division in the household' in Scotland. This is especially pertinent in the island contexts; as shown throughout this thesis, embedded patriarchal structures are more difficult to challenge in small communities on islands. This is because people rely heavily on informal networks within the agriculture and crofting communities to remain economically viable and as sources of support for challenging times, such as difficult animal births. Therefore, future research will need to consider the scale of how women's regression within the household has been impacted by the pandemic, taking particular care to consider the spatial and limited population factors within island communities in both Scotland and Canada.

5.10 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how women continue to face barriers within and when entering the system of the agriculture industry in the Scottish and Canadian islands, including access to land due to traditional succession practices, women being seen as 'only' women, and childcare constraints, which are amplified in island communities. The differences between the islands

themselves regarding land quality and distance from the market highlight the varying degrees of difficulty that are associated with operating a successful agriculture business. Furthermore, the chapter demonstrates how it is key that these issues are studied from an island feminism perspective, which illustrates how experiences of women in the agriculture industry are amplified due to the island spaces in which they are situated. Finally, the impact of COVID-19 was gendered on the islands; for women who were in supportive roles on the farm, the emotional and increased domestic burden added to their already invisible labour, further affecting their mental health and resulting in what some determined, on both sides of the Atlantic, as a regression of their place in the household and therefore wider island society. The potential opportunities the pandemic has brought in terms of online meetings can only be sustained with sufficient investment in rural broadband infrastructure. The following chapter will now examine the future, what can be done to help overcome the barriers, and where future research will look to ensure a fair and equitable community for all those in the industry.

Chapter 6. Thriving (?) in the Future

6.1 Introduction

The focus of this thesis, as reiterated throughout the previous chapters, is to examine the barriers that women in the agriculture industry face and compare them across two island group contexts: the Scottish islands and two Canadian Atlantic islands. Whilst the initial two results and discussion chapters explored the historical barriers for women and how many are still evident in the present day, this chapter will look to the future and the outlook for future generations of women in the agriculture industry. This will be done firstly by examining the participants' proposals on how to break down existing barriers, namely: women-only groups, mentors, visibility of women and unconscious bias training.

The effectiveness of these initiatives will be discussed and will make up the bulk of the chapter. Women-only groups are not a new concept, but there has been a resurgence of offering women-only training in Scotland following the Women in Agriculture taskforce report, aiming to increase women's confidence in the sector (Shortall *et al.*, 2017). However, they can also be seen as contentious due to the further separation they create by having a female-only space, rather than focusing on incorporating women into mainstream organisations (Dunne *et al.*, 2021; Shortall *et al.*, 2017). The visibility of women in the sector connects to the historic and current barrier of the 'invisible women' in the industry, as women were expected to carry out supportive roles and were not viewed as the leader on the holding (Sachs, 1983; Alston, 1995; Shortall, 1992; Riley, 2009; Shortall and Adesugba, 2020; Dunne *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, making women visible will break down stereotypes associated with the industry of it still being a masculine occupation, despite women's continued contributions over the years. Unconscious bias training has been offered to agricultural firms in Scotland following the Women in Agriculture report; this is to challenge norms that are engrained to the extent that people do not realise they are enacting them in their daily life. This is especially pertinent in the agriculture industry, as discussed in the previous chapter; masculine norms are socialised since childhood, therefore undoing these unconscious biases requires an initial awareness of them, which is what the training provides.

This will be combined with current initiatives that are ongoing in the island contexts and the wider countries of Scotland and Canada, alongside existing literature, which will be critically examined. Secondly, it will be followed by a discussion of young people, as they are part of the

heart of the future. There was a perception throughout the interviews that young women were not as affected by typical barriers. Although this was seen as a positive, there was also discussion of how actions should be put in place, such as transitional support for female Young Farmers leaders to mainstream organisations, to ensure they continue to prosper in the industry. Land tenure systems will be examined in the islands and how they differ between the islands themselves, and therefore their varying potential for women's equality in agriculture. Furthermore, the importance of diversity in the agriculture industry will be addressed, including LGBTQ+ experiences; although an in-depth analysis of this was outside the scope of this thesis, it will be briefly touched upon in this chapter in line with recent literature. Finally, there is a summary of how the combination of the existing and proposed initiatives could provide a potentially more progressive future for women in the agriculture industry but require island-specific considerations to ensure effectiveness.

6.2 Breaking barriers: setting the scene

The previous chapters addressed how the existing barriers faced by women in the agriculture industry in the island contexts occurred in the past and continue to prevail in the present. The future, however, can be another story. In the previous chapter, the participants spoke of how a key issue is the engrained cultural norms that exist within the island communities, in both an agriculture context and a broader island context. These socio-cultural norms are expressed in the wider society and are then reinforced in existing structures, such as community groups and all-male local councils. This demonstrates the importance of examining these norms using an island feminism perspective, as it highlights how the islands differ from the mainland in the context of women in agriculture's experiences in this case study. The recognition of these issues has been evident, as first discussed in Chapter 2; the recent media attention and subsequent research reports in both Scotland and Canada regarding women in agriculture were catalysts for change by both bringing the issues to the forefront of the industry and challenging cultural norms. However, any equality progression in the industry should not be overstated (Azima and Mundler, 2022). The barriers, as shown in this thesis, are clear. What was also evident throughout the data analysis process was a feeling of hope and that change can occur, even if it is at a very slow pace in the island contexts. Suggestions and examples of how this change is encouraged and nurtured will be the focus of this section.

6.2.1 Women-only training and organisations

One of the outputs from the Women in Agriculture taskforce in Scotland was measures to support women's training and confidence, and a specific training programme was developed:

the Women in Agriculture Development Programme. This aimed to 'deliver training and mentoring to support women in agriculture to build their confidence, enhance their business skills, and develop their leadership abilities' (Scottish Government, 2022b, p.5). Similarly, in Canada in 2022, the Government announced an investment of $734,806 in programmes and initiatives, which seek to encourage the diversity of those in the industry (Government of Canada, 2022b). Within the existing literature, there is much evidence of women not taking up educational or training opportunities in the agriculture industry (Istenič and Charatsari, 2017; Shortall *et al.*, 2017; Dunne *et al.*, 2021; Trauger *et al.*, 2010). This is due to reasons such as traditional expectations of women to take on childcare roles and not feeling welcome, which prevents them from attending such meetings. It will now be examined whether these are experienced in the Scottish and Canadian Atlantic islands and the effectiveness of the existing schemes in the islands.

Having these programmes in place highlights a growing realisation by both governments of the need to enhance women's opportunities to access agriculture-related training. One male interview participant who works for Prince Edward Island Agricultural Department said:

> *'I think what our hopes are to identify the barriers and see if we can put some programmes in place that would help take away some of the barriers. So, that females feel a little bit comfortable volunteering at the boards, providing strong leadership because the women that we have seen who have taken a strong interest or strong stance on the boards are very, as I say very well respected'* (Participant #27).

This highlights the purpose of putting the programmes in place and again illustrates recent government structures that have developed in both Scotland and Canada dedicated to aiding women in the agriculture industry. Interestingly, the introduction of women-only groups and training were met with a mixed response by the interviewees. For instance, some believed that there should not be this separation between men and women, and could being seen as *'discriminating against men'*, as highlighted by this female crofter from the Orkney Islands in Scotland:

> *'Well yes and no, because I think though I feel more comfortable doing it, if it was a women-only thing you're against what you're trying to get away from because like men only … you don't want to be seen as being … I suppose its slightly discriminating in a way to the men because its women-only, but I think for confidence and for women to come forward to actually get the most out of it a women-only thing is beneficial to be*

honest. So … a bit mixed ideas with it, but I can see the potential for doing women-only training' (Participant #8).

Others reported that whilst they felt it was an interesting concept, that they had never experienced any discrimination and therefore did not, on a personal level, see the need for it. For instance, this female crofter on the Outer Hebrides in Scotland:

'That's an interesting one. To be honest with you it's not something I've ever considered. Certainly in our situation here, you know you're looking at a mixed site, you're looking at mixed gender and as I've said a couple of times now, I've never … even though when I was very much in the minority in a group I never felt it was something that was a disadvantage to me in terms of being able to learn or being able to share in an experience. Now you know, maybe others have thought differently and maybe they would give you a different answer to that question but no … I haven't' (Participant #18).

Or they did not see the need for women-only groups, as expressed by this female participant from the Shetland Islands:

'I cannot, no, I do not think so, I cannot see why there would be a need for that' (Participant #6).

Some participants did not see any need for such groups. They thought that although the intention behind such groups might be positive, they might further the division between men and women. It should be noted that all the quotes above are from women in different island groups. This raises an interesting question of why women want to distance themselves and choose to reject women-only groups. There is evident structural exclusion: women are not present in the mainstream organisations, which has been discussed and evidenced in the previous chapters. One explanation could be that women do not like the suggestion that they are not asserting their agency; they can attend if they wish. In the previous chapters, the strength of historic farming and crofting women on the islands was asserted by participants; similarly, in the literature it is emphasised that women in agricultural households have control of their agency and influence on decision-making (Riley, 2009). Therefore, to suggest that this is not the case and that patriarchal structures influence women would go against these sentiments. However, the reality is that women do not attend mainstream organisations or training sessions.

Reasons for this were discussed in depth in the previous chapter: these included childcare commitments, not feeling welcome and sexist attitudes, which prevent women having a reasonable chance of achieving a leadership position in these organisations. When they are in a women-only environment, this fear of loss of agency dissipates and they are able to focus on the enjoyment of participation and learning.

There was also a view that whilst women may not feel confident attending meetings, a focus should also be shone on young people, who, whatever their gender, may also not feel comfortable or confident attending or speaking up at meetings. This viewpoint was illustrated by a male crofter from the Shetland Islands in Scotland:

> *'If that's what the women wanted, if they felt embarrassed or whatever to be there along with men. But there would be plenty of the courses I've attended, there has been plenty of young boys that would have been fairly clueless before they went on the course and there would have been plenty of men that might have been even more'* (Participant #1).

This also highlighted the ability to speak up and be wrong in such groups. A common theme that became apparent during the analysis was that in women-only groups, women felt much more confident, and the general tone of the meetings was more welcoming and less judgemental. A person would not be made fun of for asking what could be perceived as a 'silly question'. Men are saying that there is a need to encourage young people to attend, again detracting from the evident gender inequality. This quote talks about '*clueless*' young boys before they attended the course. What is interesting is that nonetheless, clueless or not, boys attended the meeting. It is their space, and they are not intimidated by a lack of knowledge; instead, they choose to attend and learn. This demonstrates the embedded structures in agricultural organisations, even when men such as this participant attempts to deny them.

This was evident in the Scottish islands, where this female participant from the Inner Hebrides, who works for an agricultural training organisation, highlighted that when she held a women-only meeting, she was shocked at how many women turned up. There were women attending who she had never seen before, despite having organised several other agriculture events and meetings during her working career on the island. The newcomers made valuable contributions to the discussions. She asked the women why they did not attend other meetings:

'"Why do you not just come to the other meetings?" And it was like, "Oh no, I don't want to be there when there's … I would feel and too ashamed of my lack of knowledge or I wouldn't want to ask a question". I thought, you know, when I go to these meetings, the men don't ask questions, either because they're worried about their neighbour thinking that they don't know the answer, and at the women-only meeting there's loads of chat and loads of questions and nobody was embarrassed to ask a question' (Participant #14).

This quote reinforces the findings of other research that women are reluctant to attend mainstream, predominantly male, meetings for fear of seeming stupid or not having enough knowledge. This demonstrates the difference between men and women; when women lack the knowledge, they do not attend such meetings or training opportunities, whereas men still do. In many ways, the entire purpose of training is to gain new skills, yet a fear of judgement in small communities may accentuate the reluctance to show ignorance. This only furthers the agriculture expertise gap between women and men; women are already at a disadvantage due to typically missing out on the knowledge transfer when younger, due to the socialisation of young girls to 'de-select' themselves from farming activities (Fischer and Burton, 2014; Shortall *et al.*, 2017). The women attending found the women-only environment to be supportive and it validated the knowledge that they had, again supporting the findings of the existing literature (Dunne *et al.*, 2022; Charatsari *et al.*, 2013a; Shortall *et al.*, 2017; Trauger *et al.*, 2008; Brasier *et al.*, 2009).

A practical concern of those who felt that women-only groups were not required is that meetings would not be well attended. For instance, one female participant from the Inner Hebrides who organised agriculture training on their island as part of their job noted that they would be apprehensive of having such a meeting on their island because of the limited population and they would feel 'embarrassed' if they organised training and then not many women turned up; in comparison, if they had organised an event and invited everyone, it would generate a much higher turnout:

'I don't have an issue going to a mixed meeting but that's not to say that a women-only meeting wouldn't be good fun. The only issue I would have is in more remote areas, sometimes it's hard enough to get a decent number of people to go to any meeting so if we're restricting it further you'd have to really be sure that your topic was going to really draw in women in agriculture, because otherwise if you take a speaker … I

suppose in some ways remote stuff makes that a bit easier but like if you were taking in a speaker to talk about accounts and it was a Women in Agriculture meeting you'd want to make sure that you got 15 or 20 people to come not to make it mortifying, like "Hi thanks for coming there's three of us!"' (Participant #12).

This highlights the perceived practical implications of in-person meetings and the island issue of having an already small pool of people who would be willing and happy to attend such meetings. The literature shows that when there is a fiscal crisis or an economic downturn, gender equality falls off the table (Shortall and Marangudakis, 2022). Here, the woman organising the meetings suggests the reluctance to organise a women-only event is because there will not be enough attendees. However, it remains that women will not attend the mainstream mixed training events and organisations, or not to the same degree. This is not seen as an important issue compared with just having a full room. This may mean equality has to be considered differently in an island context, and perhaps it is easier for it to fall by the wayside. This demonstrates the importance of considering such issues within an island framework, to appreciate how achieving equality has further barriers, as it can be easier to justify exclusion and discrimination when hiding behind excuses such as having a limited populations on islands (Karides, 2017). In reality, it is an example of unconscious sexist practices against women.

However, some of the female participants acknowledged that although at first, they were apprehensive about women-only training programmes and had in the past felt that they would not be well attended or that there was no need for separation to occur, they were happy to admit that they saw the clear benefit to them once they had attended such meetings. This was highlighted by a different female crofter from the Inner Hebrides Islands in Scotland who also organises agriculture training opportunities on their island:

'I've organised quite a lot of Women in Agriculture meetings so through the Farm Advisory Service we did, that started up Women in Agriculture, they are different from Women in Agriculture Scotland, who are the ones who are sort of more centrally based, and have a big meeting twice a year, so these were local meetings and get more practical learning. When I did the first one, I suppose I thought, "Do we really need Women in Agriculture meetings?" And had the first one, and I was so surprised at the number, 42 people came along to the first one. There were people, who quite a lot of I'd never seen before, and never met because they didn't come to any of our normal meetings. So, when you hold the on-farm or on-croft meeting and quite often it's the

same faces coming along, tends to be mostly men and a few women, but mostly men. And at the Women in Agriculture meeting all these women appeared that I didn't know existed' (Participant #14).

This quote shows that gender equality is not seen as an issue, women are invisible in the industry, and the need to include them in training programmes is not evident to the organisers. There is a complete lack of awareness of the appetite to learn amongst women in agriculture, and how they feel excluded from the 'normal' meetings. This is to the extent that meetings with almost no women present are seen as 'normal' in this island context. This is an example of an embedded social hierarchy within islands that is discriminatory against women in the agriculture industry, where 'island ways' are used to mitigate critical analysis and prevent progression, in this case for women in the agriculture industry (Karides, 2017). This shows the unconscious bias of trainers, which has received less attention in the existing literature. It is another unexpected finding, specifically the unconscious bias of women trainers who organise and present agricultural training. As this was not one of the focuses for this research, a more in-depth analysis of this issue is required in future research. Furthermore, it demonstrates the case to examine this issue from an island feminism perspective, where both islandness and gender intersect to create an unconscious bias towards the real number of women who contribute and are involved in the agriculture industry on a particular island.

These findings also demonstrate that there are women in the agriculture industry who are keen and willing to take part in these meetings, but had previously felt that they could not attend for various reasons, including a lack of confidence or not feeling like they would be welcome to such meetings. This resonates with the wider existing literature, where women have reported not feeling welcome to training or meetings because of the perception that such programmes are aimed at and predominantly attended by men (Dunne *et al.*, 2021; Trauger *et al.*, 2010; Charatsari *et al.*, 2013a, b; Shortall *et al.*, 2017). This furthers the cause and the current need for women-only training in the industry, which is to provide the opportunity for women to take part in training opportunities to further their agriculture knowledge. Furthermore, unconscious bias training is needed for those who both organise and present training, as this research demonstrates a complete lack of awareness of how women in the agriculture industry are both willing and keen to learn when given the opportunity. This is especially required for those who present training in island contexts; as has been demonstrated, there is plausible evidence of how these trainers were using excuses related to the island's smaller populations to justify the

exclusion of women; that again, men were presumed to be the norm in the agriculture industry, further hampering the progression for women in the agriculture industry on the islands.

Furthermore, this same female participant felt that although the women-only groups and training were largely positive, a critical outlook was noted in terms of their long-term plausibility and the need to reach a situation where mixed gender meetings were the norm:

> *'It's needed, but I hope it's not needed in a few years' time because people will just go to every meeting, and it doesn't matter whether it's a woman in agriculture or just people agriculture. Everyone will have the confidence to go along and that makes it a better meeting too'* (Participant #14).

This participant highlights the effective goal of many of the groups: to increase the confidence of women. This need is reflected in the literature, which presents women-only groups as a double-edged sword (Shortall *et al.*, 2017; Shortall, 1996, 2016). Shortall (2016) argues this is because of the social construction of a specific space for women, whereas men do not need to signify being a 'men's group', as being male is seen as the norm in agriculture spaces. This is evident in the quote from the trainer above who refers to the '*normal meetings*' being the ones that women do not attend. This dilemma reflects a long debate in feminist and sociological studies about how best to achieve gender equality and the role of women-only events and organisations in reaching that goal. The debate is reflected in agricultural studies. Whilst women-only groups play an important role, there is a danger that they will be sidelined, and power and authority will continue to rest with mainstream farming organisations. This then can have the knock-on effect of further reducing the number of women who can be in leadership positions and diminish their influence in the wider agriculture agenda (Alston and Wilkinson, 2002; Shortall *et al.*, 2017). The question is how to achieve the cultural changes needed to ensure gender equal farming organisations. This will help to move away from the 'women are women' ideology discussed in the previous chapter.

In terms of responding to critics of women-only groups and training, there was recognition and some understanding for those who would oppose it amongst participants. However, participants discussed that although on the surface it may appear to be unfair, it is a necessity until a more level playing field arises, as highlighted by this female participant from Prince Edward Island:

> *'Until we get to that parity that's fair, and I know I can understand like when you feel like another group is getting special treatment, that is tipping the scales, but until it's equal, that other group needs that extra attention. So, I would say suck it up buttercup. [Laughter]'* (Participant #26).

This shows that participants are not seeing the mainstream exclusionary groups as unequal, rather that the groups formed to address this structural inequality are having to defend their existence. This is the case even though mainstream groups have been indicated to be seen as male spaces, yet are not expected to be called 'men's groups' as they are presumed to be the norm, demonstrating the patriarchal nature of the agricultural industry (Shortall, 2016). This highlights that although such groups could be viewed as a short-term solution, positive discrimination is required for equality to be progressed, even if it is viewed as a contentious subject (McKee and Sutherland, 2021).

In Scotland, men occasionally attended Women in Agriculture group meetings and training, as demonstrated by this female participant from the Orkney Islands:

> *'We have had the odd man at the Women in Agriculture meetings just because it's something that they're interested in as well'* (Participant #8).

In the Scottish Government's (2021a) Women in Agriculture progress report 2020–21, the Islands Consultation revealed that 50% of the respondents believed the training offered by the government, such as 'Be Your Best Self', would lead directly to more women applying for leadership positions in the industry on their island. Furthermore, the consultation highlighted that over half of those who took part in the survey had to cancel training that they were meant to take part in, mainly due to travel distances, time constraints and caring responsibilities (Scottish Government, 2021a). This demonstrates the need to consider accessibility for those in the islands, who will always face increased challenges to attend events due to distance and variable weather conditions. Caring responsibilities are a gendered issue that continues to restrict women from even participating in women-only training. There needs to be further consideration of how this can be mitigated, which is reflected in the Women in Agriculture 2020–21 progress report. This demonstrates the need to investigate these issues from an island feminism perspective, where challenges are examined through a gendered lens, such as care expectations, and an island lens, such as distance to travel, and how both these factors intersect and cause greater barriers for women in the agriculture industry on the islands.

There were similar perceptions on both sides of the Atlantic, although in Scotland there was a more critical outlook on women-only groups than in the Canadian islands. This could be related to the recent release and rollout of such groups in Scotland, and the debate the concept has generated. Prior to the 2017 Women in Agriculture report in Scotland, there was not much media attention or even public awareness of the barriers that women in the agriculture industry faced, despite decades of literature that has researched this issue, in both Scotland and the wider global North (Shortall, 1992, 1996, 2014, 2020; Alston, 1995, 2006; Dunne *et al.*, 2021; Istenič and Charatsari, 2017). It is now a matter of considerable debate in Scotland due to Government investment in measures to achieve gender equality in agriculture.

The awareness and realisation of the treatment of women was extensively discussed in the Canadian interviews, where it was highlighted by a female participant in Prince Edward Island that it was only after she joined a women's group and hearing others' stories on how they had been treated or spoken to as a woman, that she realised they had experienced similar events:

> *'It's not something that we really, talked about until now. I'm part of women's organisations or groups that make me reflect back on my career and look at some of the things that, if I had been thinking about them at the time, I probably would have said, "oh that's a roadblock to me". And now when I look back at it, I see that people had various stereotypical ideas of females' role on the farm … I'm much more aware and much more involved in trying to increase women or girls' interest in agriculture, so now I see these roadblocks more than at the time when I [was] going through them'* (Participant #25).

This highlights a perhaps unexpected benefit of the women-only groups: that the women themselves may not have realised they were facing and experiencing barriers. This demonstrates that women-only groups and organisations create supportive spaces where women can not only learn, but also share their experiences of the industry. This can lead on to positive further action, such as this participant going forward and making a conscious effort to help and encourage younger generations of girls to pursue an occupation in agriculture. The previous lack of awareness of the barriers this female participant had experienced throughout her career demonstrates that the culturally hegemonic beliefs of women in the agriculture industry are engrained into both men and women (Shortall *et al.*, 2017), similarly to the female participant in the 60+ age category from the Shetland Islands in Chapter 4, who had never

questioned why she had always been expected to take care of the children instead of attending the local agriculture meeting, despite doing more of the croft work than her husband as he worked off the holding. The participant here is demonstrating what could be argued as a newly found agency to question the norms and stereotypes she has been subjected to in the past, rather than simply unconsciously accepting them as part of her daily life.

Women-only groups and organisations have an undoubtedly important purpose in the current agriculture industry. This was both discussed and advocated for by the participants across both the Scottish and Canadian island contexts. However, from the interview data, they can also be viewed as controversial. This is due to a perception that splitting women away from mainstream organisations only furthers the divide and discriminates against men. However, it has been demonstrated how there is structural exclusion, which tends to be invisible, but when a women-only group is formed, they need to defend their existence and also defend themselves against being discriminatory. This is never expected of the mainstream 'normal' organisations or meetings. Therefore, whilst there is a potential precarious nature in having such groups, a fine balance is required to ensure that women can also have an impactful voice in mainstream farming operations (Shortall *et al.*, 2017; Alston and Wilkinson, 2002). However, women-only training and organisation opportunities can provide a safe space for those in the industry, including new entrants, to receive key agriculture education and increase their knowledge, which they would otherwise not have access to due to structural barriers and feeling uncomfortable (Dunne *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, women-only organisations and groups are key for the current-day agriculture industry, but only if they are delivered as a stepping stone for a future in which structural issues in mainstream organisations have been addressed.

6.2.2 Role models and mentors

A further theme regarding how barriers for women in the agriculture industry could be overcome that emerged from the interviews was the introduction and encouragement of women role models and mentors, especially for young girls. This was seen as necessary on both sides of the Atlantic. Woman farmer role models in the agriculture community would mean that young girls could then also picture themselves doing farm work, effectively breaking down the existing stereotype that it is only men who can farm.

On Newfoundland Island, there is an existing mentoring scheme run through the Young Farmers programme. One female participant spoke of how this organised mentoring

programme was hugely beneficial both to themselves and to those whom they mentored. It was also an enjoyable experience:

> *'I love the mentor program because I like helping other people be successful in their endeavours and if there's any way I can help I'll do it, it's like an official document that gives you limitations and there's policies to follow, so there's rules and nobody's going to overstep them, which is nice. The couple that I have got now are very respectful of my time and I really appreciate that because I'm very busy'* (Participant #33).

This highlights the positive impact of having a formal mentoring system in place. The participant spoke of how she had mentored men and women on the course. A critical point that related to the need for women-only training was that in Prince Edward Island, a female participant spoke of how although there is an existing 'farm mentor' course, very few women have signed up. This reflects the general absence of a concerted drive to provide female role models in agriculture (Shortall and Marangudakis, 2022). Therefore, she had proposed a women-only version, to encourage women to take part, following the ideology that was discussed in the previous section:

> *'We have a programme on PEI called the farm mentor… it's like a farmer trainer course, you do it for 12 months. Very few, if any, women signed up to do that programme and so I suggested they had an all-women's farm mentorship programme. And they were like, "Oh jeez, that's a really good idea, how much do you think it would cost?" I'm not sure but I mean I can help you; I know we had a farm hand here on our farm that worked with us that went through the programme, but it was government funded. I had to pay 50% of the wages, and I said, "well it would be good if we could do an all-women's group and do a 12-month programme and place those women on farms and I would be happy to have one on my farm". They are talking about trying to cost that out and see what it would cost and how much interest it could generate'* (Participant #25).

This relates to the points that have been raised in this chapter and the previous chapter regarding what is considered the norm in agriculture organisations, which is men. Similarly, in this case women may not feel comfortable or that the programme is not aimed at them, demonstrating the patriarchal structures in the agriculture industry extend to farm mentoring programmes. This female participant from Prince Edward Island has previously benefited from being part of

women-only training and organisations, so her suggestion of a women-only mentoring programme is a natural extension of these initiatives. Although such a programme may suffer from similar critiques as women-only groups, i.e. separation from mainstream groups, which further differentiates women farmers' identities from the 'norm' male farmer (Shortall, 2016), as mentioned, the benefits of a safe space for women to feel comfortable and build both their knowledge and confidence is essential to aid their development. As already discussed, this can be more pertinent in island contexts, where existing hierarchies in peripheral island communities can make challenging engrained gender norms more difficult.

The government's involvement and commitment to encourage women in agriculture is evident in Canada, with a male representative from the Prince Edward Island Federation of Agriculture highlighting this stance of the government and the President of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture:

> *'I mean they were hoping that those barriers hadn't taken place, but I think that the first thing I would say is that the Federation of Agriculture and Mary Robinson at the Canadian Federation of Agriculture reached out to us once we had it and we are looking at ways which we could put together some programming. Probably some study to find out, now we've identified what some of those barriers are, what kind of programming or what kind of services can we put in place to try to, eliminate that'* (Participant #24).

This highlights the importance of mentors and role models, and of governmental support to establish such structures, as by providing the resources and space for mentoring, specifically women-only mentoring, it could produce similar results as the women-only training, so that women would feel comfortable about taking part and challenge the existing structures in place that prevent them from joining programmes in the first instance. Furthermore, the government representative from Prince Edward Island refers to putting in place initiatives to combat the barriers for women in the agriculture industry. Here is an opportunity where they could learn from the existing Women in Agriculture report commissioned by the Scottish Government, which has several programmes in place, such as the 'Be Your Best Self' training. The Prince Edward Island Government could then utilise these outcomes and adapt them to suit island women; as shown in this thesis, many of the issues that face women in the agriculture industry are similar in a transnational context. This therefore demonstrates the importance and helpfulness of this type of comparative research, which can then inform policy initiatives.

In Scotland, suggestions of mentors were not as evident, but more was focused on the importance of leadership schemes and women being visible in the industry:

> *'There's been a shift just this last couple of years just with all the ... stuff coming out from the Scottish Government and social media, there's definitely a shift ... we've got one very active woman in Orkney who's really done a lot and she's just gone into these meetings and joined them and worked really hard and she's paved the way but she said ... she would never ask a question at an NFUS [National Farmers Union Scotland] meeting but she would be quite happy to ask a question at one of the meetings at Women in Agriculture'* (Participant #11).

This female participant from the Orkney Islands discusses how prominent figures and even those who are confident are still in the process of increasing their confidence to take part fully in the discussions in mainstream organisations. However, this makes it about the woman, adding to discussions in the previous chapters where individuals were blamed for what is actually structural exclusion in agriculture organisations, which are still viewed as male spaces that are not welcoming to women. It demonstrates how there must be a shift of narrative from putting the onus on individual women and their apparent confidence levels to the need to provide and create an inclusive space for women.

The Women in Agriculture report recommended the implementation of a leadership development programme in Scotland to encourage women to develop the skills and experience to apply for leadership positions in agriculture organisations, to redress the gendered inequality in such positions. In the progress report, reasons for developing such a programme include 'leadership has traditionally been equated with "masculine" behaviours and practices, and women in leadership face a number of challenges' (Scottish Government, 2021a, p.32). This highlights the recognition of the differing leadership expectations of men and women. Pini (2005) discusses the need for women to perform both masculine and feminine gender traits to be taken seriously in leadership positions in the agriculture industry, as they must display their communication skills whilst also performing typically masculine traits such as objectivity and rationality. This demonstrates that women, again, must prove themselves in what are still perceived as traditionally masculine spaces, highlighting the need for the Women in Agriculture leadership programme.

The male dominance in meetings contributes to women feeling uncomfortable attending, as referred to by this female crofter from the Orkney Islands:

> *'It's getting better, I would say, it's maybe not that they're not welcoming, I think it's the fact that it was so male-dominated I suppose. There was a lot of men there, it kind of put you off, there's a female coming in is probably more my perception of it was as opposed to what they would think to be honest'* (Participant #8).

The female participant here is, again trying to justify women's exclusion in agriculture organisations by stating that they feel unwelcome because of their perception, ignoring the structural barriers in the industry. This again places the blame on the individual, women in this example, rather than the organisation and existing patriarchal structures. This distinction is one that would align with the preference of Scottish islanders to distance themselves from what they see as a mainland narrative of women being unequal to men in the industry. Placing the emphasis on individual choice and effectively denying the existence of the structural barriers acts as a means to negate inequality. This would therefore distance islanders from responsibility and allows engrained cultural norms to persist. This was highlighted in Chapter 4, where a man in the Scottish islands again placed the emphasis on individual action rather than the existing structures in place, which cause and further barriers. This issue lies in both the historical context and the present context, and could prove to be a problem in the future if this unconscious bias is not appropriately challenged. This is especially true in island communities, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, where these issues can be more pronounced and justified as 'island ways', making it more difficult to challenge structural issues (Karides, 2017).

Denying the structures in place will prevent attempts to dismantle them. A further example of this was evident in an interview with a woman crofter in the Inner Hebrides, who disparaged women not accepting help and describing their '*hang-ups*' about needing help:

> *I had an interesting conversation with somebody, and they seemed to have a lot of hang-ups about … they didn't have all the equipment and having to ask neighbours that were men to do the tractor work and they found that really difficult as a woman. I don't think I've ever had that and I don't know whether that's just because they were also a new entrant … I think sometimes women in agriculture feel that they have to be as practically good at everything as any other man is but because my dad … would take in fencers, he would take in digger drivers to do stuff … he was delighted to have people working for*

him, so I don't feel that it's a thing that … me as a woman that I can't do these things, it's just, well, I don't do these things' (Participant #12).

This quote shows the differences women can experience when they have the respect of the local community due to either being a local or their family having an established status, compared with being a new entrant. This demonstrates the advantages of having an insider status in an island community (Gibbons, 2010; Baldacchino and Veenendaal, 2018; Collins, 2017). The case of new entrants and the '*hang-ups*' that this participant refers to could be borne from the frustration of not being treated equally as a woman and the need to prove themselves, which was a common theme throughout the interviews. In terms of moving away from this perception in the future, women role models would allow for peer mentoring to take place, where knowledge can be exchanged in a supportive space and manner.

This subsection has demonstrated the need for mentors and role models for women in the agriculture industry on the islands and the benefits such programmes have in place. Issues similar to women-only groups, such as the denial of patriarchal structures, which prevent women from taking part in existing initiatives, have been discussed and are evident in the island contexts. It is important to recognise the existence of such structures in order to break down the barriers for future generations of women. Therefore, this makes it even more important for women mentors, role models and leadership figures to be prominent in the industry in order to help others, but not to be used as 'exceptional women' examples.

6.2.3 Visibility of women

The invisibility of women in agriculture has been extensively discussed in this thesis, in the context of the interview data and the existing literature. In Chapter 4, women were seen to be working on the crofts, especially when their husbands were away at sea, for instance. Then, when mechanisation increased and the need for labour on the farms and holdings decreased, women moved to background roles such as bookwork. This change in work meant that, during these times, women were never in the public space as much, and to some extent, are still not seen as the managers or in leadership roles on the landholdings. Increasing women's visibility is seen as central to addressing the barriers that are evident in the current agriculture industry, in order to move away from the 'invisible women' narrative. This was discussed in terms of women mentors and women-only training groups. Another aspect that emerged from the interviews related to the visibility of women in terms of advertising and clothing options. This was an issue which this Prince Edward Island female participant highlighted:

> *'In that group there were everything from women who were farming on their own to women who farmed large corporations like myself, to husband and wife teams that managed their farms, but they always felt invisible when they went to farmer meetings or tried to sit on boards. I think some of it was, even advertising for farm type, we talked about even like coveralls that we all wear they are designed for men, work gloves are designed for men and work boots are designed for men, so just trying to get some more visibility. You know, advertisements that are actually showing women farming, not always male farming. There is a big education piece that's probably missing amongst, it's getting better, it's way better than when I started in the 90s but it's still a long way to go, just the visibility of the fact that women can be operators'* (Participant #25).

Advertising and having tailored farm clothes may seem less significant than having access to land, but they are equally important components of a socially constructed normative occupation that presumes a male farmer. In future, women being included in advertisements will help to dispel stereotypes and presumptions in the agriculture industry. In Prince Edward Island's inequalities in agriculture report, a third of the public did not believe that there were barriers faced by women (Government of Prince Edward Island, 2020). By increasing the visibility of women, this will also shift the public's perception of who is involved in the agriculture industry, that is it not just male operators on farms.

The consequence of the lack of visible farm women in the community may result in the younger generation of potential female farmers not feeling like they could have a career in the industry. This was illustrated by a female participant whose partner is a dairy farmer on Prince Edward Island; she refers to her daughter, who shows the most interest in the farm but is consistently excluded from conversation:

> *'When people ask us about "do we think our kids are interested in farming", they don't exclude our daughter in that conversation, but they also don't … I don't know if I've ever heard anyone say "what about your daughter, is she interested in it?" People tend to focus on the male children, that perpetuates the stereotype for the kids. I don't know if our daughter sees herself as a farmer because she doesn't see any other dairy farmers, full-time dairy farmers who are women. Out of our three kids, she probably is the one who takes the most interest in what's going on in the barn, she's the only one who's taken dairy as a project in school. She feeds calves in the evenings, and she helps John*

pick names for them, she loves that stuff. The boys wouldn't have a clue. But at the same time, I don't think she sees herself long-term here farming as a job and I do think part of that is just because she doesn't see herself reflected in the population that currently farms, and I think that gets perpetuated by, like, conversations that people have about succession, they seem to focus on the boys sometimes. I think that is one of the barriers and it's an invisible one' (Participant #26).

This demonstrates the need for visible women farmers in the industry, to not only act as role models, but to demonstrate to the wider public that women are as capable of taking over farm holdings. It is an example of the socialisation of children from a young age that girls do not take over the holding, even when they demonstrate more interest and ability than their male siblings. This also includes advertisements, such as supermarkets and in farming-related media, which typically show men farmers (Shortall *et al.*, 2017). The normalisation of women in the agriculture industry, and for them not to be seen as tokenism or 'exceptional women', therefore requires the increase of visibility of women in these public advertisement spaces.

Agriculture equipment and appropriate clothing can also be a safety issue for women in the sector, as they are usually designed for men who are overall taller and larger than the typical woman, which can therefore result in an increased safety risk (McCoy *et al.*, 2002; Shortall *et al.*, 2019). Women also tend to take more risks to prove themselves to their male peers (Shortall *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, for future barriers to be resolved, there needs to be increased consideration of the fact that agriculture equipment should not only be designed for the typical male body. This feeds into the farm safety literature and into the wider discourse in feminist literature of the 'invisible woman', which examines how much of today's world is built for men and does not consider the physical variabilities of women's bodies in comparison with those of the male body (Criado-Perez, 2019; Beninger, 2019). The future needs to account for women. This requires showing them in advertisements, having appropriate work tools and machinery, and proper attire. Investment in the farm equipment that women can use is also important for the economic viability of farms. This is especially important on island holdings, where due to increased costs the margins can be narrower than mainland farms. The need to have appropriate handling equipment to work with safely large farm animals, such as cows, is highlighted by this Outer Hebrides female participant:

'Everybody on the island is assuming that 'cause I'm a woman, I will get rid of the cows, because they do need quite a bit of brute force on occasion to handle cows, because

they can be quite wild. But the farm is not viable without the cows, so I've made sure that we invested quite a lot in cattle handling over the last few years' (Participant #15).

This demonstrates the need to highlight the visibility of women in the industry. The participant here emphasises that although there is some strength required for doing certain farm work, if the appropriate equipment and handling systems are in place, then as a woman she is as capable as a man. This is evidence that is it not women who are the issue regarding their ability to work safety on a holding, it is the gendered nature of this space due to presumptions that male strength is needed on farms (Shortall, 2019). There should instead be a focus on ensuring that the farm holding is appropriately planned for all to work efficiently.

The importance of visibility was also discussed by one woman from the Scottish islands, who spoke of her conscious decision to ensure she asks all her grandchildren, the boys and the girls, to help her with similar tasks, so that she creates an understanding of equal ability:

'I always think its examples, making it normal and natural that's the thing, you get youngsters … I've got two grandchildren that are around, or pre-COVID were around, one girl, one boy, I mean I never would think, "oh, I need a hand with the sheep I'll see if Stan will give me a hand" rather than asking if Meg will come through. I suspect quite a lot of people might think like that, but I don't. I think just … I mean Meg growing up, she's grown up with a granny who's very active. Those are the important things to her, aren't they? For her to consider it perfectly normal and natural to be a woman and doing these things' (Participant #22).

This woman is consciously acting as a role model for the younger generation. She is showing via her actions that women are as capable as men to complete farm tasks. She deliberately does not gender the tasks she gives her grandchildren. In the literature, the gendered nature of farm jobs has proven to be a disadvantage to women, who may then subsequently go into farming without benefiting from information transfer; for instance, not knowing how to drive or fix a tractor due to expectations that only boys would be interested or require such knowledge in the future (Dunne *et al.*, 2021; Cassidy and McGrath, 2015; Shortall *et al.*, 2017; Shortall, 2016; Leckie, 1996).

This subsection highlights how women in agriculture may be visible in wider society and ensure their visible actions of not gendering roles to young boys and girls can continue to help moving

away from the patriarchal perspective. Therefore, women in the agriculture industry must be visible in both public and private spaces. The shift from the 'invisible women' narrative would benefit the safety of women, by being able to access correctly fitting clothing and machinery controls. It would also result in more consideration to ensure handling equipment on landholdings is designed so that any body shape or size can operate it and does not rely on the greater strength or size of the typical male body.

6.3 Unconscious bias training

Another theme that emerged from the data was regarding unconscious bias training, especially for agriculture sales organisations. This was mainly an issue in the Canadian islands, where there were multiple stories of sales representatives who had belittled women participants and continued to speak to the men present, even if the man had no idea about the machinery or crop that was being bought. Interestingly, these types of experiences and comments were usually made by those who did not know the person. For example, one female farmer participant commented that it was in these larger organisations where she was unknown that presumptions were made. On the islands where they and their family were known, she had already broken down traditional expectations and she did not face the same bias from sales representatives who knew it was her occupation.

In Scotland, because of the 2017 Women in Agriculture research report, there has been an unconscious bias training pilot that has been offered to seven organisations in the agriculture industry. The overarching results were broadly positive, as outlined in the Scottish Government's (2021a) progress report. The participating organisations reported that they had much more awareness of unconscious bias and, going forward, would be interested in having plans in place to ensure this continued. Furthermore, some were keen to have further training to ensure long-term impact; this is central to sustaining long-term equality for the future Shortall and Marangudakis (2022). The firms who had completed the unconscious bias training pilot offered by the Scottish Government had reported positive outcomes from it; however, it was also noted that long-term changes such as increasing the number of women at board level had not yet happened due to disruptions caused by COVID-19. Participants also reported that the language they used in the meetings and times of meetings were factors on which they would reflect in the future. A key finding was that organisations would like more support to create action plans moving forward and address how they have long-term impact to ensure that future boards take unconscious bias training into account. As quoted in the progress report, 'This is still a work in progress' (Scottish Government, 2021a, p.24).

In this report, it does not detail whether unconscious bias training will be available for other organisations. If the training was made available, it could include private agriculture organisations to help them develop and implement action plans. This would reduce unconscious bias against women in the wider agriculture industry. In this instance, Canadian organisations could follow suit and offer similar training to existing agriculture organisations in order to mitigate the unconscious bias that clearly impacts women in the agriculture industry. This would help create more self-reflection for these organisations and help prevent issues such as women taking their business elsewhere as they did not want to invest in a company which belittled them. This demonstrates how this training has been beneficial in the pilot scheme in Scotland, and it will be interesting to see if this is then rolled out to more organisations and firms across Scotland. This could be something which the Canadian Atlantic islands could then follow and learn from the broader Scottish Government. By implementing this training, this might allow for the agriculture organisations to participate and help deal with the issues, such as discriminatory practices against women, which have been documented in this thesis. It could lead to the development of unconscious bias tools, an awareness of the need for it, and greater equality in both contexts in the future.

However, it was noted in the progress report that there was difficulty in getting agriculture firms to sign up to the scheme. This highlights a broader issue: when the tools are developed, the challenge will be to ensure that farming organisations then implement them. Furthermore, in the review of the unconscious bias training, it also noted a recent report by the UK Government that was critical of the effectiveness of this type of wider training, in terms of its ability to change existing behaviour and get organisations to invest in the procedures required to enable this (Scottish Government, 2021a). Therefore, although the review of the training was largely positive, it was not clear if the unconscious bias training will go ahead and be implemented further in wider agriculture organisations. As demonstrated throughout this thesis, the impact of unconscious bias, both for those within the industry and those training people in it, is evident. This demonstrates the need for such training, especially when it yields positive results such as were reported in the initial sections of the review in the Women in Agriculture progress report (Scottish Government, 2021a).

6.4 Young people are the future

One of the key components to the future is young people; therefore, it is appropriate to include a section examining their position on this issue. Interviewees discussed how young people have

more progressive attitudes regarding gender equality compared with older members of the agriculture community. This section will therefore focus on this part of the analysis and how examples from both the Scottish and Canadian data demonstrate the role young people will play in how women are viewed in the industry in the future.

During the interviews, participants discussed how there appeared to be less holding back young women in the industry, compared with some of the participants' experiences in the past. This was evident in the Outer Hebrides, as highlighted by this female participant:

> *'Definitely, there are more girls, there are more young women about. It's quite interesting'* (Participant #18).

It was also evident in the Canadian data, as discussed by this female participant:

> *'I think there is a change socially in the younger generations. Because there's a lot more farm women now who own the farm lock, stock and barrel, just like here. And its woman owned. I think there's more of that happening'* (Participant #33).

These female participants are discussing that there are more young women visible in the agriculture industry as compared with the past. They note that these women also own the farmland in their own right and are not just working in the industry or joining the farm via marriage to an established farmer. This was further emphasised by another female participant who spoke of the number of young women who they have seen at Women in Agriculture events in the Orkney Islands:

> *'It's encouraging when I've been at these Women in Agriculture events how many young women there are and that really is exciting. The young women saying I want to farm and obviously not feeling there's very much of a barrier that they can't consider it. So that is encouraging'* (Participant #7).

The societal change that has occurred from previous generations would align with the progression of women in wider society. However, it is important not to overstate the limited and slow progression that has taken place in the agriculture industry (Azima and Mundler, 2022). Discussion of generational change was evident in *The Changing Role of Women in*

Farming, Crofting and the Agriculture Industry: 2016-2021 report, which examined some of the impacts of the Women in Agriculture taskforce recommendations (McKee and Sutherland, 2021). These included generational change, where it was found that young men in particular do not see the barriers that women face in the industry, as it is believed that they are associated with 'unpleasant attitudes' that will go away over time with generational renewal (McKee and Sutherland, 2021; Scottish Government, 2021a). This highlights the shift in perspective in younger generations, and how it is key for the younger generation to promote this attitude so that future women in agriculture feel confident to take up roles and not suffer similar barriers to their forebears. However, this lack of understanding by younger men of the barriers that women have experienced in the recent past and continue to report facing could also be a cause of concern. In particular, the denial of existing patriarchal structures is problematic, and a method utilised in the past to justify the exclusion of women from organisations and leadership, which results in the occupation closure of women from the agriculture industry (Alston and Wilkinson, 2002; Shortall *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, whilst the intention of young men to dispute the existence of barriers for women could be taken as a progressive comment, it can also further hinder women's progression in agriculture due to denying the existing patriarchal barriers faced by women in the industry. Therefore, unconscious bias training aimed at Young Farmers clubs may be a very progressive move. The focus tends to be on established agricultural organisations and existing gendered practices. Unconscious bias training for young farmers may help the next generation of women and men farmers to consider the barriers women face and equip them to dismantle them together.

As highlighted in the methods chapter of this thesis, the author has two sisters who are both under 30 years of age and are the heads of the family farm. Both women are prominent figures in the agriculture community in Scotland due to multiple media and televised appearances. Although appearing unusual, in that they are two young women who run the family farm, other examples of young women in the industry are prominent. For instance, the Scottish Young Farmers' past and current chairpersons are both women (Dick, 2022). Whilst more traditional organisations such as NFUS do not have examples of women in leadership positions, this is not the case in organisations for younger people. However, it should be noted that the Young Farmers do not have any authority to negotiate public policy or any lobbying power; therefore, they do not have any power in the public sphere. When there is a transition to farming organisations that can impact the national agriculture agenda, such as the NFUS Next Generation Committee, which is made up of younger people who typically graduate from Young Farmers groups, the number of women immediately decreased. The current (2022–23)

committee only has three female members, one of which is a Women in Agriculture representative, out of 18 people (NFUS, 2023). Therefore, only 17% of the members are women in what is seen as the logical graduation from Scottish Young Farmers and the initial start point for involvement in NFUS. It is therefore key to ensure those with leadership positions in Young Farmers groups continue to hold such positions in other farming organisations as they move on from Young Farmers, as only those who are under 30 can be part of the club.

The issue would appear to be that it is widely expected that women to have children from the age of 30, as the average age to have a child is 30.7 in the UK and 30.8 in Canada (Office for National Statistics, 2020; Provencher *et al.*, 2018). This female farmer in the 41–60 age range from the Orkney Islands highlights that although there seems to be a lot of younger women who are more involved and coming to NFUS meetings, there remains a lack of women in her generation:

> *'It seems to be the younger ones who turn up, so I suspect … I've never seen any of the older… sort of my generation turn up at all. It's the younger ones, and I suspect with the evening meetings if you've got a family then either you get a babysitter, or someone has got to stay at home. I'm pretty certain it would be the wife who has to stay at home. The meetings are very much a social occasion as well'* (Participant #7).

Traditional caregiving roles impede women's ability to participate in evening meetings. In terms of how this impacts the future for women in agriculture, the quote above demonstrates a theme that was apparent during the analysis; that a younger generation of women were more likely to attend agriculture meetings compared with those who are older and more likely to have caring responsibilities. What remains a key point is that whilst these young women gain experience in agriculture organisations, take up leadership positions and build up a positive reputation and rapport with their peers, if they choose to have children this progression can then be lost, or at least interrupted, if women are then unable to attend meetings due to childcare expectations or commitments.

In order to ensure that young women who have both experience and have displayed excellent leadership skills retain and utilise networks in agriculture organisations, the childcare barrier needs to be overcome. A shift in the wider cultural expectations regarding the gendered nature of care will take time and should not be expected to be resolved instantaneously, especially with the recent regression for women in agriculture due to COVID-19, which was discussed in

depth in the previous chapter (Budge and Shortall, 2022a). However, if women are continuously subjugated to society's expectations, the brief progression evident in this section will be lost. Instead, there will continue to be a vicious circle of women farmers being encouraged to take up leadership positions, to then have children and be expected to stay at home from the meetings to look after them, whilst their male partner, if they are in a heterosexual relationship, is not expected to take an equal share of the caring responsibility. Therefore, childcare support needs to be put in place to facilitate women to be able to attend the meetings in farming organisations. This will allow them to use their existing experience, such as leadership positions in Young Farmers clubs, and continue build their networks which are essential to being elected to higher positions of office. Interviewees spoke of how it took over ten years to gain the confidence and trust of other board members and demonstrate their skills and abilities. If women begin this journey, only for it to be cut short by having to stay at home with children, this will prevent their progression and ultimately result in the continued lack of women in leadership positions. Future mitigations should be put in place to prevent this, as well as encouraging a more equal and joint responsibility of childcare undertaken by both parents, allowing for both partners to attend or take it in turns to attend meetings. Examples from other countries could be followed, such as Sweden, where there has been an increase of women who work in the agriculture industry and a shift in childcare expectations, where men take a more active role (Stenbacka, 2017).

This is especially key in island contexts, where childcare is a harder barrier to overcome than on the mainland, due to the limited labour available to cover the necessary hours required to provide a wraparound care service. Although there have been commitments by both the Scottish and Canadian Governments to invest in this issue and increase childcare provisions in the islands, future research will be required to investigate the outcomes of such programmes and whether they have benefited women in the agriculture industry on the respective islands.

Regarding the future, a big challenge for young people and agriculture on the islands is land access and housing stock. Although land is expensive in many parts of the respective countries, in an island context this can be even more pronounced because of the literal limits of the land. Women are traditionally less likely to inherit land compared to men, including young women (Shortall *et al.*, 2017; Scottish Government, 2021a). This has been recognised by the Scottish Government as a key barrier for women in agriculture, to the extent that in order to promote egalitarianism in the industry, it was recommended that an increase of new entrant land access

should be made available so that women could enter the industry though this avenue (Shortall *et al.*, 2017; McKee and Sutherland, 2021).

6.4.1 Land access for young people

In the Scottish context, some participants discussed the challenges young people were facing to get into crofting and how this subsequently affected the local population. This included this female farmer from the Inner Hebrides:

> *'There are young people who would love to get into farming and get a proper chance of having your own place that's big enough for or can carry enough stock that it gives them a full-time income, so they don't have to run around here, there and everywhere to make a bit of income from contracting. There's still the old generation they are hanging on, and there is a lot of young blood, trying or just give given up and moved away'* (Participant #16).

Furthermore, another female participant in the 41–60 age range explained how she was a new entrant and how she had experienced challenges in acquiring a landholding with her husband on an island in Scotland:

> *'If we could, we would definitely keep more but it's pretty limited, it's really hard to find land. There's no way I could have done that as a young person. It's taken until now, when you're a bit older and you've got a bit of money behind you. It does seem a bit of a shame that you have to wait for so long to get land and you're quite jealous of people who managed to inherit it when they're younger but it's really difficult … the only thing is that once you're older you've got the money to be able to invest but you haven't got the energy, that's the difference, when you're younger you've all [the] energy in the world, but you don't have money behind you to do things … No we couldn't afford one. We tried to get a croft on Skye, and we couldn't get one, Skye's just so popular. It's popular for tourism and house plots and so when you're trying to bid for a croft, you're really bidding against somebody who's got the money for a house. So, we couldn't croft until we came here … whereas Lewis is quite cheap'* (Participant #14).

There are several points that are addressed in this quote. Firstly, it highlights the differences between the islands themselves, and how the variation of land prices can change depending on

the level of tourism and proximity to the mainland in the Scottish context. The participant mentions that crofts on the island of Skye, which is part of the Inner Hebrides island group, is more expensive than the Isle of Lewis, which is in the Outer Hebrides. Skye is connected to the Scottish mainland via a bridge, whereas the Isle of Lewis can only be accessed by a ferry or flight from the Scottish mainland. The accessibility of an island typically impacts how attractive it is for tourists and holiday homes (Currie and Falconer, 2014; Page *et al.*, 2010). This is a clear example of the differences between the islands and knock-on consequences of the location of an area and the land prices.

Secondly, the participant reflected that those who do not inherit land can only typically afford to buy a croft when they are older, when they have much less energy and enthusiasm compared with their younger years. This highlighted the detrimental impact of lack of access land and how young people are being outpriced in the land market due to high demand and low supply (Scottish Government, 2022c). To counteract this conundrum, this female participant from the Orkney Islands suggested introducing help and programmes to allow those who are young and enthusiastic to gain access to the land market in the islands:

> *'If you don't get succession, you're in the market trying to buy, and for any youngster nowadays trying to get farmland is pretty unlikely unless you've got somebody to back you up. It's difficult to get into it for a start so something to help youngsters or … you can't really say to help females, but you know … help young couples or youngsters into the industry would perhaps be helpful'* (Participant #8).

In Scotland, there have been numerous initiatives to encourage and help young people get into the agriculture industry by the Government. These include the New Entrants start-up grant and the Young Farmers start-up grants, which provided up to €70,000 and €15,000 to the successful applicants (Scottish Government, 2022c). The success of these grant schemes was mixed, in that although they did help 254 young people and new entrants into farming, the evaluation report highlights that they did not achieve their primary goal, which was to shift the industry from an ageing one to a more youthful composition. These schemes closed in 2018 and have been since replaced with the Farming Opportunities for New Entrants working groups, which provide advice and a land-matching service to new entrants. From 2016, they have helped 76 new entrants gain access to land, not through financial aid like the previous schemes, but by providing services such as land matching (Scottish Government, 2022c).

At the time of writing, the Scottish Government is conducting a consultation for the next Land Reform Bill, which will 'make important changes to the framework of law and policy that govern the system of ownership, management and use of land in Scotland' (Scottish Government, 2022d). This is an opportunity for the government to shape who owns and rents the land in Scotland. In recent times, there has been increased concern in Scotland regarding 'green lairds' and private owners buying hundreds of acres of land, especially in the Highlands, as firms seek to capitalise on the carbon capture market (Carrell, 2022). This makes it harder for local people, and especially young people, to gain access to the land market due to high prices that are driven by absentee landowners. The reform may seek to challenge the current structures and will be key for the future of young people's ability to enter the industry.

A further scheme in the wider UK is a pilot to encourage older farmers to retire: the Lump Sum Exit Scheme, which was opened in April 2022 (UK Government, 2022). This scheme seeks to encourage older farmers to retire to allow new entrants to join the industry. This could again be a potential way for more young people to gain access to land and kick-start their agriculture career. Regarding these various schemes, there was scepticism expressed about them during the interviews. For example, this female participant from the Outer Hebrides spoke of the '*golden handshake*', which is in reference to the Lump Sum Exit Scheme:

> *'I don't really like the golden handshake concept. Could it free up opportunities for young people? Possibly. But I think, the issues that you're going to end up with is a lot of money going to the wrong people. You will probably end up with a lot of family businesses where the father gives up, as in passes the business over to the son or daughter, but continues to be involved. Basically, making a transfer that was going to happen anyway. But cashing in on it. Now, if we could help the next generation, you might need to almost go for that'* (Participant #16).

This critique of the scheme highlights the various issues and loopholes in the programme that may be taken advantage of by people and demonstrates the complex nature of this issue. Considerations of the programme's effectiveness and value for money are important to ensure it is those who benefit from such schemes that are the target audience, not those who seek to take advantage of the available profit. This is relevant to the key theme of the chapter, as this type of manipulation would further reduce women's ability to access land, if schemes are in place that can be taken advantage of, but no real change occurs. Therefore, inefficient

programmes essentially waste resources that could be better spent on initiatives that provide tangible outcomes for women.

In the Canadian islands, similar views, such as from this female participant, were expressed regarding the older generation who are reluctant to let go of the land and the detrimental impact this has on potential young farmers on Newfoundland Island:

> *'A lot of people sit on them, because there is, where the farming industry is very small, the average age of the farmer in our province last time I read about it was 55 years old so, like there are not young farmers at all and we are not, we are not food secure on the island'* (Participant #31).

Solutions to this issue were discussed by participants, for instance how a government's intervention could be beneficial to help young people gain access to land as new entrants in Prince Edward Island:

> *'Their platform when they were running for government was the development of a landbank where they would buy farmland when it came up for sale and hold that in trust to lease to young farmers, because again, being a small island there's only so much land and if farmers retire and can sell it to a developer and it gets built on, it's never farmland again ... I do think that that's a huge issue, like I say, it's hard to get into farming if you don't already belong to a farming family, because the land is just so expensive, and I think if the government could intervene by buying some of it up and earmarking it specifically for farming that that would help'* (Participant #26).

This female participant reiterates how islands are particularly limited by this issue as there is only so much land in comparison with the mainland. This demonstrates the importance of national policy, whilst also the need for a specific island focus. It shows that although there are programmes in place to help young farmers in Prince Edward Island, such as the Future Farmer Program, which helps new entrants with their business plan and skill development (Prince Edward Island Federation of Agriculture, 2022), if young people do not have access to land, then such schemes are useless.

In terms of those who are from existing farming families, the succession of the farmland from one generation to the next can be a contentious and emotional topic. This female participant

from the Outer Hebrides spoke of how they did not believe an easy solution would be to simply split up farmland between family members, as this would make the farm business non-viable. To illustrate this, she used her own family's farm as an example, that the farm business would not have been economically possible to continue if the land had been split between her and her three siblings:

> *'I often think if my brother wasn't there my sister would probably take over because it's her interest but there's still been no rivalry between him and her. It was always inevitable it was going to be … so maybe it's just my father's way of dealing with it as well. You can't divide a farm between three people and three girls who live in three separate locations'* (Participant #20).

Another interviewee referred to a Swiss law, that once farmers reach retirement age, they must pass on their farmland as only farmers under the age of 65 can claim direct support payments (Baker, 2017). This female participant based in the Inner Hebrides in Scotland highlighted the benefit of this process:

> *'Well, and Switzerland, they're a little bit different about it and it's just a case of once the head of business or the majority shareholder of the business reaches retirement age, all support payments are stopped to that business. That's how they deal with that; in Switzerland they don't have that issue with the older generation holding on'* (Participant #16).

This proposal again highlights a different manner by which the issue could be tackled, using an international perspective. Using and comparing examples and techniques on how to solve or avoid issues such as ageing and unfair land ownerships demonstrates the importance of this type of transatlantic comparative research. By comparing and examining what occurs in similar contexts, ideas for tackling complex issues such as land access may be considered. For instance, across Europe there are various land transfer laws that seek to ensure that family farms can remain viable. However, even European laws seek to dismantle patrilineal land succession practices – for instance, Norway's Allodial Law, where it is the oldest sibling who inherits the farm, yet only 12% of the farms are owned by women – but none have been successful in increasing the proportion of women who inherit farmland (Shortall and Marangudakis, 2022; Shortall, 2010, 2015). This highlights how engrained barriers faced by women are in the

agriculture industry, and the importance of the topic to be studied for future generations of women to achieve increased levels of equality.

6.4.2 Land tenure systems in the islands

Land inheritance and access to land is a key barrier for new entrants in both the Scottish and Canadian Atlantic islands, especially for young women. This calls into question how land on the islands is governed and if this has any influence on women's ability to access land. Land tenure systems vary significantly around the world. This was one of the key differences between the Canadian and Scottish islands and varied between the islands themselves. These differences include the scale of the landholdings, and the laws concerning ownership rights. For example, in Newfoundland, the land is mostly owned by the provincial or federal government, as 88% of the land is held as Crown lands (Connolly *et al.*, 2015). This stems from the 1844 Crown Lands Act, where the land is held by the government authority who is responsible for handing out the grants under the Land Branch department (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2022). Therefore, those who want to farm must apply and then rent the land from the local government. This is not for large sums of money and leases can span up to 50 years in some cases. This new entrant female farmer from Newfoundland discussed how much they rented their land for:

> *'Technically we don't own the land, but we pay a fee yearly to the government per hectare. I think it's very low, I think it's seven dollars per hectare. Per year. So, we don't own the land but it's in our name for 70 more years, something like that so, I guess you could say it's ours but not really because the government has the right to come in and inspect when they want and tell you need to do this, or you can do this so. There is a lot of oversight in the province when it comes to farming. For some reason they have a lot of, a lot of rules here for it'* (Participant #31).

This is an example of very cheap land rates, which makes it accessible to those without a lot of capital, which is typically required when buying farmland. The participant referred to how there are many rules to obtain access to Crown farmland: this includes a multi-step application process, including a full farm development plan where feedback from two different land departments is required (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2023). Furthermore, the applicant must then pay for a full land survey of the site within 12 months of submitting the application. This highlights how although the rents are not expensive, obtaining Crown land is not a simple, inexpensive process.

There are benefits to the Crown land system on the island, such as the low cost of renting the land and the long leases available. However, another female participant in Newfoundland highlighted its drawbacks, and the contrasting benefits of owning your own land:

> *'The government always owns the land, we're very fortunate where my grandfather started farming in the 1950s. The land is zoned agricultural land and even though it's on a protected highway, where no infrastructure development is allowed to be built because it was his own agricultural land before 1976 … we're investing in something that future generations can take over and we're not worried about government input, government leases, and you know the government changing their minds on things. And because it has no say here'* (Participant #33).

This participant highlights how being able to invest in the holding, without the fear of the government involvement, is a benefit of owning the land in comparison with renting Crown land from the government. However, in relation to the historical barrier of land access for women in agriculture, Crown lands could theoretically provide an option for women who are trying to enter the industry, as there is no land succession involved and the land is cheap to rent, which removes the need for a large amount of initial capital for new entrants. On the surface, this method could ensure a fairer distribution of land and an avenue for younger people to enter the industry. But, this female farmer participant highlighted that people still 'sit on the land' and refuse to give up their Crown land tenure:

> *'A lot of people sit on them, because the farming industry is very small, the average age of the farmer in our province last time I read about it was 55 years old, there are not young farmers at all, and we are not food secure on the island'* (Participant #31).

This highlights again that there is not an easy answer to the question of how land can be distributed more equally; that although most of the land is government-owned and not passed through private ownership, it does not prevent the industry from ageing and older farmers sitting on the landholding. This is demonstrated by the fact that only 25% of the land in Newfoundland Island is held by female occupiers, compared with the national average of 30% of female occupiers in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022). Therefore, although in theory Crown lands could

have reduced the level of inequality for female occupiers compared with male occupiers of farmland, in practice this has not materialised.

In comparison, in the other Canadian Atlantic island included in this study, Prince Edward Island, Crown lands only equate to under 2% of the land, with the rest being privately owned (Neimanis, 2011). However, land ownership on the island is capped at 1,000 acres for individual owners and 3,000 acres for corporations under the Lands Protection Act (Legislative Counsel Office, 2022). This Act was introduced in 1982 to 'protect islanders against large land purchases by corporations' and allow 'islanders [to] own land and have the first opportunity to purchase land when it came for sale' (Prince Edward Island Federation of Agriculture, 2020). When this was asked about this during the interviews, Participant #25 summarised it as: '*Well, there is only so much land*'. This provides a reminder of the physical barrier of islands, which will always have a limited land mass and will forever be restricted to their shores. Therefore, Prince Edward Island employs a system that prevents monopoly farms from dominating the agriculture landscapes in the islands and prioritises island inhabitants over large corporations. This demonstrates two different but similar land tenure systems of the Canadian Atlantic islands in respect of state involvement and restrictions being placed upon farmers. The overall Canadian context indicates that only 11% of the land is owned privately, with the rest either federal or provincial Crown land, with Prince Edward Island province having the highest proportion of private land ownership in Canada (Neimanis, 2011). This high proportion means that it is no surprise that only 20% of the land is held by female occupiers in Prince Edward Island, 10% below the national average of female occupiers in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022). It is unsurprising, as typical succession practices involved in private ownership of farmland are typically patrilineal in nature, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, including the Prince Edward Island-specific interview data.

In terms of the Scottish islands, a different land tenure system is in place. In Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, where albeit differing systems are evident, both seek to reduce or restrict private ownership. However, in Scotland, 50% of the land mass is owned by only 432 private landowners (Scottish Government, 2014). Interestingly, the islands are most likely to benefit from community ownership; for instance, 384,980 acres in the Outer and Inner Hebrides are owned and managed by the local communities, which represents 70% of all Scotland's community-owned land (MacLeod, 2019). This shift in the islands from privately owned estates to community-owned land has been encouraged through the Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015 and the Land Reform (Scotland) Acts of 2003 and 2016 (Highland and Islands

Enterprise, 2022). These powers will likely be increased, as there is an ongoing consultation in Scotland for the Land Reform Bill, which is:

> 'Improving Scotland's system of land ownership, use, rights and responsibilities, so that our land may contribute to a fair and just society while balancing public and private interests' (Scottish Government, 2022d).

This highlights the attempt to move away from large, privately owned estates and move to a more community-focused land ownership model. As discussed, much of the agricultural land is also rented in forms of 'crofts' in the Scottish islands. In the Highlands and Islands, a total of 750,000 hectares of land is under croft tenure, where the land is usually rented from a private holder (Crofting Commission, 2023). These patterns of land ownership and rental structures are a clear difference between the two countries, and in the Canadian context, between the islands themselves.

Land tenure systems matter for a multitude of reasons, as demonstrated in this subsection. It has been proven in the existing literature that land succession laws make no difference to women's ability to access land (Shortall and Marangudakis, 2022; Shortall, 2010, 2015). The various systems in place on the islands in this case study provide a comparison of when the land is mostly privately, state or community owned in an island context. In theory, there are possibilities for the state and the communities who own the land to design policies that could actively promote greater gender equality in access to land. This research has shown, however, that who owns and distributes the land does not make a substantial difference, as women are still less likely to be occupiers on the islands. Although the differing systems discussed have shown that this has not made a difference so far, the introduction of the Land Reform Bill in Scotland may provide an opportunity for such policies to be put in place and enacted in island communities.

Throughout this subsection, challenges that young people and especially young women in the industry face have been discussed, alongside various programmes that are in place to try to mitigate some of these issues in the future. If successful, these initiatives would allow for a greater number of young people to enter and stay within the industry; however, they should be analysed through a critical eye to ensure any money put towards such schemes generates the best value and does not go to those for whom it is not intended. In terms of leadership positions in agriculture organisations in both the Scottish and Canadian contexts, although some

milestones have been reached in terms of the first women in leadership positions, including in Young Farming organisations, it should be highlighted that the longevity of women occupying these spaces needs to be safeguarded for the future. A common barrier that is inhibiting women's equality in agriculture is their representation on boards and committees and thus their influence in the wider agriculture industry, highlighted in this research and reflected in the wider literature, as discussed in this subsection. However, there remain questions of whether women who take part and gain leadership positions in organisations such as the Young Farmers progress to then take up similar positions on other agriculture organisations, such as NFUS, especially if these women then go on to have children and are expected to take on the majority of the care work, as is still widely expected in society. Evidence has shown that the gendered nature of care work has only been furthered during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the impact on farming women (Budge and Shortall, 2022a; McKee and Sutherland, 2021). Therefore, until this is rectified, the issue will remain. Solutions such as providing childcare centres or areas during meetings might help to solve the lack of childcare availability; however, more consideration of the island context is required, due to increased pressures such as lack of labour. In terms of land availability, there is again no easy solution for young people and new entrants. In Scotland, although outside the time period of this thesis, the Land Reform consultation will be an important bill, as it could alter the ability for young people and new entrants to access land and thus enter the crofting and agriculture industry. Childcare support for women to continue to attend meetings and gaining an increased chance of being able to access land will enable the future agricultural industry to be more equitable. These factors all need to be considered from an island feminism perspective to take into account the unique spatial factors that impact on how gender expectations are formed.

6.5 Wider cultural change in islands

Interviewees in both Scotland and Canada were asked if they viewed the islands as being 'traditional', in line with traditional small island stereotypes. Some participants felt that their communities were largely progressive but had traditional tendencies. This was generally felt to be positive, that the islands were outward-looking and had progressive mindsets but remained close communities and were proud of their traditions. The negatives of being traditional communities were highlighted, mainly in terms of how they had a negative impact on the social position of women in local society. The focus of this section will examine how these traditional tendencies will influence the future barriers that women face in the agriculture industry.

Firstly, in the Scottish island case study, the islands are regarded as being mixed in terms of being both traditional and progressive. There was an evident difference between the islands. The Inner and Outer Hebrides are largely seen to be traditional and religious communities, in comparison with the Shetland and Orkney islands. This impacted on how interviewees saw the likelihood of cultural change occurring.

For instance, when interviewees were asked about whether they thought Shetland could be considered a traditional community, one female participant responded that:

> *'A lot more male orientated, likes of Up-Helly-Aa has always been a male thing. Maybe now that they are both I don't know. But surely certainly no.'*
>
> *Interviewer: 'And what impacts do you think [this] has on the community of Shetland?'*
>
> *'I think it was more accepted until the last few years, now there is more of a challenge, I'm thinking of higher jobs, there are more women in them, whereas before there were none. I think that the council would have been mostly men up until a few years ago'* (Participant #4).

This is an example of the modernisation of engrained traditional and cultural norms. In June 2022, after over 100 years and much local conflict, the senior and junior Lerwick fire festival Up-Helly-Aa allowed women and girls to take part in the procession (BBC, 2022a; Budge and Shortall, 2022c). This sign of gender progression coupled with the first ever Pride festival taking part in the Shetland Islands demonstrates the societal progression in an island community (BBC, 2022c). This inclusion of women and celebration of the LGBTQ+ community in the islands highlight how societal and inclusion is progressing, albeit slowly. Similarly, there are more women in the top jobs in the local council; for instance, Shetland's first ever woman Chief Executive was hired in 2019. In the Western Isles – the Inner and Outer Hebrides – there were no women councillors for ten years, but in 2022 two women were elected (Brown, 2022). However, this only makes up 7% of the council members, with the remaining 93% all being men. In the Shetland Islands, 22% of the councillors are women, with both the Leader and the Convenor of the council being women (Shetland Islands Council, 2023). This shows a clear difference between the Scottish islands in terms of the number of women in public leadership positions.

In terms of the Canadian islands, it was similarly suggested to be traditional but there was evidence of progression in the community. For instance, there was an increase in the different types of restaurants in the local community, as highlighted by this male participant from Prince Edward Island:

> *'When I talk to you as a graduate coming back from university in 1992, there weren't very many people of colour on PEI at that time when I was going to high school and university. It's a relatively new phenomenon here to have, a lot more people of colour, a lot more visible cultures, a lot of different cultures for restaurants and places to eat and you see more traditional dress out there. A lot of different languages around, I would say in the last ten years it's really kind of flourished and blossomed and we as a culture are still trying to catch up, I think we are not as far along as we should be, but we're learning and growing is I guess is how I would put it'* (Participant #27).

This would highlight how there has been an increase in diversity in the island community, due to the migration of those from other cultures. The participant here indicates how this has been seen as positive in their community, that it has '*flourished and blossomed*' in the past few years. Furthermore, the anecdotal experience of this LGBTQ+ farmer in wider Canada told by a female participant in Prince Edward Island highlights the progression in attitudes:

> *'When we talk about diversity too, we have a friend who did an article in our regional Holstein magazine about being gay and being a farmer. He specifically said like it's not something he usually is like … but he wanted to make sure that other young people knew that, yes, there are gay people in the farming community, and he wanted to make sure that they could see themselves reflected in the farming community. That article was very well received, and he doesn't feel ostracised at all, and for sure I think attitudes have changed'* (Participant #26).

The experiences of those in the LGBTQ+ farming community raise an interesting point regarding the research on queer farmers in island communities. It is to this topic that the following section will now turn.

6.6 Diversity in agriculture

As mentioned in the previous section, diversity in the agriculture industry and in the islands have been welcomed. However, the lack of research in this area was highlighted by one male participant from Prince Edward Island:

> *'We haven't even spoken about transwomen working in agriculture, there is complete and total lack of literature on LGBTQ+ experiences in agriculture in Canada. There's one, a dissertation done by a man in, a person who identifies as a man, in British Columbia or Victoria, it's out West. But we just don't even know transwomen's experience in agriculture, there is just so much that needs to be done. you know'* (Participant #24).

Research examining the experiences of queer farmers has been prominent in recent years by USA (Sohn Leslie *et al.*, 2019; Hoffelmeyer, 2020, 2021; Dentzman *et al.*, 2021). In Canada and the UK, there is a lack of academic research in this area, despite there being specific groups dedicated to those who are LGBTQ+ and work in the agriculture industry. In terms of this research, the term 'women' throughout refers to anyone who identified as a woman, and although any transwomen who wanted to take part would have been included, there were none in the sample. This could be for several reasons: in Scotland, there is no 'precise estimate for trans or non-binary people', but an approximate calculation is 0.5% of the population (Scottish Government, 2021d). This figure is likely to be much higher, due to people going through transitional phases, not being comfortable self-identifying as a different gender to their birth gender and to remain anonymous in their community to avoid any hate crime. It is the latter point that is key to consider in the context of this research.

It is important to be mindful that this research took place in island contexts, with some very small populations and tight-knit communities. Anonymity was very important in this remote rural context; to the point where one participant asked whether, when reporting a quote about their experiences of being the only woman on a committee, that the island they lived on could not be reported, as they feared being identified by their peers. This demonstrates the need for a higher level of care being provided and broader categories created to ensure anonymity when researching island communities. The relevance of this to the inclusion of transwomen in the research would be to ensure that their identity would not be revealed if they were categorised as a transwoman in the results section. This would be to protect them from being identified by their local community, which is important when topics such as this one can be seen as timely.

Therefore, it would be a concern for identification purposes and whether it jeopardised their anonymity. There is a call for future research to consider queer experiences in the agriculture community, an identified gap in the Scottish and the Canadian literature. In island studies, there is a similar call to use queer theory to analyse how it intersects with existing social structures in island communities (Karides, 2017). Therefore, whilst future research should examine LGBTQ+ farmers on islands using an island feminism perspective and queer theory, upholding participants' anonymity will be key. Safeguarding procedures would have to be carefully planned with considerations of how to keep any interviewees safe in their community. Thus, although this is a topic which needs further examination, it should be handled delicately and with the utmost care. This highlights the challenging nature of conducting island research and how, although scholars should not shy away from such topics, they require a higher level of ethical consideration, which is not required at the same level in mainland communities. Therefore, whilst diversity in agriculture is a key topic to examine, the focus of this thesis is women and the historic, current and future barriers they face in the agriculture industry. Thus, whilst the participant's point above demonstrates a very valid observation, it was outside the scope of this thesis.

This chapter has illustrated that there is much potential for the change and reduction of barriers faced by women in the agriculture industry. A key point that was raised was that the focus and need for there to be continued visibility and research in the subject would all help to combat such barriers, as demonstrated by this female participant from Newfoundland:

> *'Things like this when you can speak to people and people do research and people can see what you are doing definitely makes a difference, because it just puts more in the public eye so it's less uncommon, when it's more visible. But you know what, farmers are like, "I just keep to myself"; in ten days I've been to the store one time, and I haven't been anywhere but my own farm. When you're behind a locked gate and nobody can see what you are doing it's not always easy either'* (Participant #31).

This highlights how it important it is for this type of research to occur to illustrate the diversity in the industry. Although there is a 'slow burn' of progression of women in the industry, by raising awareness of the issue it allows for people to reflect and prompts conversations of one's own practices and challenges to engrained behaviours within the home.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed what the future may hold for women in the agriculture industry, and how the participants believed the future could be shaped to mitigate these barriers for future generations. This includes considering how land access is a key barrier to young women and new female entrants, that although schemes piloted and introduced by the government may offer potential opportunities, they should be examined and monitored with a critical outlook. The differing land tenure systems in place on the islands additionally offer a potential option to improve gender equality regarding land succession and access, yet, as has been proven by the various land inheritance laws in Europe, these do not translate to being any more advantageous for women. This was shown by the fact that the interviews across the island groups in the Scottish and Canadian contexts report similar barriers of patriarchal succession practices. Furthermore, considerations need to be put in place to ensure the longevity of women in leadership roles in farming organisations; firstly, by ensuring patriarchal structures are recognised by all, and are not dismissed, as has happened in the past. Secondly, that those in existing roles in Young Farmers clubs are offered support to transition these skills to mainstream agriculture organisations and that young women who then go on to start families are not then constrained by their caring commitments and can still participate in agriculture organisations. Future research should also focus on including those in the LGBTQ+ community and their experiences of the agriculture industry, yet careful ethical considerations and assurances should be put in place to ensure anonymity is maintained in island contexts. This would follow recent research from North America, which has in recent times focused on how queer farmers navigate what is traditionally seen as a very masculine, heteronormative space.

To conclude, this chapter and the previous two results chapters have presented and discussed the findings of the data collected for this research. The barriers and experiences of women, seen from both the men and women participants' perspectives in the agriculture industry in the Scottish and Canadian islands, have shown that although there has been some limited progression, there remain barriers in place. It has also highlighted the importance of considering these barriers from island spaces and how it is appropriate to use an island feminism perspective to analyse the results. These three chapters' key arguments will now be summarised in the following conclusion chapter.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The overarching key question that this thesis sought to answer is whether there were existing barriers faced by women in the agriculture industry in the island case study contexts. This comparative transatlantic case study approach has demonstrated that, in both the Scottish and two Canadian Atlantic islands, women in the agriculture industry continue to experience gender-based barriers that prevent them from reaching their full potential. This is despite extensive investment by both the Scottish and Canadian Governments in training programmes and research into the topic, demonstrating the challenging nature of altering engrained gender norms and expectations that are still associated with the belief of this being a traditional masculine occupation. This conclusion will first briefly examine the literature, methodology and methods utilised in this case study, followed by the key findings, the limitations and the future directions for research.

Existing literature in this field has extensively highlighted both the agriculture industry and general society's ignorance of the contribution that the 'invisible' women farmers make to farm businesses and holdings (Sachs, 1985; Riley, 2009). Practical barriers, such as farmyards being designed for the typical male body (Shortall, 2019) and patrilineal land succession patterns (Gasson, 1980; Alston *et al.*, 2018), as well as the socialisation of young women out of key farm knowledge transfer (Dunne *et al.*, 2021) have contributed to women feeling that even when they work harder than their male counterparts, they are still 'only' seen as a woman (Shortall *et al.*, 2020). This is reflected in the continued lack of women in leadership positions in farming organisations (Alston and Wilkinson, 2002; Shortall *et al.*, 2017).

The methodology and design of the study followed a feminist framework. This was in line with the historic power imbalance in both agriculture and wider research, which feminist researchers argue largely ignored the position of women (Tickamyer, 2020). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were used to gather the data. This allowed the participants to deviate from the interview guide, giving a flexibility to interviewees to guide the conversation and introduce new ideas that may not have been considered by the researcher whilst remaining on topic. The interviews were conducted online due to COVID-19, with both men and women farmers and crofters on the islands. A total of 33 interviews, ten (seven women and three men) from the

Canadian Atlantic islands and 23 (19 women and four men) from the Scottish islands were conducted. These were typically an hour long and generated rich, in-depth insights into the experiences of women and perceptions of these experiences from the male participants on the islands.

7.2 Key findings

The research questions for this thesis were:

1. What are the barriers women in agriculture face in an island context?
2. Are the barriers women face different or similar in Canada and Scotland?
3. Are there different barriers between the islands, depending on socio-cultural factors?

The rationale for these questions was to provide a framework for a comprehensive transnational comparison between the islands and to answer the overarching question: 'Do women experience barriers in the agriculture industry on the islands?'

The key finding of this thesis is that women continue to face barriers in the agriculture industry on the islands in both Scotland and Canada. These barriers for women include access to land, feeling unwelcome at training and mainstream farming organisations, being seen as 'only' women, and gendered caring responsibilities. These factors all contribute to the fact that women, despite decades of academic research, feel that they have to prove themselves more than their male counterparts in the agricultural industry. The findings from this thesis support the existing literature. Primarily, the findings from the Scottish Women in Agriculture research report were largely reflected in this thesis: these being that women on Scottish islands are subject to discrimination due to their gender and historically engrained gender norms. This was also similar in the Canadian Atlantic islands, where women in the agriculture industry were subject to unconscious bias, patrilineal land succession patterns and agriculture organisations being seen as an 'old boys' club'. This is despite the fact that, in past centuries, women in the islands in Scotland and Canada were seen as more equal due to the need for them to work on the holdings whilst men were away for long periods of time fishing at sea (Abrams, 2005; Thompson, 1985; Mackenzie, 2019).

Furthermore, in terms of how the islands compared with their mainland counterparts, there was a clear indication by the participants to distance themselves from what they perceived as a

‘mainland narrative’; that the disadvantages and barriers that had been experienced by women in the agriculture industry had been evidenced in high-level research and the media. Instead, they pointed to examples of women who had risen to positions of power in their local community. However, this was in line with the ‘exceptional woman’ literature, that women still have to prove themselves more than men (Shortall *et al.*, 2020). This was evidenced by people offering up examples of how their community is not subject to traditional norms; for instance, a well-respected female farmer who is seen to run a good holding in the local island community. This only reinforces the fact that women are still seen as women and must put in more work and prove themselves compared with their male counterparts in the agriculture field. Therefore, although this notion of women being more equal in island settings was promoted by some of the participants, it was found that women face equal if not more pronounced barriers when on islands.

Many of the barriers experienced on the islands were similar. A very evident difference was land tenure systems in the Scottish and Canadian Atlantic islands, between the territories and within the Canadian Atlantic contexts. This could have offered the potential for women to access farmland more easily, with cheap Crown lands available to rent on Newfoundland Island for women and new entrants; however, this potential was not reflected in the proportion of female farmers in the islands. This statistic was below the national average of female operators and even lower than Prince Edward Island, which has the highest proportion of privately owned farmland in Canada. This resonates with existing literature that discusses how varying land laws in the European Union make no difference to women being more likely to inherit land (Shortall, 2010, 2015).

A difference between the Scottish islands was that of the socio-cultural factor of religion, as in the Outer and Inner Hebrides, where there were more evident engrained gender norms in the wider islands’ communities compared with Shetland and Orkney. Religion in the islands is not solely responsible for gender norms, yet the attribute of a shared religious culture does impact communities, from islanders’ private lives to social norms (Bruce, 2014). Such norms include the historical position of men on the island, when they were of one mind with the male ministers (Bruce, 2014). These social norms in community life of religion and hierarchy can thus arguably contribute to a wider level of conservatism than perceived on the islands by the participants. This was evident by the lack of women in positions of power in the Inner and Outer Hebrides communities; for example, in the council, which until last year had been ten years without a woman councillor. In comparison, in the Shetland Islands the Leader, Convener

and Chief Executive of the council, the top positions, are all women. This demonstrated a clear difference between the Scottish islands, which some participants attributed to the lack of women in leadership positions in their local agriculture community and wider island organisations.

Alongside reinforcing the existing literature, this thesis also has original contributions to make. It has demonstrated the unique balancing act that women in agriculture face when negotiating the breaking of barriers in the island communities, whilst also reliant on maintaining positive relationships with their neighbours. This is due to a lack of resources and services on the islands, due to their peripheral nature and isolation from the mainland. This demonstrated how challenging engrained cultural norms on island communities is more difficult due to their traditional nature, therefore inhibiting gender-related progression.

An issue which has not received attention in the current literature is the unconscious biases of those who organise and present agriculture training for those in the islands, including female trainers. The small populations of the islands were used as an excuse not to organise women-only training, even when it was known that women do not attend mainstream farming events. This effectively further inhibits the progression and education of farm women in island communities. This reinforces that what is considered a 'normal' space for meetings on islands is one that is dominated by men and not one that is welcoming to women, whereas men do not have to justify their presence at meetings and are seen as the norm. This is a further example of how, in an island context, barriers are more pronounced than on the mainland.

This thesis also contributed empirically and theoretically to the emerging island feminism theoretical framework. Examining the Canadian and Scottish islands through this framework has meant that women in agriculture's experiences have been considered from a specific island space. This has therefore taken into account the isolated and peripherical nature of island life and how this interacts with gender; for instance, the need for women to remain amicable with their neighbours, even when they are aware of the fact they are being discriminated against due to their gender by the very same community. This highlights that the ability to challenge traditional social norms is more difficult in an island context. This demonstrates how the findings of this thesis have contributed to the ongoing development of the island feminist theoretical approach. The findings have shown that there is a need to take an island-specific approach to research. This is especially true for topics such as the barriers women experience in the agriculture industry, which is a typically masculine industry. The use of the island

feminist framework has shown how women are then further affected and their ability to achieve equality is constrained due to traditional island communities. Therefore, the results of this thesis illustrate and provide empirical evidence of the key principle of island feminism, where island space determines a person's experience in their community. In terms of what island feminism adds to both the field of island studies and feminist theory, it can be termed a novel approach and advocates the use of place-based intersectionality.

As reiterated throughout this thesis, the interaction and intersection of gender in island spaces is a currently under-researched area, both in island studies and feminist literature. In terms of the future for island feminism and what is needed for its further development, island feminism is an emerging framework. It is new and there is currently a lack of literature and analytical engagement with island feminism from the academic community, both from island studies and feminist scholars more generally. There needs to be more work that both uses and critically analyses the framework, including using island feminism alongside a more established perspective, such as intersectionality. This would allow for a greater depth of understanding and inspire a more rigorous debate, which is required to allow the framework to expand and engage with more mainstream island studies and feminist work. Critical engagement with island feminism includes its limitations as a framework; for instance, Gandhi's (2023) critique of the book *Gender and Island Communities*, which highlights its lack of engagement with postcolonial feminist theory and its Western-centric focus. This is reflective of the wider island studies field, which has failed to increase the number of publications and research studies that use a decolonial lens and non-Western authors (Grydehøj *et al.*, 2023). This is despite Nadarajah and Grydehøj's (2016) call for island studies to be a 'decolonial project'. This thesis was limited in the sense that although there was mention of the complex history and colonial relationships in the case study islands, there was not a specific in-depth discussion or examination of the impact of coloniality and its subsequent effect on women in the agriculture industry. Therefore, for island feminism to develop further, research that utilises the framework would need to reflect critically on the principles of the feminist theories from which island feminism originates, including postcolonial feminism. This would ensure island feminism does not succumb to a Western-centric perspective and remains true to its core principles.

This includes how it interacts with the theme of empowerment. As referred to in the literature review chapter, island feminism utilises principles from a multitude of existing contemporary feminist frameworks. A key principle of both postcolonial and indigenous feminism is to empower women who, in the past, have not been able to have their voices heard due to the

colonial powers exerting control over their communities (Green, 2017; Liddle, 2014; Elam, 2019). This connects to the theme of empowerment and demonstrates how this perspective can be used in future research to understand the empowerment of island women who try to expose and combat engrained gender norms that have prevented them from achieving their goals and ambitions, and therefore inhibit their future abilities. Although there remains critical engagement from the literature regarding the very definition of empowerment – the role of women organising themselves for collective action to challenge patriarchal structures – such structures can be more pertinent in island spaces, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, which is key to this concept (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995; Wright and Annes, 2016; Rowlands, 1995). Therefore, island feminism should engage with the empowerment literature, as this will aid its development as a theoretical approach and its ability to examine how island women seek and fight to increase their ability to access resources that elevate them both socially and economically, subsequently improving their lives.

This interlinks with the wider theme of equality and the difficult nature of achieving gender equality in island settings. Over the course of this thesis, the challenging nature of breaking down culturally engrained expectations of women on islands, despite many of these attitudes being outdated, has been extensively discussed. These are further advanced in the agriculture communities, where norms and expectations, or the lack of them, for women remain similar to those expressed in the literature dating back to the 1980s. Therefore, a critical reflection on the theme of equality, which has been expressed throughout this thesis, is how it is very difficult to achieve, especially in close-knit island communities. Furthermore, there is a need to implement intervention programmes at state level that aim to tackle gender inequality in the industry, as well as to raise awareness of these issues in communities themselves. Whilst there is evidence of a very slow shift towards awareness of a greater need for equality in the agriculture industry, cultural change is required, which can only be enacted at a local level. Therefore, whilst the concept of equality in the industry may currently appear to be unattainable, this does not mean that work should halt. Rather, there should be a greater push and emphasis on the programmes, such as the ‘Be Your Best Self’ programme run by the Scottish Government, that allow progress towards the ultimate goal of equality for women in agriculture.

7.3 Limitations

There are several limitations of this study. As mentioned throughout, the research took place during COVID-19, when there were travel restrictions in place in both Scotland and Canada, resulting in the interviews being conducted online. Therefore, gaining access to participants

was challenging; this resulted in a smaller sample size. Not being able to visit the islands meant that there was no natural opportunity to interact with a wider network of other local farmers in the community. This constrained the researcher's ability to recruit a greater number of participants. Furthermore, the online interviews had consistent interruptions due to poor digital infrastructure on the islands, therefore interrupting the flow of the interviews and thus the overall quality of the data. Another key limitation of the study was that the research was not conducted in person; therefore, many nuances will have been missed regarding being a woman in the agriculture industry in the island contexts. As the researcher had never travelled to most of the islands in the study, there was a lack of lived experience of life in the various island contexts and how they compared across the case study.

During the data analysis phase, the unexpected finding of unconscious bias of trainers was identified. Although this has contributed to this field of research, it would merit further investigation and analysis so that there is a more in-depth knowledge of the issue. Had it been apparent in the literature or identified earlier in the study, this issue could have been made a greater focus of this case study. Furthermore, the whole question of whether to use gender-neutral language gained traction during this thesis. Whilst there is a clear benefit to neutralising gender in job applications or where discrimination might occur, the exact opposite is the case if, as social scientists, we want to highlight the inequality women experience and promote a feminist agenda. It is predominantly women who experience domestic violence, rape, sex trafficking, and who almost never inherit land, as demonstrated throughout this research. To use the pronouns they/them in this context would obscure the problem and move us away from finding a solution. Although it is recognised that gender is not binary, the need to use sex-disaggregated data and a gender lens is critical to understand the power differences and incorporate gender into agriculture-related research (Tickamyer, 2020). As highlighted in other studies regarding the agriculture industry and gender, the hegemonic impact of the gender binary in this research was apparent (Southard and Jenson, 2020). Therefore, it was appropriate not to adopt gender-neutral language in this thesis, as the entire purpose was to examine the experiences and barriers faced by women in the agriculture industry on the islands.

The importance of using appropriate sex-disaggregated data was raised in Chapter 2, where it was highlighted that in the 2016 Scottish Agriculture Census report, there was a decision to incorporate 'spouses' when reporting the worker-occupied land statistic, which would increase the number of women included (Scottish Government, 2016). Although this may have been well intentioned in order to acknowledge women's contribution, it may obscure the unequal

power dynamics where women work unpaid on farms but do not necessarily own the key resource: land.

Therefore, whilst the motivation to include women in this statistic is well intentioned, to give them increased recognition of their contributions on the landholdings, it is damaging, as it prevents researchers and policy officers from conducting appropriate analysis. This demonstrates the need for sex-disaggregated data to be clearly presented in agriculture research, to provide a comprehensive analysis of the position of women in the agriculture industry. The data needs to be transparent, publicly available and presented clearly in reports, as although the segregated statistics may be obtained by emailing those who collect it, this is a form of gatekeeping.

7.4 Future directions for research

The future could be positive for women in the agriculture industry, with continued investment in training opportunities focused on women's needs, appropriate childcare provision, and access to land, either through the breakdown of patrilineal succession practices or made available through government organisations to women and new entrants. There is a clear drive and commitment from both the Scottish and Canadian Governments to put these practices into place. However, to enable this cultural change, a concerted effort to challenge sexist and discriminatory practices must be addressed at every level, from state policies to organisational behaviours and the reproduction of gender norms through everyday interaction. There are examples of how other occupations that have historically had gender imbalances, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), have used hard laws, such as the European Parliament mandate, which sets out clear barriers and methods to overcome inequalities and promote women (Shortall and Marangudakis, 2022). This is a positive development, but as this thesis has demonstrated, although state policies are successful at raising awareness of issues, they do not fully eradicate gender-based barriers. At an organisational behaviour level, it requires both men and women to be proactive in pushing back on what can be seen as an 'old boys' club' and working together to integrate women into agriculture organisations. Whilst women-only training and organisations are required for the time being, they should be future-proofed to eventually merge into mainstream farming organisations, so that women can influence wider farming agendas and not be sidelined. This will allow women's voices and concerns to be heard, resulting in a more diverse and true reflection in the agriculture organisations. Furthermore, childcare provision for mainstream farming organisations' meetings will help women's ability to attend and contribute. Regarding

the reproduction of gender norms in everyday interactions, providing mentors for women and increasing their knowledge will increase women's confidence in the industry to reaffirm their rightful position and valuable contribution. It will increase the visibility of women in the public space of agriculture and provide role models for young girls who will be able to see themselves as future farmers. This is especially important in an island context, where gender norms, as reiterated throughout this thesis, are more difficult to change due to traditional patriarchal structures evident in island communities.

With reference to the future, this thesis has also highlighted multiple avenues and potential for future research that should be considered by academics in this field. COVID-19 has demonstrated that in response to shocks there is a regression of gender equality in the agriculture industry (Budge and Shortall, 2022a). The initial impacts of this have been documented, but there is a need for research to monitor the situation to ensure there is no long-lasting damage to women's ability to enter into and remain in the agriculture industry. Secondly, there is a need in both Scotland and Canada to examine the experiences of LGBTQ+ and queer farmers and the barriers they face within the industry. The challenges of conducting this type of research in an island context are especially due to small populations and tight-knit communities. However, this does not mean such research should not be carried out; rather, increased care and consideration of what constitutes ethical research is required to ensure confidentiality is maintained for participants. Therefore, although this is a challenging potential area of research that was outside the scope of this thesis, it is one that requires examination. Finally, further research that utilises the emerging island feminism perspective is needed. This will provide a framework for island studies work to take into consideration this neglected area of research and therefore achieve a better understanding of women's experiences in island contexts. Examples from the existing literature demonstrate that issues such as gender-based violence dynamics in island contexts can be underestimated when this framework is not used (Dávalos and Zaragocín, 2022). By considering the spatial context of islands, this will allow for a greater comprehension of how island life differs from that of the mainland. This includes how gender interacts with this space; that as proven throughout this thesis, women are largely subjected to engrained cultural norms associated with traditional island communities. This prevents the progression of women and delays the goal of equality on islands. To further strengthen this approach, there needs to be comparative research about mainland experiences of women and island women, both in agriculture and across broader issues. There is currently a lack of this type of research in island studies and in the wider literature, as much work is siloed into its respective disciplines of mainland versus mainland and island versus island, such

as this research. By directly comparing the experiences, this would provide a much greater argument and justification for the need to take a specific island feminism approach and to study islands on their own terms.

7.5 Summary

To summarise, this thesis has contributed both empirically and theoretically to both the broader field of island studies and the interaction of gender, particularly for women in the agriculture industry on islands. It has demonstrated the importance of considering the unique factors of life on the islands and how these affect women specifically. Women have always contributed to the agriculture industry on the islands in both Scotland and Canada, to the extent that the industry would not have survived without their work. It is high time their abilities and contributions are recognised. Although the future may be bright, there is work to be done before full equality for women is reached in the agriculture industry. Despite literature dating back to the 1980s calling for increased awareness of what was deemed the invisible woman farmer, there remain similar patriarchal practices in the industry that prevent the full potential and abilities of women being realised. This work demonstrates just a small part of what will be a dedication to driving for equality in the farm fields, farm households and agriculture organisations. Equality for women is equality for all and is what we all should strive for.

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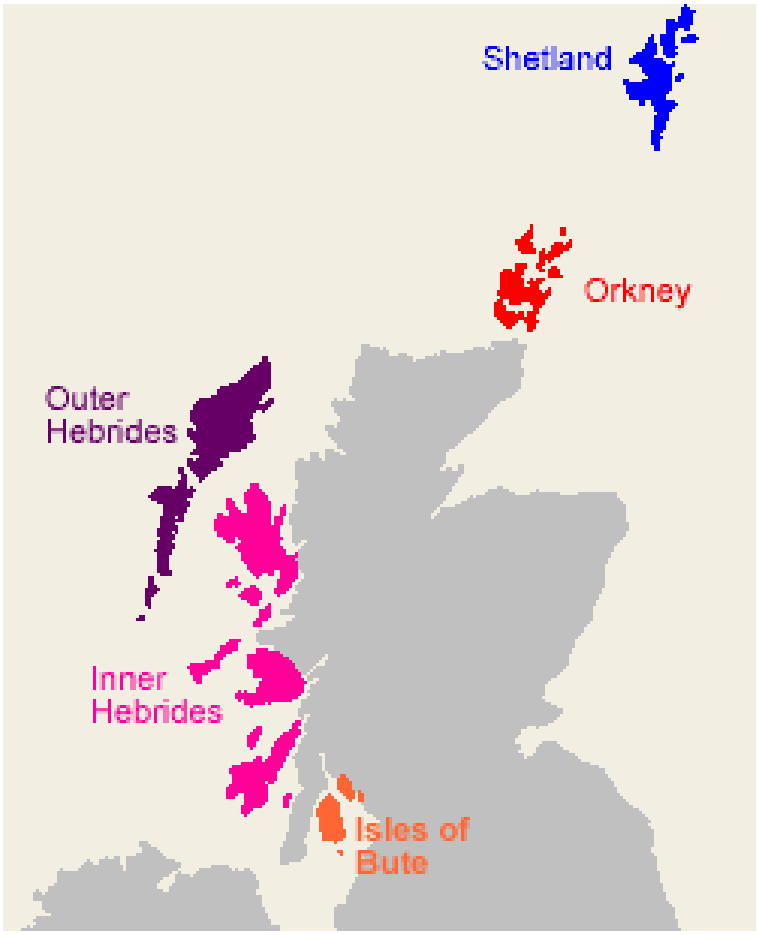
Appendix A



Source: Scottish Archival Network (2000)

Appendix B

Source: Moscovitch (2020)

Appendix C

Scottish Interview script

1. I want to start the interview by learning a bit more about you, have you always been interested in agriculture? For example, did you grow up on a farm/croft?
    a. What type of farm/croft was it?
    b. Do you also have any family members which helped out on the farm?

2. Do you currently work or help on a farm?
    a. Whose farm or croft do you help or work on? Ie, do you own it?
    b. What kind of activities do you carry out? Ie everyday jobs, management, the accounts or seasonal?

3. What would you say are the main differences to farming on the mainland and the islands?
    a. Are you part of any farming organisations on the islands? Ie NFUs, the marts.
        i. In your experience do you think they are as welcoming to women as men?
    b. Have they, or another organisation provided training opportunities?
        i. Do you think women have the same access to training and credit as men?
    c. Are there any you would like to see in the future? For instance, women only fencing courses.

4. Historically, on the islands there has been a perception that men and women have always been more equal, due to the expectation that everyone had to help out with various croft tasks for example. Do you think this is the case on your island?
    a. How would you describe your broader island in terms of community and tradition?
        i. And what about your local farming community, is it reflective of the broader island community?

5. Recently, there has been a lot of media attention about gender and agriculture and the barriers which women face, for instance a continued tendency for farmland to be passed down to the eldest male in the family, do you think there are these types of barriers existing in your island agriculture community?
    a. If yes, what do you think they are, and have you personally experienced any?
        i. What could be done to break down these barriers?
    b. If no, why do you think this is?

6. Coronavirus has affected all of us and impacted our society in many ways, has it affected the farm you work/live/own?
    a. There has been evidence that some of the impacts of COVID-19 has been felt more by women, for instance expectations for women to take on more of the domestic duties, what has been your experience or observations of this?
        i. Why do you think this has fallen to the women?

7. Would you have answered any of these questions differently had this interview been done in person? And if someone else was doing the interview, for example if I were a male researcher or someone with no agriculture experience?

8. Do you have any questions or any final comments about the role of women in agriculture in the Scottish islands?

Appendix D

Canadian Interview script

1. I want to start the interview by learning a bit more about you, have you always been interested in agriculture? For example, did you grow up on a farm/croft?
    a. What type of farm/croft was it?
    b. Do you also have any family members which helped out on the farm?

2. Do you currently work or help on a farm?
    a. Whose farm or croft do you help or work on? Ie, do you own it?
    b. What kind of activities do you carry out? Ie everyday jobs, management, the accounts or seasonal?

3. What would you say are the main differences to farming on the mainland and the islands?
    a. Are you part of any farming organisations on the islands? Ie Federation of Agriculture, NFU etc
        i. In your experience do you think they are as welcoming to women as men? For instance, has the Women's Advisory Committee been effective?
    b. Have they, or another organisation provided training opportunities?
        i. Do you think women have the same access to training and credit as men?
    c. Are there any you would like to see in the future? For instance, women only fencing courses.

4. Historically, there was an expectation that everyone had to help out with various farm tasks for example when men went fishing, then many women did a lot of the farm tasks. Do you think this is the case on your island?
    a. How would you describe your broader island in terms of community and tradition?
        i. And what about your local farming community, is it reflective of the broader island community?

5. Recently, in wider Canada there has been a lot of media attention about gender and agriculture and the barriers which women face, for instance a continued tendency for farmland to be passed down to the eldest male in the family, do you think there are these types of barriers existing in your island agriculture community?
    a. If yes, what do you think they are, and have you personally experienced any?
        i. What could be done to break down these barriers?
    b. If no, why do you think this is?

6. Coronavirus has affected all of us and impacted our society in many ways, has it affected the farm you work/live/own?
    a. There has been evidence that some of the impacts of COVID-19 has been felt more by women, for instance expectations for women to take on more of the domestic duties, what has been your experience or observations of this?
        i. Why do you think this has fallen to the women?

7. Would you have answered any of these questions differently had this interview been done in person? And if someone else was doing the interview, for example if I were a male researcher or someone with no agriculture experience?

8. Do you have any questions or any final comments about the role of women in agriculture in Newfoundland/Prince Edward Island?

Appendix E

Participant number	Country	Island Group	Gender	Age bracket	Lead Farmer	Interview method	Originally from island	If not from island, where from?	Lived away from island.	Length of time away (Years)	Children
1	Scotland	Shetland Islands	Male	61+	Yes	Phone	Yes	N/A	No	N/A	Yes
2	Scotland	Shetland Islands	Female	61+	No	Phone	Yes	N/A	Yes	2-4	Yes
3	Scotland	Shetland Islands	Female	18-30	Yes	Zoom	Yes	N/A	Yes	2-4	No
4	Scotland	Shetland Islands	Female	31-45	Joint	Phone	Yes	N/A	Yes	2-4	Yes
5	Scotland	Shetland Islands	Male	18-30	Yes	Zoom	Yes	N/A	Yes	<1	No
6	Scotland	Shetland Islands	Female	61+	No	Phone	Yes	N/A	No	N/A	Yes

7	Scotland	Orkney Islands	Female	61+	Yes	Phone	No	England	Yes	N/A	Yes
8	Scotland	Orkney Islands	Female	31-45	Joint	Zoom	Yes	N/A	Yes	2-4	Yes
9	Scotland	Orkney Islands	Female	18-30	No	Phone	No	Wales	N/A	N/A	Yes
10	Scotland	Orkney Islands	Male	31-45	Yes	Phone	Yes	N/A	No	N/A	No
11	Scotland	Orkney Islands	Female	31-45	No	Zoom	Yes	N/A	Yes	6+	Yes
12	Scotland	Inner Hebrides	Female	31-45	Yes	Teams	Yes	N/A	Yes	5	No
13	Scotland	Inner Hebrides	Female	61+	Joint	Phone	Mixture	Scotland	Yes	6+	Yes
14	Scotland	Inner Hebrides	Female	46-60	Joint	Zoom	No	Scotland	Yes	6+	No
15	Scotland	Inner Hebrides	Female	31-45	Joint	Zoom	Yes	N/A	Yes	6+	Yes
16	Scotland	Inner Hebrides	Female	18-30	No	Zoom	No	EU	Yes	6+	No

17	Scotland	Inner Hebrides	Female	46-60	Joint	Zoom	Yes	N/A	Yes	6+	Yes
18	Scotland	Outer Hebrides	Female	61+	Yes	Zoom	Yes	N/A	Yes	2-4	Yes
19	Scotland	Outer Hebrides	Female	31-45	Joint	Zoom	Yes	N/A	Yes	6+	No
20	Scotland	Outer Hebrides	Female	31-45	No	Zoom	No	Northern Ireland	N/A	N/A	Yes
21	Scotland	Outer Hebrides	Male	18-30	Yes	Zoom	Yes	N/A	Yes	2-4	No
22	Scotland	Outer Hebrides	Female	61+	Joint	Zoom	No	England	N/A	N/A	No
23	Scotland	Outer Hebrides	Female	46-60	Joint	Zoom	Yes	N/A	Yes	2-4	Yes
24	Canada	Prince Edward Island	Male	18-30	No	Zoom	Yes	N/A	Yes	2-4	No
25	Canada	Prince Edward Island	Female	46-60	Yes	Zoom	Yes	N/A	Yes	6 +	No
26	Canada	Prince Edward Island	Female	31-45	Joint	Zoom	No	Canada	No	N/A	Yes

27	Canada	Prince Edward Island	Male	46-60	No	Zoom	No	USA	Yes	6+	Yes
28	Canada	Prince Edward Island	Female	46-60	Joint	Phone	Yes	N/A	Yes	<1	Yes
29	Canada	Prince Edward Island	Female	46-60	No	Zoom	Yes	N/A	Yes	2-4	Yes
30	Canada	Newfoundland Island	Male	31-45	Yes	Phone	No	Canada	Yes	6+	Yes
31	Canada	Newfoundland Island	Female	31-45	Joint	Zoom	No	Canada	No	N/A	Yes
32	Canada	Newfoundland Island	Female	45-60	Joint	Phone	Yes	N/A	No	N/A	Yes
33	Canada	Newfoundland Island	Female	31-45	Yes	Zoom	Yes	N/A	No	N/A	Yes

Appendix F

Participant background sheet

1. What age bracket are you in.
    a. 18-30
    b. 31-45
    c. 46-60
    d. 61+
2. What is your gender?

3. Where do you currently live and whom do you live with?

4. Are you originally from the island?
    a. Yes
    b. No
        i. Where are you from?
5. Have you lived away from the island for any length of time, i.e., attending college/university?
    a. Yes
        i. 1 year or less
        ii. 2-4 years
        iii. 5 years
        iv. 6 years plus
    b. No
6. Do you have any children?
    a. Yes
        i. Ages:
        ii. Genders:
    b. No
7. What is your religion, if any, even if you aren't practising right now?

8. Are you practicing your religion regularly?

Appendix G

Women in agriculture in the Scottish and Atlantic Canadian Islands

Consent form for participation in the Women in agriculture in the Scottish and Atlantic Candaian Islands case study.

Please complete the form below by ticking the relevant boxes and signing on the line below. A copy of the completed form will be given to you for your own record.

Please Tick Box

- ☐ I confirm that the research project examining women in agriculture in the Scottish and Atlantic Canadian Islands has been explained to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project and have had these answered satisfactorily.
- ☐ I consent to the material I contribute being used to generate insights for the research project women in agriculture in the Scottish and Atlantic Canadian Islands.
- ☐ I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- ☐ I consent to allow the fully anonymised data to be used for future publications and other scholarly means of disseminating the findings from the research project.
- ☐ I understand that the information/data acquired will be securely stored by researchers, but that appropriately anonymised data to be shared to partner organisations as required for the purposes for improving service data may in future be made available to others for research purposes only.
- ☐ I understand that I can request any of the data collected from/by me to be deleted.
- ☐ I agree to take part in the above women in agriculture in the Scottish and Atlantic Canadian Islands research project**.**

Name of participant	Date	Signature
Name of researcher *Hannah Budge*	Date	

Appendix H

Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title

Women in agriculture in the Scottish islands

Invitation

You are invited to take part in a research study that is exploring any issues which women face in the agriculture industry in the Scottish Islands. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken and what it involves. Please read the following information carefully. I will be happy to go through this information sheet with you if you would like further explanation.

What is the project's purpose?

The purpose of the project is to investigate any barriers which women face in the agriculture industry across the different islands in Scotland.

Do I have to take part?

No, participation in the research study is entirely up to you. If you agree to take part, I will ask you to sign a consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time of the interview without giving a reason.

What do I have to do?

You will be asked questions regarding experiences and opinions about the roles women play in the agriculture industry in your island community.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no risks in taking part in the interview. There will also be no disadvantages to you taking part; all of your responses are confidential and will be anonymous in the write up of the PhD thesis.

Thank you for your time.

My contact details are as follows:

Email: h.budge2@newcastle.ac.uk

Appendix I

Country	Island Groups	Islands in Groups	Total Land Area (Sq miles)	Total Population Size
Scotland	Shetland Islands	Shetland Islands	567	23,167
	Orkney Islands	Orkney Islands	382	21,949
	Outer Hebrides	Isle of Lewis Harris North Uist South Uist	1,082	25,090
	Inner Hebrides	Skye Isle of Mull Islay Eigg	1,228	16,143
Canada	Prince Edward Island	N/A	2,170	156,947
	Newfoundland Island	N/A	42,030	477,787

*All data has been sourced from the Scottish 2011 Census and 2022 Statistics Canada.