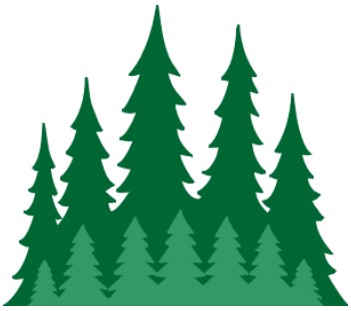

Essay on Gender in Family farming and its implication on gender equality

Elias Andersson

Arbetsrapport 309 2011

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Preface

This essay is an outcome of a process of mapping and reviewing the context and previous research in the field of family farming and aims to explore fruitful theoretical perspectives and knowledge. This essay set, in some extent, the start of my PhD-project concerning the gender (in) equality in of the family farm that is financed by the Foundation of agricultural research (SLF). The intention of my research is to be a part of the theoretical and methodological development that broadens the field of rural gender studies in collaboration with other adjacent fields, perspectives and methods.

Umeå, december 2010
Elias Andersson

Sammanfattning

Familjelantbruket har genom historien haft en central roll för att producera samhällsviktiga konsumtionsvaror. Den starka industrialiseringen under 1900-talet har familjen fortsatt att utgöra en essentiell grund för produktionen inom de gröna näringarna. Tillgången på billig arbetskraft har utgjort grunden för familjelantbrukets överlevnad inom ramarna för den kapitalistiska marknadsekonomin. Familjen som källa till arbetskraft skapar en större flexibilitet i form av arbetsförhållanden, arbetstider, arbetsmiljö och ekonomi, i en produktion som i stor utsträckning är manuell och därför tidskrävande. Studiet av arbetsdelningen och ägandet könskodning inom familjelantbruket har bidragit till förståelsen av familjens roll i kvinnors underordning. Kärnfamiljen, liksom landsbygden, är två centrala nationella symboler som är starkt politiskt kodade och nära knutna till vår förståelse av svenskhet. Den sociala organiseringen av familjen bidrar till framställandet av de samhälliga hierarkierna och relationerna som naturaliga. Barn socialiseras in i gårdens arbete samt deras sociala position och identitet. Därigenom spelar den rurala kärnfamiljen en betydande symbolisk roll i upprätthållandet av heterosexuella ideologin och den patriarkala arbetsdelningen inom familjen. Därför är det av stor betydelse att undersöka hur kön kodar arbetsuppgifter, ägande och ojämlikhet i organiseringen av familjelantbruket. De sociala relationerna är inte en deterministisk process av inordnande, utan en process som formas av subjekt, agentskap och motstånd, vilket tar sig utryck på olika sätt och genom skiftande strategier.

Genusvetenskapen inom landbygdsforskningen har en dryg fyrtioårig historia som akademiskt fält. I strömmarna efter den andra vågens kvinnorörelser formerades fältets ursprungliga forskningsmål som främst syftade att ifrågasätta den rådande bilden av den manliga lantbrukaren och synliggöra kvinnors arbete och deltagande inom landbygdens produktion. Under 80-talet förde marxistiskt och strukturalistiskt inspirerade forskare upp betydelsen av den socioekonomiska kontexten för kvinnors erfarenheter och liv i västvälden och utvecklingsländerna. Under 90-talet ökade mekaniseringen av lantbruket, vilket medförde att kvinnornas roll på gården förändrades till följd av att deras arbete ofta ersattes av maskiner. Denna process belyser ytterligare den ojämlika värderingen av arbetet på gården och i hushållet. Den tidigare förståelsen av kön, som en fix och distinkt kategori, ersattes av ett mer socialkonstruktivistiska synsätt. Förståelsen av genusrelationerna som könade praktiker och meningsskapande ersatte gradvis könsrollstänkandet. Identitetsforskningen har vidgat det rurala genusperspektivet till att även omfatta klass, etnicitet, rasifiering, ålder och sexualitet i studerandet av ojämlikhet.

Familjelantbruket, i sin rurala kontext, har halkat efter den allmänna utvecklingen inom jämställdhetsområdet, vilket grundar sig i flera olika faktorer. För att öka jämställdheten inom familjelantbruket är det viktigt att analyser den sociala organiseringen av ojämställdhet inom detsamma. I denna process har både de kvalitativa och kvantitativa metoderna en fruktbar och viktig roll. Statistikens främsta användningsområde är att synliggöra orättvisor, underminera stereotyper och utgöra grunden för politiska beslut som syftar mot ett mer jämlikt samhälle. Kvantitativa metoder är ett bra verktyg för att fånga den strukturella organiseringen av samhället och erbjuder, i ifrågasättandet av singulariteten, en bredare bild av den sociala världen. Det är däremot viktigt att betona att definierandet av statistiska data är mer än teknikalitet, utan även något djupt politiskt.

Genusvetenskapen inom landbygdsforskningen har etablerat sig som ett särkilt fält inom rural sociologi, geografi och ekonomi. Problematiken kring fältets isolering kvarstår drygt tjugo år efter att det för först gången påtalades av forskare. För att utveckla fältet empiriskt och teoretiskt krävs det att fältet vidgas och även involverar andra discipliner och akademiska fält. Det är viktigt att skapa grunder för breda forskarnätverk samt att föra ut forskningsresultat och diskussioner i både offentlig debatt och till andra akademiska fält. I studierna av familjelantbruket är det nödvändigt att inkludera kunskaper från andra akademiska fält som t.ex. familjestudier, genusvetenskap, arbetsvetenskap, ekonomi och organisationssociologi. Det är angeläget att bredda de sociala perspektiven och se till hur olika sociala relationer formar ojämställdheten inom familjelantbruket. Ojämställdhet kan inte separeras från andra ojämlikheter på samma sätt som kön inte kan särskiljas från andra sociala relationer. I detta utgör det intersektionella perspektivet ett alternativ till identitetpolitik. I flera offentliga utredningar betonas behovet av en tydligare koppling mellan teoretisk genusvetenskap och praktiskt jämställdhetsarbete. Jag har intentioner att med min forskning bidra till den teoretiska och metodologiska utvecklingen, och därmed vidga den genusvetenskapen inom landbygdsforskningen. En sådan utveckling öppnar upp fältet i förhållandet till dess omvärld och inkluderar ett brett socialt perspektiv med hjälp av både kvalitativa och kvantitativa metoder.

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1 Introduction

The ideal of gender equality has been a feature of Swedish politics on and off since the 1970s. Many political decisions have been made and laws issued to increase equality between men and woman. Various political actions have focused especially on equality in the workplace and supporting parenting through laws and labour regulations (Ds 2004:39). However, the political efforts to promote equality have contrarily contributed to setbacks in parts of society that are not naturally connected to the labour market, in ways that have reinforced the differences between the centre and periphery of society. The rural areas of Sweden have been particularly affected by this; an issue that is only occasionally discussed.

Family farming in the countryside falls outside the regulation of the labour market and most public interest, thus it receives only minor general and academic attention. However, in most areas of the world the family remains the primary unit of production in agriculture, and the limited amount of relevant research indicates that family organization of farming produces and reinforces inequalities (Brandth 2002, Blekesaune 1996, Flygare 1999, Shortall 1999). Further study of the organization, conditions and context of family farming is essential for examining and understanding the reproduction of inequalities within the area. This research field differs from other work-related sociological research fields, since the organization of family work is not based on ordinary relations between employers and employees but more complex relationships. The concepts of simple commodity production (SCP) have provided a guide for the following theoretical discussions and concepts. SCP defines a variety of types of small-scale production for the market, based on family or household labour and property. In this type of production there is a close connection between capital and labour. The main academic interest in SCP to date has been in studies of the historical role of family enterprise in the early development of industrialization. Much less attention has been paid to its role in more advanced capitalist economies, since production modes and organizations have generally profoundly changed. However, agriculture is an exception from this general development, since even in advanced capitalist societies this major production sector is still dominated at the farm level by family enterprises (Friedmann 1986, Goodman & Redclift 1985).

Although SCP has provided a conceptual guide for discussion here, it should be noted that the orthodox understanding of SCP presents major difficulties for the analysis of family enterprise and household production, since it rests on the divisions of political and domestic economy, home and work, and waged and non-waged work (Marsden 1991). Feminist

scholarship has made an important contribution towards understanding and challenging the general assumptions of non-waged work and gender relations (O'Hara 1998, Whatmore 1991). Notably, the exploration of women's experience as domestic workers has challenged the orthodox concepts of labour and drawn attention to the complicating factors of the family as a sphere of exploitation and struggle. Rural social theories, as well as urban-based feminist theories and practices, inadequately address the context of men's and women's lives within family farming, but are still helpful for exploring the commonalities and differences in men's and women's experiences (Niskanen 1998, O'Hara 1998). However, feminist researchers have generally had little to say about women's participation in SCP in the West. Furthermore, the use of orthodox categories of either housewife or wage labourer, has, as in other parts of feminist theory, proven inadequate, deceptive and limiting (Whatmore 1991). Thus, it is important to consider ways in which the gendering of jobs and ownership more subtly shapes the organization of farming, and the interweaving of gender within the organization of family farming and inequalities is at the core of my analysis.

We should not view the women and men involved in family farming as homogeneous, as there are no universal genders within this context. The lives of men and women in rural areas differ from those of their urban counterparts, as well as between different rural areas (Javefors Grauers & Eskilsson 2003). Thus, it is important to explore the interrelations between different types of social division and the ways they combine to form specific social hierarchies within these areas. It is also fruitful in the context of this study to capture strategies of resistance to inequalities and how they both shape and are shaped by collective and emotional relations. By expanding the research to include the experience of women outside conventional categories, this study can be placed within feminist scholarship with a perspective that is broader than the experience of white, western, upper-middle-class, urban women.

Mainstream society continues to legitimize the subordination of woman through romanticized narratives that misinterpret rural women's ties. The ideals of rurality and rural livelihood are of deep political interest and are firmly connected to the identity of the nation. Two key gendered elements of these romantic ideals are wifehood, which Whatmore (1990) has shown to be primarily reinforced by the patriarchal labour process in rural ideologies, and the assumed "naturalness" of heterosexuality, rural life and community, as discussed by Little (2003). To progress beyond the ideological assumptions and understanding of rural life, it is

crucial to take people's narratives of their life and work experiences as a point of departure, in studying family farming from an emancipatory perspective (Woods 2005).

Interest in the development towards gender equality goes beyond the academic community. Despite the continuing influence of the romantic ideals outlined above, interest in the development towards gender equality goes beyond the academic community. There is a general and political will to reduce the structural barriers of individuals and to increase equality in the rural and agricultural sector (LRF 2009). However, a qualitative and quantitative understanding of the social organization of family farming is essential for developing effective measures and to monitor their outcome over sufficiently long timeframes.

2 Previous research

Investigation of family farm activities and businesses requires interdisciplinary research, due to their diversity. However, various aspects of the family farm and associated issues have received widely varying degrees of attention, largely centred within rural studies, as outlined below.

2.1 Rural gender studies

The academic field of rural gender studies has a nearly 40-year history, originating during the growing second wave of the women's movement and the development of feminist research at that time. An important difference between this research stream and other Western academic interests, is that is originates largely from the study of non-Western women's participation and their major role in agricultural production. Subsequent development of rural gender studies has been influenced by the evolution of rural studies in both Western and non-Western countries (Whatmore 1994, Brandth 2002).

The first rural gender studies appeared in the 1970s (Boserup 1970). In the developing countries, the role of women in agricultural production had been overlooked and was largely unrepresented. In bringing women's role to the fore, scientists questioned the predominant image of the male farmer – an image that had shaped the administration of development resources. Inspired by these studies, researchers from westernised societies expanded this research, as illustrated by seminal works such as *The invisible farmers* by Carolyn Sachs (1983). The primary aim of the first wave of rural gender studies was to expose the invisibility of farm women's work and to analyse its roots, so as to expand the theoretical base of rural studies (Sachs 1983, Reimer 1986, Gasson 1992, Sommestad 1998). During the 1980s, scientists inspired by Marxist and socialist ideology changed the methodological framework and political concepts of rural social studies. They questioned concepts such as modernization and development, and criticized previous research for ignoring socio-economic factors. This new research placed the situation of women in developing countries in relation to both their socio-economic and gender positions, mainly to highlight the structural inequalities between the centre and peripheries of the world. The theoretical framework was further extended during the second half of the 1980s to embrace Western rural studies research (Whatmore 1994, Little and Panelli 2003).

In the 1990s, research revealed how the modernization of farm work had led to a de-skilling of women's work and a devaluation of their position on the farm. Interest in the family as a

production unit was also raised, both in Western and non-Western countries. The family farm was at that time the primary production unit, independent of context, in the agricultural sector. Despite the effects of industrialization and reorganization of other sectors on the labour market, the family farm was the dominant production unit across the world in agriculture. At the beginning of the 1990s, the question of the oppression of women within the nuclear family was renewed within the feminist debate. The power relations within the family began to play a more central part in rural gender studies and in the study of women's unpaid house- and farm work (Freidman 1986, Whatmore 1990, Delphy and Leonard 1992).

Within the study of the family, the question of the patrilineal nature of land and capital transfer through inherence was raised. The farm was inherited by the sons of the family, while marriage was shown to be the main way in to farming for women. The exclusion of women from agricultural property legitimized male domination in agricultural production and politics (Shortall 1992, Shortall 1999). It was also at the start of the 1990s that the first studies of rural women outside agriculture emerged. Research on off-farm wage-labour explored the economic factors of farming and its consequence for gender relations. An important conclusion of this research was that the public sphere had previously been primarily reserved for men, but as the profitability of the family farm declined, the need for income had forced women (especially) into part-time wage-labour (Little 1991, Oldrup 1999, Kelly and Shortall 2002). This interpretation of women's off-farm labour is a key issue in the rural gender field. The flexibility of women as labour made it possible for the husband to withhold his role as farmer, while wage-labour gave women a platform, a presence in the public sphere and financial independence (Brandth 2002, O'Hara 1998).

At the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s, the concept of gender started to shift. The newly introduced concepts of gender redefined the previous fixed and distinct categories into a more socially-constructed understanding of the sexes. The earlier use of sex roles in research within the field were gradually modified by the understanding of gender relations as gendered practices and meanings. The theoretical introduction of gendered identities opened up a more complex visualization of the social world, in which more than one social position was possible. This new view of agency within social relations changed the conceptual position of women from solely victims to actors as well. Both women and men were recognized to participate in the production and reproduction of the unequal gender relations. This understanding of the social sphere has helped researchers to understand how women, in various ways, negotiate their position on the farm and in the rural community. The study of

agency has led to analyses of forms of resistance and other strategies in the social context of rural areas (Pini 2005). One topic relevant to this discussion is the self-organization of rural women in separate networks, within or outside established organisations (Arora-Jonsson 2009, 2010).

In addition to identities, research in rural studies other social dimensions besides gender, such as class, ethnicity, race, age and sexuality has been acknowledged in the production inequalities (Arora-Jonsson 2009, Little 2003, Reed 2000). However, the use of the intersectional perspective is still limited in rural studies, especially in the west.

The production, influence and reinforcement of stereotypical representations in mainstream media of men and women in rural areas, primarily on the farm or in the forest, have been research issues since the 1990s. Notably, the postmodern understanding of the construction of identities has resulted in several attempts to deconstruct how identities are affected by social representations, particularly in farm- or forestry-related media and advertising (Brandth 1995, Brandth & Haugen 2000, Leipins 2000).

Rural gender studies have come a long way over the past four decades. It is a field that has developed over time and discovered new and important issues. In some places, at least, the situation for rural women has improved during this period, but women are still far from equal to men and in various ways they remain oppressed. As production conditions in the agricultural and forestry sectors change, they affect social relations within rural areas. The consequences of this transformation for the situation of women and social relations are important issues for progress. Hence, Little and Panelli (2003) argue that rural gender identities have changed fundamentally during the development of rural gender studies.

The expansion of the European Union has provided greater possibilities for interesting comparisons of different experiences of gender (in)equalities, not least with the post-socialist countries that had officially banned inequities. The effects of globalization on women and comparisons between developing and developed countries are examples of other issues that are of great ongoing concern in rural gender studies (Bock 2006, Shortall 2006a).

2.2 The will of the farm

One of the primary issues within rural gender studies and family farming research is the patrilineal transfer of land and property, usually from father to son. Many researchers within the field emphasize the central role that property and ownership plays in the production and reproduction of social relations. Both in agriculture and forestry, property and its acquisition

are regulated by customs and traditions. Shortall (1999) argues that property provides easier access to other core resources of farming. Access to knowledge, organisational resources, customs, social practices and political power are, according to Shortall, all connected to land ownership. In order to conduct forestry or farming activities, it is vital to have access to land, but property is not equally accessible to all, since most farmers and forest owners acquire their land through inheritance. Property in most of Western Europe and North America is transferred within families, in a nearly closed system. A small amount of land is acquired through the market, but this is a difficult way to enter farming. The transfer of land is also connected to tradition, with the result that women rarely inherit land and take over the business. The most common entrance for women to farming and forestry is through marriage. Furthermore, despite the inequities within the system, women who marry into the farm often participate in the customs and thereby transfer the land to their sons. The distribution of property within farming is not only crucial for influence and access to land-based activities, but also produces and reproduces, the image of the male farmer, as opposed to the farmer's wife or female farmer (Brandth 2002, Flygare 1999, Lidestav and Nordfjell 2005, Shortall 1999, Shortall 2002 Whatmore 1990).

In most western countries, laws and regulations support equal inheritance between sons and daughters. However, in practice, it still seems to be the sons who are given property. There is a great amount of research confirming this pattern and discussing its causes (Flygare 1999, 2001, Haugen 1994). This structural organization of property transfer is most obvious in agricultural family farming, but is also present within the family forestry sector. In the Swedish context of family forestry, fewer women than men take over the family forest. Furthermore, women generally inherit smaller areas than men and share ownership with other family members to a greater extent. Men also buy their property from parents more often than women (Lidestav 2010).

Sons and daughters have officially had equal inheritance rights for more than 150 years in Sweden. Nevertheless, various customs and regulations have deprived women of their rights to acquire, administer and inherit property. It was not until 1950 that women truly had full legal rights to inheritance. According to Lidestav (2001) these conditions have strongly shaped current social relations of forestry and the family farm, partly because a considerable proportion of current forest owners acquired ownership during a time when administrative law was not enforced. In the mid-1970s, only a fifth of the forest owners were women. Thus, Swedish history of administrative law has shaped and influenced Swedish rural society and its

social relations, due to the key role that property and its transfer play in rural production (Lidestav 2001).

2.3 Agriculture and farming

Agricultural production and farming are closely associated with the male farmer and masculinity. The historical background can be primarily found in the patriarchal structures and male domination within the family farm. The farm business is owned and controlled by men and thus the occupation of farmer is labelled as male. The concept of gender division of work in agriculture stipulates the principal of social differentiation and produces and reproduces the identities of the "farmer" and the "farmer's wife". The positioning of men and women in agriculture by their activities constructs and shapes the social understanding of masculine and feminine. The division of labour reveals the dominant value of productive and hard work with heavy machinery. The gendered hierarchy of work has, through specialized and mechanized production, always resulted in a superior position of men, even if the area is formally dominated by women (Götebo Johannesson 1996, Little and Panelli 2003, Shortall 1999, Whatmore 1990).

In the Nordic context, milk production and processing are activities that have traditionally been associated with women on the farm. However, mechanisation and increasing profitability attracted men into this work, while the introduction of the milking machine pushed women back into the household and their role as wife (Almås and Haugen 1991, Sommestad 1992). Similar developments have been described by researchers in other western countries and production fields, primarily in more industrial and capital-intensive systems, for example egg and poultry production (Shortall 1999).

The modernisation of agriculture has led to a redistribution of work between men and women, and the demand for technology in farming has implied a de-skilling and degradation of women's work. The labour of women has, in general, been viewed as more flexible and only as a supplement, and thus invisible or inferior to the primary labour of men on the farm (Kaldal 2000, Niskanen 2001, Flygare 1999). When the profitability of farms decreased, women left the farm to work in other parts of the labour market to a greater extent than men. This process has reinforced the image of women's labour as flexible, but also raised questions about the male role as breadwinner. Leaving the farm, and even the rural area, has been seen as an act of resistance against these patriarchal inequalities, but this still has not led to any

significant changes in gender relations or the renegotiation of domestic work (Blekesaune 1996, Brandth 2002, Kelly and Shortall 2002).

2.4 Forestry

In forestry, male domination has been longer-lasting, and until the end of the 1960s women were absent from higher education in forestry. The number of women engaged in forestry education, occupation and organizations has increased, but they continue to constitute a minority in the sector (Lidestav and Sjölander 2007). The forestry professions have a strong masculine association, women are mainly active in administrative or plantation work in the sector, and the few women in the forestry workplace face male occupational cultures. In contrast, sons of men engaged in the sector have often been socialized into forestry and adulthood by helping the fathers with forest work (Brandth and Haugen 2000, Flygare 1999, Lidestav 2001, Lidestav and Sjölander 2007).

In the male-dominated forestry sector, female foresters and forest owners' face significant difficulties in establishing their identities within forestry professions. Various strategies that have been adopted by women to negotiate their positions as forest owners and professional women in the forest sector have been described, and various scholars have studied women's collective organization within the forest communities and organization. Several of these studies have shown a strong reaction against the separate organization of women in forestry that differs from that of the traditional organisations in rural areas. However, joining the existing (male) associations has often proved to be a laborious and trying process for the women involved (Arora-Jonsson 2005, Brandth, Follo and Haugen 2004).

Lidestav and Sjölander (2007) note that the forestry sector has one of Sweden's most unbalanced workforces, in terms of gender. Men dominate the sector at all levels, although female supervisors have become more common over the last two decades. During this period there have been considerable changes in the work done by supervisors, which now (for instance) includes greater elements of environmental protection (Lidestav and Sjölander 2007).

Research has also shown that women in both agriculture and forestry have been over-shadowed by men. In Sweden, nearly two out of five forest owners are women, but only 14% of the female forest owners have sole responsibility for overall decisions. In comparison, the figure is 64% for male forest owners. Furthermore: the main responsibilities for day-to-day work are held by 65% of the male and only 6% of the female forest owners; a fifth of the

female forest owners compared to a third of the male forest owners have single ownership; and the average production unit owned by women is smaller than that owned by men (Lidestav 2003, Lidestav and Nordfjell 2005).

The structural and social patterns of both agriculture and forestry have similarities to other areas of the Swedish labour market. This highlights both the historical dimensions and the overall interest in social relations within agriculture and forestry. There clearly remains a need for analyses of various aspects of forestry, and from various perspectives, to augment knowledge of the social relations within the industry.

3 The family farm

The family farm is one of the most long-lasting cultural and historical phenomena in the western world. Today, the family farm is still the primary unit of agricultural production and forestry in many areas of the world. In various parts of Europe, when industrialization took root, production was reorganized and slimmed down to make it more cost-effective. The ideology of Fordism has reshaped society and its production in many ways. Despite this development, the family farm as a production unit has stood the test of time in both capitalist and post-socialist countries (Whatmore 1990, Whatmore, Lowe and Marsden 1991).

The reasons, why and how, the family farm has survived, are topics of ongoing discussion. For nearly four decades, the nature of family farms has been debated by those who regard the family farm as a permanent feature in agriculture and those who believe that the family farm is a transitional phenomenon in an ongoing industrialization of agricultural production. The latter position, the transition theory, proposes that industrialization leads to market integration, in which only the most competitive farms will survive. Marxists argue that this will lead to social polarization and proletarianization of production. In the family farm, control over the means of production will be lost to external capital. An example of this is contract farming (Whatmore 1990, Shortall 1999, Freidmann 1986).

One of the reasons that the family farm can survive as a non-capitalist form of production is its ability to provide cheap labour, irrespective of income, and to do so highly flexibly in response to changes in labour demand, the economy, time and the working environment. Another reason is that agricultural production is highly time-demanding, which makes the profit rates low and unattractive for external investors. The lack of access to land on the open market is another obstacle to capital penetrating agriculture.

There has also been debate about how to define the family farm, resulting in both broad and narrow definitions. The broad definition of the family farm, originally constructed by Gasson and Errington (1993), describes the “family farm business” according to the following six elements, based on the relationship between the farm and the associated household.

- Business ownership is combined with managerial control in the hands of business principals.
- These principals are related by kinship or marriage.
- Family members (including these business principals) provide capital for the business.
- Family members, including business principals, execute farm work.
- Business ownership and managerial control are transferred between generations with the passage of time.

• The family lives on the farm (Gasson and Errington 1993, p. 18).

Gasson and Errington (1993) point out that ownership and control are more important than the numbers of labour hours spent on the farm. A primary concern has been to develop agricultural production, so as to reduce the need for human labour input. Gasson and Errington claim, therefore, that the importance of work has declined; hence their definition of the "family farm business" is primarily based on property relations and control, rather than on the dominance of the family within the labour force.

Djurfeldt (1996) criticized the definition of Gasson and Errington and argued that they miss the comparative advantage of non-fixed labour costs for family farms. Djurfeldt's objection suggests that the labour should be a more vital criterion in the definition of the "notional family farm". According to Djurfeldt's narrow definition, the family farm is characterized by its requirement for family labour for production (Djurfeldt 1996:341). The narrow definition can also be problematic, since it excludes part-time and diverse farming, where there is a lack of on-farm labour input compared with off-farm income. In addition, Blekesaune (1996) argued that the narrowing of the concept of the family farm makes it more difficult to separate the farm and the family in an analytical sense.

Research on women within farming has to a large extent focused on the family farm. As outlined above, this research has shown that the family farm is patriarchal, with the man as the head of the household and the decision maker, and that women are less likely to inherit compared with men, in an industry that is controlled by men (Lidestav 2010, O'Hara 1998, Shortall 1999). Thus, O'Hara (1998) points out that the family farm, from a feminist perspective, is clearly oppressive to women; their on-farm work is unpaid and they are invisible to society. The question to consider is this, should the family be understood as the major site of exploration of these women? The gendered organisation of work and capital on family farms has contributed to the understanding of the family as the locus of women's exploitation. The on-farm work of farm wives is strongly associated with the idea of family solidarity and partnership with their husbands. Even though they may not own the land, the women consider the family farm as their own. However, if they separate from their husbands, there is also an apparent tradition in family farming that the farm follows the male line of the family** (O'Hara 1998, Shortall 1999).

4 Within the Family

The nuclear family and the countryside are two important national symbols that are loaded with political meaning. The social connection between farming and the identity of the family excludes single farmers from the societal understanding of the farmer (Nordström Källström 2008). The traditional family ideal is formed through a combination of marital and blood ties, based on heterosexual couples who produce their own biological children. Such families are authoritarian in structure, with a clear and fixed sexual division of labour. Advocates of an idealized view of the traditional family regard it is a private haven, united by emotional bonds of love and caring, with a structure naturalized and legitimatized by state-sanctioned heterosexual marriage (Laskar 2005). The family constitutes a fundamental principle of social organization and is, in its idealized version, the ultimate unit of equality since the family protects, supports and balances the interest of all its members. In contrast to this version, families are in reality organized around shifting patterns of hierarchy. The socialization within the family reinforces the hierarchy and both the image and symbol of the family as a unit of harmonized interests. Patricia Hill Collins also emphasizes that individuals learn, in their families of origin, their place in the social hierarchy and to view the social organization as natural. The social hierarchy thus becomes naturalized because of its resemblance to processes within the family (Collins 2000).

The social organization of the family is attached to the household, which is primarily conceptualized as the home (a multiple concept, encompassing wider dimensions, such as one's hometown or homeland, due to its ideological links to the location of the family). The home provides a space of privacy and security for its members; the place that families are attached to and where they are regarded as truly belonging. An idea that is often referred to in this context is that an objective of individuals and groups is to find their right place or "home". Furthermore, the spatial divisions and organization of the family are shaped in relation to the home – both inside and outside its social or physical walls - and gendered ideas about space play an important role in these spatial divisions, within the home and in other spheres, both public and private (Daly 2000). This concept follows the premise that everything has its place, maintaining the borders and the logic of segregated home spaces (Collins 2000).

Marriage and the family have been two of the most heavily critiqued institutions by the feminist field. However, feminists have been ambivalent critics of the family. The problematic position of women in families has both been a target of criticism and regarded as

a basis of agency or independent action (Delphy 1984.). Progress in the Lesbian and gay rights movement raised the question of same-sex marriage and partnership, which in turn revived debate on the concept of family (Okin 1997). One contribution to the research on families by feminist scholars has been their emphasis on the plurality of families and rejection of the traditional understanding of "the family". It has been argued that the reproduction of "the family" as homogeneous, natural, universal and good, sets the foundation of governments' support for a specific form of family. Thus, Zack (1997) advocates a reconceptualization of "family", to better acknowledge the diversity of both familial structures and family values. This would have a major impact on the social relations and organization of the family farm, and also contribute to a more democratic and non-normative space in rural areas.

5 Counting on equality

This chapter deals with gender statistics and the quantitative study and measure of gender equalities. The primary characteristic and statistical variable is gender, but a wider understanding of equalities, including variables such as age, ethnicity and location is also covered.

5.1 Why?

> "Only if we know where we were and where we are now, can we take a confident step forward" (Evans 1992:39)

Measuring and tracking the status of gender equality is an important but difficult task, given the variety of locations where discrimination against women occurs. Statistics and indicators of the situation of various population groups in society are vital tools in promoting equality. Statistics on equality can also play a central role in undermining stereotypes and provide foundations for political goals and policies that foster a more equal society. Statistics is closely produced in relation to their users, in forms of politics, researchers, the media and the public, and their responds of needs. The statistics is most often the base of the selection of appropriate political measures in various issues. Thus, to generate objective equality statistics and associated political measures, it is essential to challenge and discuss matters of definition, technical issues and the availability of data, to ensure that the resulting statistics rigorously reflect the realities of individual's lives and their relations. Women's unpaid work in the household and the informal sector, especially, requires new indicators to provide more accurate records and values. Official statistics, national and international, have ignored key aspects of this issue, and thus prevented the achievement of a more complete understanding of social life. An example is women's economic contribution to, and role in, production. However, there have been increasing attempts to examine the concepts of equality using quantitative data, statistics and indicators more rigorously, and the debate concerning statistics and indicators has resulted in the development of more sophisticated approaches (Hedman, Perucci and Sundström 1996, Chaseling 2000).

5.2 Measuring equality

Making statistical knowledge accessible and meaningful to the public is an important aspect of emancipatory research. Towards this end, indicators are important for summarizing complex data for a wider audience in a meaningful way. Walby (2005) identifies a list of criteria for effective indicators. They should: summarise complex data, be unambiguous and easy to interpret, show whether improvement or deterioration has occurred, be significant and relevant, based on large amounts of quantitative data, allow comparisons between countries and population groups at regular intervals, and be of sufficient scale without being confusing, misleading or unbalanced (Walby 2005).

In order to visualise inequalities robustly, any statistics used should be appropriately defined and readily available. However, Walby and Armstrong (2010) point out that the accessibility of data reflects structural inequities and the political context. In addition, the definitions of statistics are not merely technical matters, they also have profound potential political implications. Collecting and making data public is basically a social, economic and political process, for example to determine the importance of an issue (Walby and Armstrong 2010).

In order to overcome data deficiencies, goals need to be quantified and to be understandable and communicable to the parties involved. This does not only concern the quantitative measures, but also qualitative measures, for example the experience of sexual harassment and work competence. For these kinds of qualitative measures, a more general and imprecise definition that can be stated in a few words is required. The main goal is mainly to reduce the frequency of discriminatory incidents during a given time period, and for such purposes quantitative measures of gender equality, e.g. the representation of women, are most convenient and illuminating. However, quantitative data often have underlying qualitative elements, which can be crucial for their interpretation. Within the field of family farming, relevant examples are provided by the official Swedish report “Slow progress” (Det går långsamt fram) and the FAO report “Time for Action” (DS 2004:39, FAO 2006). Both of these reports use primary quantitative data to show gender inequalities within their researched fields by visualizing the distinct and common relationships among the data. This use of statistics to capture the structural organisation of society offers a wider image of the social world and its relations, as it rejects the assumption of singularity of certain events (LRF 2009).

The concept of inequality refers to an imbalanced relationship between two, or more, groups. The everyday understanding of this concept is primarily based on imbalanced distributions of desirable variables (e.g. income or representation). By examining such distributions, using appropriate raw data, one can determine whether any improvement, for

instance in the relative pay of disadvantaged groups is largely due to an increase in their pay, or a decline in the pay of other groups. Including extreme values is vital for calculating pay gaps and other relevant parameters. There is particular importance in measuring the levels of equality within a precise field. While differences or gaps are mainly used to visualize inequalities, in some cases thresholds are also applicable. Assessment of poverty is one of the areas where thresholds are often used. Measuring absolute poverty is focused on the number of individuals that live under an established threshold, such as the famous one-dollar per day income criterion. In determinations of relative poverty, the threshold can be calculated through a set share of the median income. It is important to point out that inequality gaps are not the same as poverty thresholds. Inequality gaps have a wider context, but thresholds have wider applications in setting policy goals. An example is the case of violence against women, which has a zero threshold as a goal, regardless of differences between advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Equality review 2007, Walby and Armstrong 2010).'

5.3 Gendered economic equality

Gendered economic inequalities are important in two ways, both in their direct form of inequalities within and their contribution to the inequalities between households. They include the gender gaps in employment and unemployment rates, the gender pay gap, the female share of earned income, occupation segregation and the proportion of women in managerial and professional jobs. The female employment rate has increased over the last twenty years in nearly all regions of the world. The average proportion of females in the labour force was 39% globally in 2005 and 44% in the OECD countries in 2006, although many of the rich counties in the North have reached what is considered to be equal presence of men and women in the labour market (47% women). Like the employment gap, the gender pay gap has also declined very slowly over the last two decades. Indeed, the gender pay gap within the EU is still on average 15%, ranging between 7% in Belgium and 22% in Germany. However, there are some technical weaknesses in the measure of gender pay gaps that can make them misleading in cross-country comparisons. Notably, the gender pay gap rate is sensitive to differences in female employment rates; pay gaps are smaller in countries with low female employment rates. To compensate for the weaknesses in the measure of gender pay gaps, alternative measures are sometimes used. One such measure is the female share of earned income. The average earned income of women in the OECD countries was 59% of average male income in 2005. The higher proportion of females employed in the non-agricultural

sector of the more developed countries also influences the variability of results. In the OCED countries, 28% of managers, legislators and senior officials are women. There are also significant differences among developed countries, e.g. in a comparison of gender equality in the USA and Sweden, pay and income gaps were found to be greater in the USA, but smaller in terms of proportions of female managers (Walby 2009) (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of equality indicators between the USA and Sweden. (1) = female employment rate; (2) = gender pay gap; (3) = female share of earned income; (4) = percentage of women in managerial positions.

	(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**
USA	**46**	**22**	**63**	**42**
Sweden	**47**	**16**	**81**	**30**

5.4 Index and Measure

To determine the level of equality at a national level, there are two primary measures of well-being: the Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) (Walby 2009.). The GDI indicates the overall gender inequality and development in a country, according to various parameters. The GDI is a modified and gendered version of the Human Development Index (HDI), based on the same dimensions as the HDI with the addition of gender. The GDI was produced in response to criticism of HDI and its inability to account for different groups within a nation. Both the GDI and HDI are based on three components: life expectancy, education and income. GDI is calculated by computing achievements indicators for men and women separately, followed by an "equally distributed index" for each component.

$$\text{Equally Distributed Index} = \{[\text{female population share} \times (\text{female index}^{1-x})] + [\text{male population share} \times (\text{male index}^{1-x})]\}^{1/1-x}$$

Following publication of an article by Bardhan and Klasen (1999) the methodology used to calculate GDI changed, to use female and male income indices, instead of female and male proportional income shares, as applied before 1999. This alteration means that GDI values calculated before and after 1999 are not directly comparable, but it made the HDI and GDI fully comparable (Bardhan and Klasen 1999).

The GEM is focused on whether men and women have equal power in the political and economic spheres. The three indicators of GEM are based on male and female shares of:

Parliamentary seats

Administrative, professional, technical and managerial positions

Power over economic resources

The third indicator is based on estimated incomes of men and women. As mentioned, the objective of the GEM is to establish an index of economic and political gender equality, but the use of income levels, instead of income share, has been criticised as problematic by researchers. This is because, (*inter alia*) a poor country cannot achieve a high GEM-value, even if full equality of income is attained (Schüler 2006).

The main purpose of using the GDI and GEM has been to raise the issue of gender inequalities. The indices have attracted minimal attention from the international media and have been used more to rank countries in terms of gender equality, rather than to analyse and debate the equality in particular countries. In academia, they have prompted a number of analyses. Some of these studies examine what the indexes actually measure (McGillivray and Pillarisetti 1998, McGillivray and Pillarisetti 2006, Ogwang 2000), while others analyze gender differences within thematic fields to evaluate the relationship between the field and the indices (Blackburn and Jarman 2006, Hank and Jürges 2007). The indices have also been used to analyze the impact of certain policies and explore measures that could be used to improve gender equality (Schnepf 2007). My research on gender equality in family farming can be categorized as the second type of study, however, in an attempt to ensure that the results are valid, part of the research also focuses on what the indices really measure.

6 Conclusion and discussion

Rural gender studies have expanded in recent decades and developed both theoretical and empirical frameworks through interaction across various academic fields. Rural gender studies have been established as a specialist field within rural sociology, rural geography and rural economics. Whatmore (1988) stressed that the risks of specializing in such a manner were that the broader significance of gender relations and farming might be obscured. More than twenty years later, the concerns about rural gender studies are still the same. It has essentially remained an isolated area within rural studies. An effect of this is that rural gender studies only seem to address questions directly related to gender, rather than wider rural issues. This limitation is not restricted to rural studies, which is a sub-discipline of a number of academic fields. There is a need for a broader understanding of rural research questions, which could lead to empirical and theoretical development with inputs from a more general debate, and not only within the social sciences. Shortall (2006b) similarly emphasized the need for actions to promote wider debate, citing presentation and publication in more general fora as examples of the required actions. Hence, to avoid the danger of "talking to ourselves", it is necessary for those working in rural gender studies to broaden their research networks.

A general element of mainstream gender research, as well as rural gender studies, is the integration of gender within other research fields. The work needs to result in a position of gender awareness that constructs more general research questions and practises. It is important to build a presence in mainstream debate and to take the scholarly advances of rural gender studies to a wider field and the public.'

The field of rural gender studies has been dominated, to date, by qualitative and regionally specific studies. There have been some quantitative and comparative studies within the field (Lidestav 2001, Safilios-Rothschild 2002, Safilios-Rothschild 2003), but relatively few. Hence, there is a need to review and develop the framework and conceptual elements of quantitative and comparative research within rural gender studies to take into account (*inter alia*) changes in rural gender relations. There is a large amount of relevant information that requires systematic analysis, both to summarise the existing knowledge and to reveal gaps in knowledge and understanding.

During the last two decades, the acquisition and analysis of gendered statistics has expanded, and the category of gender is more often included in official statistics. However, much further development of gendered statistics is required. In addition to increasing the inclusion of gender dimensions in the statistics, we need to evaluate the whole process of

statistics production. The indicators and survey designs applied profoundly affect the quality of the resulting information and need to keep pace with current social relations and economic situations. Hence, it is essential to examine current relations and conditions, rather than simply including gender in previous research questions, without further consideration. Bringing women into empirical pursuits for knowledge helps in these respects, by not only addressing the andocentric bias of science, but also in improving the quantitative inclusion of women in research samples and populations. The gendering of the collection of statistical data is essential for the acquisition of adequate information about rural employment patterns, educational levels, income and other important indicators - thereby highlighting gender and women, as part of the story told by statistical data.

One of the main future tasks for rural gender studies, according to Shortall (2006b), is to broaden the rural gender studies, and to recognise that practitioners in the field can learn from, and contribute to, other academic fields. Through the examination of inequalities within the family farm presented here, this paper provides some insight into the various fields that can contribute to the research process. I find it essential to reach outside rural gender studies to supplement knowledge of the field from other research disciplines. Possible research areas that can contribute to such research include, for example, family studies, gender studies, occupational studies and the sociology of organization. In a similar manner, I find it vital to acknowledge the whole social concept that shapes the gender inequalities within the family farm. My point of departure for investigating gender inequalities cannot be separated from other inequalities, in the same way that gender cannot be distinguished from other social relations. Even though Western rural gender research is inspired by, and to some extent originates from, its equivalent in developing countries, the social categories of gender dominate in the research. In general gender studies, research in developing countries and postcolonial situations has gone a long way towards exposing the social diversity of gender and the effects of other social relations. To understand the complexity of social relations, even if the primary interest is in gender equality, it is vital to consider the whole social context, to distinguish how social meaning of gender is reproduced (de los Reyes & Mulinari 2005, Lykke 2003).

In my research, I find that the concept of intersectionality (which concerns ways in which power is formed in social relations that are coded by, for example, gender, class, race, age and sexuality) increases the opportunities and complexity of the investigations. The concept mainly originates from the interaction between feminist and postcolonial theory and provides

a vocabulary to respond to critiques of identity politics. The primary purpose of an intersectional analysis is to highlight how social relations relate to and shape each other. The main risk associated with intersectional research is the possible use of critically unevaluated categories, placing the researcher in a position of social responsibility. Use of simplistic categories to represent the complexity of lived experience, and/or neglect of the diversity in predetermined categories, may result in trite reproductions of monolithic social structures and identity, or even the reinforcement of stereotypes.

> To ignore questions of methodology is to assume that knowledge comes from nowhere allowing knowledge marks to abdicate the responsibility for their productions and representations (Skeggs 1997:17).

Focusing on the family farm in an investigation such as this also offers methodological and epistemological challenges, since previous research has shown the unity and close relations in the family, which create particular requirements and conditions for the research process. However, these methodological and epistemological challenges, in conjunction with insights obtained from the traditions of feminist research and theory, can help to guide the research process.

There is a further need in the research process, for frequent discussion and self-reflection regarding the position of the researcher and her/his influence on knowledge production. In my research on family farming, I find the need for reflexivity particularly important, primarily because my informants' experiences are created inside the walls of the household and are difficult to capture. Reflexivity is central to understand and challenges prevailing notions and categories. The words of Dorothy Smith provides insight into the researcher's role in the research process, "if sociology cannot avoid being situated then sociology should take that as its beginning and build it into its methodological strategies" (Smith 1990:22).

Knowledge is something that is always created socially and collectively. In research on families and households, it is important to take into account the emotional context and its effects on knowledge production. The subjects are shaped by specific situations that influence their everyday actions; understanding this is essential for analysing social relations.

> "It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience." (Scott 1992:25)

The type of knowledge that is accessible is one of the primary epistemological issues in social research. How knowledge production is affected by the position and interaction of the

researcher is an important attendant question. How do social relations and actions change the experience I'm studying? What privileges do I, as researcher, assume and how can I gain access to the field? The close connection to the people "studied" also raises complex ethical questions. It is vital to face the epistemological and methodological challenges and to consider them during the whole research process, primarily to be able to understand the researcher's, as well as the informants', parts in the process. It is important that this research contributes to both the academic and the public field. The official report on gender equality (SOU 2005:66) highlighted the need for a clearer line between theoretical gender research and practical gender equality work. I agree, but within this process the theoretical understanding must be continuously challenged to acquire new knowledge and understanding. My intention with this research is to contribute to theoretical and methodological developments that broaden the field of rural gender studies, in collaboration with other related research fields. This development will reduce the risk of "talking to ourselves", as Shortall puts it. Furthermore, it will broaden the field from within, fostering a wider perspective on the overlapping social relations within rural studies, using both qualitative and quantitative research tools.

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