

Separate Spheres and Mutuality:
Farm Families in Rural British Columbia from 1940 to 1960
by

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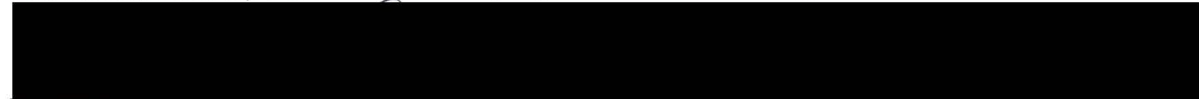
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Abstract

Historical research on women and gender during the Second World War and the post Second World War periods has primarily focussed on urban women's experiences and has rarely explored farm women lives. Through an analysis of prescriptive literature, oral history interviews, newspaper accounts and records from one local Women's Institute, this thesis studies the construction of farm women's femininity from 1940 to 1960 in the rural areas surrounding Kamloops, British Columbia.

For the most part, women's and gender historians have used the construct of separate spheres or the construct of mutuality to examine notions of womanhood on the family farm. By moving beyond the separate spheres/mutuality dichotomy and employing both constructs, a fuller understanding of farm women's lives can be gained. This thesis explores the dominant notions of femininity as prescribed through the pages of *Country Life in British Columbia* as well as how white, English-speaking women played out their own ideas of femininity through their work, family and community.


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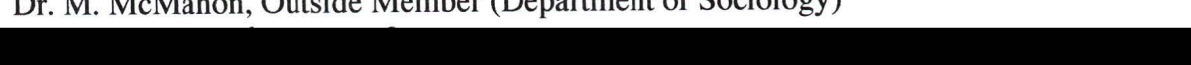

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Introduction

For the most part, historians have divided the time period between 1940 to 1960 into two separate eras of study: the Second World War and post Second World War. Over the last two decades, both of these eras, separately, have received increasing attention from women's and gender historians in Canada as well as the United States. The first era has been explored as a time of women's participation in factory work and the female divisions of the army, navy and airforce.¹ Images of Rosie the Riveter, an Americanized icon of the female factory worker, are easily conjured up in the minds of North Americans. After the war, displaced female factory workers and service women were encouraged to return to the home. Propaganda and prescriptive literature from the late forties and fifties would lead us to believe that the 'revival of domesticity' characterized the postwar era and women's lives. Historians, such as Veronica Strong-Boag and Mary

¹ See, for example, Ruth Roach Pierson, *"They're Still Women After All": The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986); Carolyn Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots: Canadian Women at War (1939-1945)* (Toronto and Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1991); Jean Bruce, *Back the Attack! Canadian Women During the Second World War – at Home and Abroad* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1985). For American examples, see Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, *Since You Went Away: World War II Letters from American Women on the Home Front* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1991); Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984); Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998); Nancy Baker Wise and Christy Wise, *A Mouthful of Rivets: Women at Work in World War II* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994); Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981).

Louise Adams, have begun to challenge this stereotype through research on the diversity of urban women's experiences.²

Overwhelmingly, research on women and gender in the 1940s and 1950s has focussed on urban experiences and rendered rural women virtually invisible. Katherine Jellison's *Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913 to 1963* is one exception.³ Jellison examines how the Second World War affected American farm women and how they responded to prescriptive literature that urged women out of the farm field into the kitchen after the war. Similar research has yet to be done in Canada. My thesis contributes to our understanding of the gender ideologies facing Canadian farm women during the Second World War and in the fifteen years that followed. Furthermore, I explore how women negotiated their tasks in light of the dominant discourses on womanhood.

² I am indebted to Tina Block's thesis for this insight. Tina Marie Block, "'Housewifely Prayers' and Manly Visions: Gender, Faith, and Family in Two Victoria Churches, 1945-1960" (M.A. Thesis, University of Victoria, 1999). See, for example, Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble With Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), Veronica Strong-Boag, "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle Class, 1945-1960" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29,3 (Fall 1994): 5-25; For American works, see Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Book Inc., 1988); chapters in Katherine Jellison, *Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Joanne Meyerowitz ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Brett Harvey, *The Fifties: A Women's Oral History* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993).

³ See chapters 5 and 6 in Jellison, *Entitled to Power*, 131-180.

While little is known about Canadian farm women in the 1940s and 1950s, even less is known about women in British Columbia; Canadian studies have focussed on earlier time periods and have been generally been restricted to the Prairies and Ontario.⁴ Moreover, the general study of rural history in British Columbia has been scarce. With the recent publication of *Beyond the City Limits: Rural History in British Columbia* edited by R.W. Sandwell, British Columbia's rural history has begun to receive the attention it is due. As Sandwell argues "researchers have begun to examine the distinctive cultures and economies that have existed in rural areas alongside the dominant forms of capitalist, urban-based industry."⁵ Rural areas, and the people attached to these areas, are being recognized as a legitimate part of British Columbia's history. While gender analysis is used in this collection of works, an examination of gender relations between white farm women and men in rural BC is missing. My thesis augments the

⁴ For research on British Columbian women, see Gwendolyn Szychter, "Farm Women and Their Work in Delta, British Columbia, 1900-1940" (M.A. Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1992). For examples of works in Ontario and the Canadian Prairies, see Marjorie Griffin Cohen, *Women's Work, Markets and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988); Mary Kinnear, "'Do you want your daughter to marry a farmer?': Women's Work on the Farm, 1922," *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, Vol.VI, Donald H Akenson, ed. (Gananoque, Ontario: Langdale Press, 1988); Sheila McManus, "Gender, Work and Politics: Southern Alberta Farm Women, 1905-1929" (M.A. Thesis, University of Victoria, 1994); Veronica Strong-Boag, "Pulling Double Harness or Hauling a Double Load," *The Prairie West: Historical Readings*, R.Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer, eds. 2nd edition (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1992); Pauline Rankin, "Politicization of Ontario Farm Women," *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics*, Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

⁵ R.W. Sandwell, "Introduction," *Beyond the City Limits: Rural History in British Columbia*, R.W. Sandwell, ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 6-7.

emerging historiography on rural British Columbia through a case study of white English-speaking farm women in the rural areas surrounding Kamloops, British Columbia.

Women's and gender historians have used the constructs of separate spheres and mutuality to understand male/female relations on the family farm. "Separate spheres" in historical analysis is the notion that the social division of labour is based on men and women's biological sex. Many historians of rural women's history have viewed separate spheres as the defining force in husband and wife relationships in farming communities. Gender historians have also used mutuality to address the reciprocal relationships between rural women and men. Mutuality recognizes the cooperative element between women and men in their working and family roles. By examining women and men's paid and unpaid labour as complimentary we can further our understanding of gender relations. In this thesis, I move beyond the traditional dichotomy of separate spheres and mutuality. I argue that both the concepts of separate spheres and mutuality are needed to understand the relationship between farm women and men in rural British Columbia.

To date most Canadian authors have used separate spheres to understand farm women's experiences.⁶ One author who has examined the work relationship between women and men is Marjorie Griffin Cohen in *Women's Work, Markets, and Economic*

⁶ McManus, "Gender, Work, Politics" is one exception. American scholars influenced her work.

Development in Nineteenth Century Ontario. Cohen argues that industrialization served to perpetuate, not initiate, separate spheres for farm women and men.⁷ In her analysis of the dairy industry, Cohen suggests that “the division of labour by gender”⁸ was a “common [feature] of productive relations in the pre-industrial period.”⁹ Cohen uses separate spheres in her work to raise awareness of women’s important role in rural subsistence.

Gwendolyn Szychter in “Farm Women and Their Work in Delta, British Columbia” furthers Cohen’s work through her analysis of pioneering farm women and men. Szychter agrees with Cohen’s notion of separate spheres for rural women and men. As she explains, “a fairly rigid sexual division of labour existed in these families concerning domestic chores.”¹⁰ While Szychter acknowledges that the gender division of labour was more flexible in garden, barnyard chores and fieldwork and that men and women often cooperated on a number of tasks, she argues that separate spheres were maintained.¹¹ By limiting her perspective to separate spheres, Szychter is unable to fully understand women’s expanded roles through their participation in farm labour and the

⁷ Cohen, *Women’s Work, Markets, and Economic Development*, 59.

⁸ Cohen, *Women’s Work, Markets, and Economic Development*, 10.

⁹ Cohen, *Women’s Work, Markets, and Economic Development*, 10.

¹⁰ Szychter, “Farm Women and Their Work,” 79.

¹¹ Szychter, “Farm Women and Their Work,” 79.

cooperative nature of farm life. Szychter does not acknowledge that farm women's identity was partially defined by the flexible gender roles and instead, she proposes that womanliness is defined by separate spheres.

Sara Brooks Sundberg in "Farm Women on the Canadian Frontier" uses the notion of separate spheres to discuss men and women on the Canadian Prairies as working partners. Sundberg suggests that by viewing farm women's work "as ancillary to the work of farm men, our conception of prairie farm women's work loses equality within the economic structure of the farm."¹² She argues farm women should be viewed as equal partners because "women made substantial contributions to the business of farming."¹³ Sundberg argues that farm women's equality "is justified given women's roles as providers of valuable goods and services."¹⁴ Her idea of working partners is limited because Sundberg still subscribes to separate spheres for farm women and men. The concept of separate spheres maintains that women's biological sex and not their actual labour on the farm defines the perception of women's work and the definition of

¹² Sara Brooks Sundberg, "Farm Women on the Canadian Prairie Frontier: The Helpmate Image," *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History* Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman, eds. (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd, 1986), 104.

¹³ Sundberg, "Farm Women on the Canadian Prairie Frontier," 104.

¹⁴ Sundberg, "Farm Women on the Canadian Prairie Frontier," 104.

femininity. Therefore, the notion of working partnerships in Sundberg's research does not expand women's role on the farm beyond their socially-defined role.

Cohen, Szychter and Sundberg focus their research on the economic relationship of farming families. A historian who moves beyond the economic aspect of the farm to explore women and men's personal relationships is Elaine Leslau Silverman in "Women's Perceptions of Marriage on the Alberta Frontier." In her analysis of marriage, Silverman argues that "the spheres in which the husband and wife worked were defined by the couple themselves" and did not correlate with "those which middle class culture was prescribing through its media."¹⁵ In her study of marriage, Silverman suggests that "marriage was a working partnership designed for survival, for productivity, and for reproduction."¹⁶ Although Silverman recognizes that rural women and men did not always prescribe to the dominant notions of separate spheres in marriage, she acknowledges male dominance in the relationship because "husbands 'held on to the purse strings'."¹⁷ Silverman moves beyond the economic relationship between men and women to the social institution of marriage; however, she maintains that marriage is a

¹⁵ Elaine Leslau Silverman, "Women's Perceptions of Marriage on the Alberta Frontier," *Building Beyond the Homestead*, David C. Jones and Ian MacPherson, eds. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1988), 58.

¹⁶ Silverman, "Women's Perceptions of Marriage," 58.

¹⁷ Silverman, "Women's Perceptions of Marriage," 60.

economic arrangement. In my thesis, I argue that women and men's relationships in the 1940s and 1950s were based on more than economics.

The concept of separate spheres is valuable to understanding women's gender-specific work and patterns of socialization. However, taken alone the use of separate spheres as a lens through which women's lives are explored denies the intricate relationship between farm women and men and places emphasis on the differences between the genders. In addition, the concept of separate spheres has failed to address how work is valued by a society. Gender historians place greater importance on reciprocal relationships between women and men. The two most influential works for my thesis are *Bonds of Community: Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth Century New York* by Nancy Grey Osterud and *The Important Things of Life: Women, Work, and Family in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, 1880-1929* by Dee Garceau.¹⁸ Osterud's work is valuable to my thesis because she uses the idea of mutuality in her analysis of farm women.

Osterud argues that separate spheres "emphasized the disjunction between women and

¹⁸ Research on farm women in the United States has been more extensive than in Canada. See, for example, Deborah Fink, *Open Country, Iowa: Rural Women Tradition and Change* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986); Joan M. Jensen, *Promise to the Land: Essays on Rural Women* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991); Joan M. Jensen, *With These Hands: Women Working in the Land* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1981); Minnie Millar Brown, "Black Women in American Agriculture," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 50, No 1 (January, 1976): 202-212; Kathleen R. Babbitt, "The Productive Farm Women and the Extension Home Economist in New York State, 1920-1940," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (Spring 1993): 83-101; Marilyn Ferris Motz, *True Sisterhood: Michigan Women and Their Kin 1820-1920* (Albany: State University of New York, 1983).

men while concealing the inequalities between them.”¹⁹ Her work expands the study of farm women beyond the “female defined subculture”²⁰ to explore how men and women interacted in the home, on the farm and in the community. In order to examine rural women’s lives, Osterud introduces the concept of mutuality. She argues that women worked to create complimentary relationships with their male kin²¹ and focused “their energies on those aspects of life in which sharing provided some basis for equality rather than on those marked by hierarchical divisions.”²² Women created mutuality by “breaking down the barriers between cross-gender and same gender relationships and drawing on their female networks to nurture respect and understanding between women and men.”²³ Mutuality, as defined by Osterud, depends on the development of reciprocal relationships between women and men as well as the notion of sharing between genders. Moreover, Osterud argues that mutuality is possible because the women and men in her study “interacted on the basis of mutual interests rather than on the basis of their differences.”²⁴ Therefore, mutuality is defined more through men and women’s similar

¹⁹ Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 5.

²⁰ Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 275.

²¹ Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 4.

²² Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 276.

²³ Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 9.

²⁴ Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 9.

interests and goals in farm life and less by the differences that are socially defined by middle-class society.

In addition to the general concept of mutuality, Osterud's work is relevant to this thesis because she maintains her focus on women but she includes men in her study. Since "gender is a relational system," what it means to be masculine or feminine is defined through difference and interaction.²⁵ As a result, a study solely focussing on women would exclude the "elements of conjunction and disjunction in relationships among women and men."²⁶ This thesis includes an analysis of women and men's relationships as relational. That is, femininity and masculinity are not explored as simple dichotomies; rather, femininity will be explored in relation to masculinity.

In an effort to prove mutuality in rural New York, Osterud romanticizes agrarian life. For example, she argues that both men and women participated in the realm of childbirth. In her book, she highlights examples where men and/or women noted the male presence during childbirth in their diaries. Using these examples, she assumes that where participation was not documented, men were "too preoccupied"²⁷ to make note of it in

²⁵ Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 3.

²⁶ Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 9.

²⁷ Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 118.

their personal journals.²⁸ Despite their preoccupation, Osterud argues that men were involved in childbirth. Osterud's evidence here borders on the speculative.

Furthermore, Osterud's notion of mutuality is limited in its analysis because it places too much emphasis on mutual relationships and not enough on women's individuality and separate sphere. Even in the chapter on the work women performed together, Osterud argues that the women shared their gender specific work in the home to allow them to cross over into male realm of outside work.²⁹ In my study of farm women in BC, I argue that women's work in the home generally comprised a separate sphere which was of equal importance to the women's lives as mutual relationships; mutuality did not permeate all aspects of women's work or patterns of socializing.

Another limitation of Osterud's work is her failure to account for the influence of gender ideology on women's lives. Garceau addresses how women justified their transgression into the male realm of outside work in her comparative study of the lives of men and women in mining and farming families in Sweetwater County. Relevant to this thesis is Garceau's notion of the "ethic of group partnership"³⁰ which she uses to describe and justify ranch women's crossover into farm labour that was socially defined as male.

²⁸ Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 117-119.

²⁹ Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 200.

³⁰ Dee Garceau, *The Important Things of Life: Women, Work, and Family in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, 1880-1929* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 89.

She argues that women did not challenge their traditional roles but cautiously moved into the realm of “outside” work through the idea of family or group partnership. She further maintains that women did not see the transition into outside work “as a vehicle for redefining gender identity,”³¹ but rather that ranch wives used the notion of group partnership to deflect the challenge to traditional ideas of gender ideology.³² Garceau’s analysis is valuable for exploring how women justified their outside work. Unfortunately Garceau, like Osterud, hides women’s individual accomplishments under the “ethic of group partnership.” Both Osterud and Garceau’s works would benefit by recognizing women’s separate sphere.

For this thesis, I have combined Garceau’s idea of “group partnership” and Osterud’s notion of “mutuality” to analyze the relationship between farm women and men in rural British Columbia. Using these two works, I have redefined mutuality to mean a shared space for men and women that does not challenge women’s domestic roles or men’s sphere. Mutuality also includes an understanding that farm women and men were working toward a common objective – farm success. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s in British Columbia, farm women and men worked toward a common goal of farm

³¹ Garceau, *The Important Things of Life*, 110.

³² Garceau, *The Important Things of Life*, 110

success by making physical boundaries of work in the home and work in the barnyard and fields as permeable.

Mutuality should not be viewed as an opposite concept to the concept of separate spheres. My thesis recognizes that the constructs of separate spheres and mutuality were both relevant to farm women and men in British Columbia from 1940 to 1960. Farm women and men worked together and socialized together; however, they also worked separately and socialized separately.

The concept of power is important to the discussion of separate spheres and mutuality in rural history. In each case, power has been ascribed different definitions. Silverman denies women power by defining power as equality with men in marriage. She argues that “their work, the economic contribution they made to the marriage, nonetheless in no way permitted them greater power or autonomy in the marriage.”³³ According to Silverman, women could only have power if they could “dominate” or “leave” the marriage.³⁴

Cohen places her argument for women’s agency within the context of women’s economic contribution to the family and women’s legal right to property ownership. She argues that women’s production in the home was key to subsistence and, therefore, their

³³ Silverman, “Women’s Perceptions of Marriage,” 60.

³⁴ Silverman, “Women’s Perceptions of Marriage,” 60.

work was valuable to the survival of the family.³⁵ According to Cohen, women's role in subsistence is overshadowed by their lack of legal power over property in nineteenth century Ontario; the recognition that women did not have legal rights to property is Cohen's most valuable contribution to understanding women's power on the family farm. Cohen argues that men owned the family farm and thus, women's contribution to the subsistence economy was subject to men's authority and power. Cohen states that in the family economy subsistence and production were not separable and, as a result, "women had no productive sphere beyond the power of male authority."³⁶ By negating women's subsistence work as providing women with some power, Cohen obscures the women's perception of their status on the family farm.

Sheila McManus' careful consideration of power in "Gender, Work, Politics: Southern Alberta Farm Women" is critical to understanding power in rural British Columbia in the 1940s and 1950s. McManus recognizes that fundamental to women's power are the very real but separate "issues of control of labour and land ownership."³⁷ McManus argues that the patriarchal structure of the family farm is only oppressive if the women perceived it to be. McManus argues that Alberta farm women did not consider themselves to be oppressed because they "believed themselves to be equal partners with

³⁵ Cohen, *Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development*, 71.

³⁶ Cohen, *Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development*, 57.

their husbands, equal partners in the ‘family farm’.”³⁸ Likewise, farm women in BC did not consider themselves oppressed on the family farm. Although I feel it should not be ignored, the issue of property rights is not addressed in my thesis. The reality for farm women in this study was that they did not own the land.³⁹ In light of having access to few legal rights, women saw power in their ability to control their tasks and their involvement in decision-making.

My thesis is a study of separate spheres and mutuality in English-speaking, white farm women’s lives during the Second World War and the decade and a half that followed. My study is based on one farm periodical from British Columbia (*Country Life in British Columbia*), oral history interviews with eleven women and six men in ranching and farming communities surrounding Kamloops, British Columbia and minutes from the Beresford⁴⁰ Women’s Institute. The pages of *Country Life* provide valuable insight into the dominant discourse of “acceptable roles” for farm women and men in British Columbia during World War II and the postwar period. The oral interviews provide us

³⁷ McManus, “Gender, Work, Politics,” 61.

³⁸ McManus, “Gender, Work, Politics,” 62.

³⁹ It is important to note here that by the twentieth century, at least on paper, married women had the same rights to control their property as men. For more information on women’s property rights, see Constance B. Backhouse, “Married Women’s Property Law in Nineteenth Century Canada,” *Canadian Family History: Selected Readings*, Bettina Bradbury ed. (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1992), 320-359 and Constance Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice: Women and Law in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1991) in particular Chapter 6.

⁴⁰ Beresford is part of a network of rural communities located south of Kamloops.

with women and men's first hand accounts of their lives in rural Kamloops and their own perceptions of gender relations. The methodology used in the oral history interviews will be addressed more extensively in Chapter Two. The Beresford Women's Institute Minute Books contribute to our understanding of the socialization patterns of a rural community as well as the socialization patterns of farm women. The combination of sources provides us with different perspectives on women's lives. These sources allow us to explore the public discourses of farm women in one region of British Columbia.

Kamloops and its surrounding rural areas, from Cache Creek to Westwold to Beresford, is the geographical focus of my study. Kamloops is located in British Columbia's Interior and "was at the heart of a landscape characterized by bunch grass and a dry, semi-arid climate."⁴¹ Initially, the vast, open rangelands were used by the Hudson's Bay Company to graze large numbers of horses.⁴² With the decline of the fur trade, cattle ranching prevailed as the dominant activity in the generally uninhabited grasslands. Large-scale agricultural settlement began as early as 1860 but the greatest growth took place between 1901 and 1911. The area attracted Canadians, Americans, British, French and Eastern Europeans who came to homestead 160 acre plots. By the

⁴¹ Ken Favrholt, "Domesticating the Drybelt: Agricultural Settlement in the Hills around Kamloops, 1860-1960," *Beyond the City Limits: Rural History in British Columbia*, R.W. Sandwell, ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 102.

⁴² Favrholt, "Domesticating the Drybelt," 103.

1940s, most farm families engaged in mixed farming, dry farming,⁴³ cattle or sheep ranching and fruit growing.⁴⁴ Fruit growers were not included in this study because they were subjected to different labour and market demands. For the most part, cattle ranching replaced mixed farming and dry farming by the 1960s. This general trend was reflected in the oral interviews conducted for my thesis.

Chapter One uses prescriptive literature to examine the construction of femininity and masculinity in rural British Columbia. This chapter argues that notions of womanhood are flexible and can be adapted to national needs. During the war, prescriptive literature encouraged women to expand the domestic sphere to embrace the barnyard and garden as part of their economic responsibility to the nation.⁴⁵ This is not to suggest that women's domestic responsibilities could be shirked; rather, women were asked to maintain their present focus on home and family as well as participate in the production of food with their husbands. After the war, prescriptive literature refocused women's sphere on the home and family. This chapter suggests that women and men maintained their separate spheres throughout the 1940s and 1950s. While masculinity and femininity remained separate, how they were defined in the public realm fluctuated

⁴³ Dry farming refers to the practice of growing crops without irrigation.

⁴⁴ Ken Favrholt, "Domesticating the Drybelt," 108-109.

⁴⁵ This is not to suggest that women were not working in gardens and barnyards prior to the war, only that the prescriptive literature focused on these activities as being part of women's sphere during the war.

with time. Chapter One provides a broad look at gender relations in rural British Columbia from the perspective of prescriptive literature.

Chapter Two explores the existence of separate spheres and mutuality for women and men in the home and on the farm through oral history interviews. For farm women, there was rarely a clear separation of their domestic tasks from the farm; for the most part, women's domestic tasks, performed in the sphere of the home and primarily by women, had benefits for the success of the farm. While childbirth and some domestic tasks were part of a separate women's sphere, other work in the home performed by women demonstrated the blurred lines between the home and farm. Cooking is an example of the later. If farm women cooked meals for the sole purpose of feeding their families, then the task of cooking would be part of the feminine sphere of the home; however, in addition to preparing meals for their families, farm women fed the hired hands. The meals provided to the hired hands were part of their daily wage; thus, the feminine task of cooking contributed to the farm economy and could not be cleanly and neatly separated from the masculine sphere of the farm. In this chapter, I challenge the idea that domestic tasks performed by women must be isolated into a separate feminine sphere. Instead, I argue that the notion of mutuality must be applied to the analysis of the women's domestic tasks that expanded to the farm in order to provide a more accurate understanding of farm women's work.

In addition to women's domestic tasks, mutuality is applied to women's participation in farm labour. Many of the farm women in this study engaged in activities on the farm which included riding horses, caring for turkeys and other livestock, and working in the fields. The women used the term "help" to describe their participation in farm activities which allowed women to maintain the socially constructed meanings of masculinity and femininity. By not challenging the dominant discourses around gender roles, the farm women allowed for the concept of mutuality. Mutuality allowed the women's sphere to be permeable to meet the needs of farm life. Rather than tasks being defined as strictly masculine or feminine on the farm, women and men performed work that was necessary to ensure the farm's success. Women's participation in farm work was adapted to ensure that the home and the family were not neglected. Furthermore, women maintained a masculine sphere around work that they rarely participated in such as work with farm machinery.

Chapter Three examines Women's Institutes through oral interviews and the Beresford Women's Institute Minute Books. The Beresford Women's Institute served to perpetuate societal norms of womanhood and expanded women's sphere of interest into topics relating to rural living and the farm. Further, Women's Institutes served as both a separate sphere for women as well as an opportunity for women to create mutuality in the community. Women both included and excluded men from the Women's Institute meetings. While men who represented an interest group or were perceived as experts on

a particular topic were invited to the meetings, husbands were excluded. At the same time, women were active in organizing community meetings and events that included men and women through the WI. In this chapter, I argue that women maintained the dominant ideology of womanliness through the activities of the Women's Institute. The women also ensured that separate spheres and mutuality were flexible enough to allow the inclusion and exclusion of men depending on women's needs and preferences.

Chapter 1: National Duty and Family Responsibility: Prescriptive Literature and Dominant Notions of Gender

This chapter explores gender construction in rural British Columbia through prescriptive literature. For the purpose of this thesis, prescriptive literature refers to articles, editorials, published letters and advertisements that consciously or unconsciously advised women and men of their roles in rural society. Prescriptive literature allows us to explore the dominant discourses around masculinity and femininity in the public realm. It is important to note that prescriptive literature does not necessarily correlate with the realities of people's lives and it is difficult to determine to what extent prescriptive material was read and internalized; however, it does provide insight into how the dominant discourse around gender was defined in rural communities. The prescriptive literature examined for this chapter are monthly issues of *Country Life in British Columbia*¹ between 1940 and 1960. I chose *Country Life* because it focussed on agriculture and advocated agricultural causes in BC. More specifically, the information in the journal was directed at both rural women and men.

The prescriptive literature in *Country Life* provides valuable insight into how rural society defined gender roles. Both rural women and men were given guidance and advice on what their roles should encompass in rural families and in the agriculture industry.

¹ Throughout the rest of the thesis it will be referred to as *Country Life*.

Women received a multitude of clearly defined and directed advice written by other women, as well as male experts, which generally focussed on the home, family and garden.² Outside of the women's columns, the rest of the journal was concerned with the masculine sphere of agriculture production, politics and economics.

As I argue in this chapter, the definition and boundaries of rural women's work changed over time as national priorities and demands on the farm changed. I explore the amount of change that occurred in the feminine sphere from 1940 to 1960 through the pages of *Country Life*. While maintaining a focus on the home, World War II provided women an opportunity to transcend the boundaries of the domestic sphere to work in the barnyard. To contribute to the war effort in Canada, women were asked to help their husbands increase food production. After the war, the acceptability of labour outside of the home diminished and women were encouraged to return to the domestic sphere of home and family. In addition to fluctuation in gender definitions, how women derived power changed over time. In the media, women's power was attached to the dominant gender definitions. *Country Life* perpetuated the notions of separate spheres but recognized that cooperation was as essential to farm survival. Through articles on or incorporating the theme of cooperation, *Country Life* reflected the idea of mutuality. As a

² The advice was usually given by perceived authorities such as the President of the Associated Countrywomen of the World, the President of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada, the Editor of the Women's Pages in *Country Life* and the Editor and Manager of *Country Life*.

result, I argue that the concepts of mutuality and separate spheres must both be used to understand work in rural British Columbia.

Before exploring the construction of femininity, I will examine how masculinity was defined in the pages of *Country Life*. Although masculinity and the masculine sphere are not the major focus of this chapter, women and men do not exist separately from each other. Joy Parr in “Gender in Historical Practice” warned against viewing masculinity and femininity as dichotomies. Parr suggested that understanding the masculine sphere helps us to understand the construction of the feminine sphere and women's ability to transcend the boundary of the feminine sphere to engage in activities in the masculine sphere.³

The masculine sphere remained centered around outside work, financial issues and politics throughout the 1940s and 1950s in rural BC. In articles that described male skills there was a clear focus on the diversity necessary to be a successful farmer. In the article, “The Farmer is the Man,” the farmer’s breadth of knowledge and skills are described: “how to milk, shock wheat, play obstetrician to a Jersey cow, train a dog, put together a binder, fan grain, build a load of hay or wheat stack, judge whether to start a

³ Joy Parr, “Gender in Historical Practice,” in *Gender and History in Canada*, Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld, eds. (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd. 1996), 20.

balky horse, operate a gasoline tractor, repair general machinery, string fences.”⁴ In another article, “The Farmers Hundred Skills,” the farmer’s knowledge is equated with “all the colleges’ professors put together.”⁵ The article states,

To farm a man has got to have at least a hundred skills. He has got to know as much as all the colleges’ professors put together. He must know, not only how to milk a cow but how to feed her so she will give milk. He must know not only how to act as a midwife to a litter of ten pigs, but also how to grow them into selects. He must have a working knowledge of machinery from climbing 40 feet in the air to desqueak a windmill to lowering 50 feet into the well to find out why the darned thing isn’t delivering water into the trough. At ground level he must be a motor mechanic, a blacksmith, a carpenter and a good hand with a shotgun. He must fight a long line of enemies from bacterial plight...to coyotes or even wolves...He is expected to quote the bible, vote intelligently, serve on council, or school board and in some cases get himself elected to parliament. He’s got to be quite a man.⁶

In describing the necessary attributes of the male farmer through these two articles, *Country Life* defined masculinity as the ability to work with animals and machinery as well as participate in the public realm.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the influence of science on agriculture became apparent. In addition to the other skills associated with masculinity in farming, “Farmers

⁴ “The Farmer is the Man,” *Country Life*, August 1943, 20. Other examples of similar articles include: *Country Life*, December 1943, 21; C.A. Hayden, “What’s Wrong with the World?,” May 1947, 3; “Knowledge is Power for BC Farm Boys and Girls,” *Country Life*, October 1950, 10; “B.C. Federation of Agriculture,” *Country Life*, June 1952, 19; “Farming Now Way of Living; Deputy Review Many Changes,” *Country Life*, January 1959, 17.

⁵ “The Farmers Hundred Skills,” *Country Life*, June 1943, 7.

⁶ “The Farmers Hundred Skills,” *Country Life*, June 1943, 7.

have to be... high class scientists these days.”⁷ In another article, a “good farmer” who was capable of surviving in the agricultural industry was correlated with being “a pretty fair scientist.”⁸ The acceptance of science in agriculture required farmers to be “adaptable to change, and ...able to capitalize on the findings of scientific research.”⁹ Masculinity, then, became associated with understanding, adopting and applying scientific methods into agricultural practices. Also suggested in these articles was the farmer’s ability to forge ahead despite adversity. After listing all of the skills necessary to be a farmer, one article concluded, “He does all this work with no guarantee of income because he is subjected to the vagaries of weather, disease and world markets over which he has no control.”¹⁰ Hardship was inevitable for rural men; men’s persistence was an important component of masculinity.

All of these articles neglected to include skills involving the home and family. Thus, the construction of masculinity for rural men was based on their adeptness with farm management, participation in the public sphere, acceptance of science and ability to face adversity; masculinity was not concerned with men’s involvement in housework or

⁷ “What’s Wrong with the World?,” *Country Life*, May 1947, 3.

⁸ “This is the Truth,” *Country Life*, June 1952, 19.

⁹ Howard Thorton, “At Last, B.C.’s High Schools Provide Vocational Agriculture 4-year course,” *Country Life*, June 1951, 3.

¹⁰ “This is the Truth,” *Country Life*, June 1952, 19.

child-rearing. Masculinity was detached from the domestic space, thus creating separate spheres for men and women. Where men's skills on the farm were connected with responsibilities to their families was as provider and benefactor.

Men's role in the family was portrayed as the breadwinner.¹¹ Men's breadwinner role was generally discussed in conjunction with the poor economic state of farming, which threatened men's ability to provide for their families. In the article, "Farm Wife's Dollar Value," the editor wrote about the farm wife's value. This initial recognition of women's work and its value was eclipsed by the poor economic situation of farming, which hindered farmers' ability to provide for their wives. The editor states,

Once in a while, a hubby tries to do his wife's full days work in and around the house...His lagging ineptitude convinces him that his wife is worth a fortune, but he has a grim time trying to accumulate it for her with his selling prices running below cost of production.¹²

This article alluded to the male role as breadwinner and drew attention to how outside forces, the market and the economy, inhibited men from fully succeeding as the breadwinner. In addition, the article was a rare example where housework was associated with men. We could assume that men's participation in household chores was so

¹¹ For a preliminary discussion of men's role in the urban family during the postwar period in British Columbia, see Robert Rutherford, "Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory: Breadwinning and Male Parenting on the Job Frontier, 1945-1966," in *Gender and History in Canada*, 357-375.

¹² C.A. Hayden, "Farm Wife's Dollar Value," *Country Life*, February 1947, 5.

commonplace that *Country Life* did not feel it was necessary to write articles about it; however, numerous articles providing women with advice on managing housework suggest that it was considered a female role, not a male role. Through the tone of the article, “Once in a while,” the husband’s “lagging ineptitude” reinforces the idea that housework was part of the feminine sphere. It was likely that the purpose of the article was not to show men performing housework but to reveal the poor financial position of farming.

In addition to their role as the family breadwinner, farm men were described as the breadwinners of the nation. This was particularly evident during the war years: “The job of agriculture in time of war is to provide food. The farmers of this country will do their job – they always have – they will provide food in abundance.”¹³ In an article on farm equipment maintenance, the “urgent necessity for conserving farm machinery” was associated with food production. The article states, “It’s all wanted to keep up food production. Food is one of the most important items in the war.”¹⁴ Even in the postwar years, farmers were advised to “Produce meat, milk, eggs and other livestock products

¹³ *Country Life*, June 1941, 22.

¹⁴ “Farmers Warned to Take Utmost Care of Their Machines,” *Country Life*, June 1942, 4.

needed to feed the growing population.”¹⁵ The masculine role of provider was extended to encompass the entire nation.

Another aspect of men’s role was to provide a future for their boys by having a successful farm for them to inherit. Robert Rutherford in “Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory” introduces the role of “father as benefactor.”¹⁶ In his study of men in Prince George, Rutherford only briefly discussed the male role of benefactor.¹⁷ My analysis of prescriptive literature suggests that this role was more significant.

Country Life placed a large emphasis on the role of benefactor for rural men. After the war, there was concern over the dwindling number of sons who chose to remain on the farm. These articles were overwhelmingly directed at fathers and what they could do to encourage their boys to stay in agriculture.¹⁸ The majority of articles outlined the need and the benefits of business agreements between the father and the son in that, “a well-planned partnership gives the son steady employment with a chance of advancement.”¹⁹

¹⁵ “Ten Point Program for Farming,” *Country Life*, January 1954, 22.

¹⁶ Rutherford, “Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory,” 369.

¹⁷ Rutherford, “Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory,” 368-369.

¹⁸ “Father and Son Farm Operating Agreements” third broadcast entitled “Your Father’s Farm” printed in *Country Life*, June 1949, 21; Frank D. Hansing, “Farmer Father-Son Accord Bridge Between Generations,” *Country Life*, November 1949, 29; “Keep ’em Down on The Farm,” *Country Life*, April 1954, 19; “Farmers Gain Income Tax Amendments,” February 1957, 2; *Country Life*, March 1957, 15.

¹⁹ “Father and Son Farm Operating Agreements” third broadcast entitled “Your Father’s Farm” printed in *Country Life*, June 1949, 21.

Men were also warned about portraying agriculture in a negative way and thus contributing to their sons' disinterest in farming given that, "an undue emphasis on hazards can undermine the son's ambition to become a farmer."²⁰

For men, owning and operating a farm was not simply about providing an immediate living but about providing a future for their sons. The Minister of Agriculture's speech published in *Country Life*, for example, demonstrated the importance of the father's role as benefactor: "...your land should be as good as or better, when you turn it over to your boys than it was when you worked it up to maximum efficiency. If you do this you have fulfilled your mission in life."²¹ This article brought to light two important points: the male role of benefactor and the idea that farms were passed on through male lineage.²² In the editorial, "What's Wrong With The World?," the editor makes a similar point. The editor argued that farmers should invest all of their earnings in land and equipment to help their sons get established in farming.²³

²⁰ "Keep'em Down on the Farm," *Country Life*, April 1954, 19.

²¹ "Says Frank Putman to Cattlemen," *Country Life*, April 1946, 27. This is a written version of a speech presented by Hon. Frank Putman at the Kamloops Bull sale.

²² Other articles in *Country Life* supported the idea that farms were inherited or purchased by male offspring as opposed to female offspring. For examples, see "Father and Son Farm Operating Agreements" third broadcast entitled "Your Father's Farm" printed in *Country Life*, June 1949, 21; Frank D. Hansing, "Farmer Father-Son Accord Bridge Between Generations," *Country Life*, November 1949, 29; "Keep'em Down on The Farm," *Country Life*, April 1954, 19; "Farmers Gain Income Tax Amendments," February 1957, 2; *Country Life*, March 1957, 15.

²³ "What's Wrong With The World?," *Country Life*, June 1942, 14.

While father and son agreements were mentioned as methods for keeping boys on the farm, daughters were mentioned only once and in a very different light. Daughters were not meant to inherit the farm and, thus, “a girl helping on her father’s farm should be paid a salary for her work, or be given a share of the farm profit”²⁴ but should not be encouraged to stay on the farm through an agreement. This provides insight into both male and female gender roles. Fathers were encouraged to sign agreements with their sons to ensure that their sons would eventually take over their farm. Boys would then assume their preordained role as head of the farm. Daughters’ work on the farm, however, was viewed as short-term and thus wages or “a share of the farm profit” was more appropriate. It was rural fathers’ responsibility to provide a successful farm for their sons, not their daughters. The role of benefactor for their sons was an important component of the masculine identity in rural BC.

Men were also required to provide guidance for their sons to ensure they were successful at farming. In reference to his four sons, Charlie Turner, a cattle rancher, was congratulated for “raising top-ranking cattlemen.”²⁵ This article suggests that raising boys who are successful farmers and ranchers was the responsibility of the fathers. Men were to provide land and equipment for their sons as well as provide their boys with the skills

²⁴ “Father and Son Farm Operating Agreements,” *Country Life*, June 1949, 21.

²⁵ “Charlie Turner And Family—Prize Winning Quintet” *Country Life*, January 1951, 10.

to be successful in the agricultural industry. Through teaching their sons the necessary skills to be successful farmers, men participated in a masculine form of child-rearing for their male heirs. Men did not cross into the feminine sphere of caring for the children's everyday needs but rather defined their own role in raising the children.

The feminine sphere, as defined in *Country Life*, complimented the masculine sphere. During World War II, rural women were given specific messages about their responsibilities to the Canadian war effort.²⁶ Articles written for women placed an emphasis on women's "national responsibility" to win the "war on the kitchen front."²⁷

Women's purchasing power was heralded as critical to the Canadian war effort. It was generally agreed that women did "more than 85 per cent of the buying."²⁸ While I did not accept this as an accurate figure because I do not know its source, the "general" acceptance of women's purchasing power gave women important responsibilities especially during the war. As the main consumers, women were required to be the "Watch Dog[s]" on inflation by "keep[ing] track of prices paid."²⁹ An article by Mrs.

²⁶ Although the war effectively ended in 1945, life did not return to "normal" until sometime in 1947 – when rationing was phased out, men returned from war and women were displaced from their war jobs by returning soldiers. In July of 1947, Miss Alice Stevens, editor of the women's column "Homefront," described 1947 as a time of "uneasy peace." For this reason, I have chosen to define the war period from 1940 to 1947.

²⁷ *Country Life*, March 1942, 18.

²⁸ C.A. Hayden, "What's Wrong With the World?," *Country Life*, March 1940, 13.

²⁹ *Country Life*, April 1942, 25.

Cameron Dow, President of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada, stated, "The women of Canada have a national responsibility to keep down inflation."³⁰ Inflation was characterized as an evil of wartime as is suggested by the title, "Gallows for Price Hoisters [sic]"³¹; food rationing was implemented and concern over increased prices rose. Women were encouraged to fight inflation as part of their contribution to Canada's war effort. The article continued, "This war will be won by the nations with staying power."³² Dow created a link between women's regular duties of purchasing goods and the circumstances of war. Through this link, Dow appealed to women's sense of national duty and demonstrated women's power to influence the economy.

Women's role went beyond watching prices. Women were also given the task of purchasing products grown and produced in Canada. In an article about flour making, women were encouraged to make their own flour and bread to ensure that it was "Canada Approved."³³ Women were helping the war effort by keeping Canadian industry viable through the purchase of Canadian products. C.A Hayden in, "What's Wrong With the World?," discussed the importance of supporting Canadian farmers by purchasing Canadian products. He claimed, "The women of Canada can control this situation...The

³⁰ "This is Our Task," *Country Life*, January 1942, 23.

³¹ "Gallows for Price Hoisters," *Country Life*, December 1945, 22.

³² "This is Our Task," *Country Life*, January 1942, 23.

³³ "New Development in Flour Making," *Country Life*, March 1942, 18.

power to effect or remedy lies entirely in their hands, if they choose to take it.”³⁴ This initially appears to be about women’s power to effect what products were purchased and further, women’s power to effect the economy of Canada. Women’s power was challenged when he stated, “The housewife does not stop to think of the economic angle...And, of course, there is always the fascinating novelty of eating fruits and vegetables from distant climes.”³⁵ Hayden assumed women knew very little about economics but suggested that women could be educated. He argued that women must be informed that “what they are doing is harmful to their own country...”³⁶ An article that initially appeared to espouse the power of women in the economic realm shifted to a discussion about the whimsical nature of women and their ignorance as consumers. In the next issue of *Country Life*, Mabel Tomer, in a letter to the editor, described how the women in her community were promoting the purchase of Canadian apples. She wrote of the “valuable aid women can give in establishing new habits of diet and their interest in health and economic problems...”³⁷ In addition, she addressed what she felt were women’s main roles in the war effort: “Women’s first line of defense in this war is the

³⁴ C.A Hayden, “What’s Wrong With the World?,” *Country Life*, March 1940, 13.

³⁵ C.A Hayden, “What’s Wrong With the World?,” *Country Life*, March 1940, 13.

³⁶ C.A Hayden, “What’s Wrong With the World?,” *Country Life*, March 1940, 13.

³⁷ *Country Life*, April 1940, 5.

conservation of food. Our second line of defense is keeping our money at home and in Canada.”³⁸ Tomer was clearly challenging C.A. Hayden’s claim that women did not think about the “economic angle.” Further, Tomer emphasized that women understood their part in winning the war. Together the editorial and the letter to the editor created a public discussion of women’s power. Watching prices and purchasing Canadian goods fell within women’s domestic sphere during World War II.

Another role within women’s sphere that received recognition during the war was keeping the home in order. In an article by Nellie McLung in *Country Life*, she quoted from a speech given by Lady Ethal Nanton: “mothers who are the center of family... We can either become nervous wrecks...or we can become a center of power and comfort for all members of the family.”³⁹ This was addressed again in an article by the US Secretary of Agriculture, the Hon. Claude E. Wickard, where he argued that women had their “hands full” with caring for their families, “holding the family together and keeping everyone cheerful in spite of all the difficulties.”⁴⁰ Women’s sphere during the war went beyond meeting the physical needs of the family to ensuring its members’ emotional stability. Women were to stay strong for the benefit of their families.

³⁸ *Country Life*, April 1940, 5.

³⁹ Nellie McLung, “Face Whatever the Future Holds Without Faltering,” *Country Life*, March 1942, 8.

⁴⁰ Hon. Claude E. Wickard, “It’s Not Amazing: It’s Just What Women Have Always Done For Home and Country,” *Country Life*, July 1942, 14.

While women maintained their domestic responsibility, wartime allowed women to move beyond the home. Articles about increasing production were directed at two different groups of women: rural wives and rural daughters. Through the pages of *Country Life*, rural wives were encouraged during wartime to increase the production of food through raising animals and gardening. The President of the Associated Country Women of the World⁴¹, Mrs. Watt, encouraged women to “grow more food for your own family. Grow a few more chickens this year and if possible a pig or two.”⁴² Another article stated, “Gardens, poultry and small stock can be women’s share in the production and *quite within our ability* [italics mine].”⁴³ By qualifying this request with “quite within our ability,” the author suggested that farm women had the skills to raise livestock and that it was acceptable work for married women. Married women’s sphere was officially expanded to include the barnyard.

In describing her typical day, Mabel Tomer suggested that rural women were performing some barnyard work: “Get up at 5 am; get hired man up; soak clothes; prepare breakfast; get husband off for town; wash clothes; mop the floor and scrub the

⁴¹ Mrs. Watt was instrumental in organizing the Associated Country Women of the World which was “a world-wide association of Women’s Institutes.” Its purpose was to foster “general friendliness and goodwill.” For more information, see Alexandra Zacharias, “British Columbia Women’s Institute in the Early Years: Time to Remember,” in *In Her Own Right*, Barbara Latham and Cathy Kess, eds. (Victoria: Camosun College, 1980), 73.

⁴² “Breakfast Conference in the Okanagan,” *Country Life*, May 1940, 15.

⁴³ “Buy Within the Empire,” *Country Life*, June 1940, 10.

back steps; milk the cows; feed the hens, pigs, baby chicks and turkeys.”⁴⁴ Prescriptive literature during the war provided acceptability for work that women were likely already performing.

Rural daughters, unlike their mothers, were encouraged to perform work in the fields to replace the labour of the farm hand. Men previously employed in the fields were either off at war or had found higher paying work in factories. The absence of male workers during the war created an opportunity for rural daughters to legitimately participate in farm work. The necessity for extra labourers made female work “outside” acceptable. Since rural wives and mothers were busy with the family and housework, the task of fieldwork fell to the rural daughters. Full-page advertisements by the Dominion Department of Agriculture encouraged daughters to move beyond the home and barnyard and into the field. For example, on the back cover of the November 1942 issue was a picture of a young woman driving a tractor. The caption read, “Driving a tractor is my War Job today...driving a tractor is one way I am helping Dad. This is my personal war effort – part of my share in victory.”⁴⁵ The ad continued, “All across Canada, the girls on Canadian farms have answered the call to service.”⁴⁶ The daughter’s role within the

⁴⁴ *Country Life*, May 1943, 22.

⁴⁵ *Country Life*, November 1942, back cover.

⁴⁶ *Country Life*, November 1942, back cover.

family blurred the boundaries between the feminine and masculine spheres to encompass driving a tractor and participating in national affairs. In addition, the ad made a link to national duty and contributing to the war effort by stating, “my personal war effort – part of my share in the victory.”⁴⁷ Under the guise of family and national duty, rural daughters could cross into the male-dominated sphere of fieldwork. A single photograph of a young woman on a tractor with the caption, “Just 17, she handles a tractor and power plow like a veteran,”⁴⁸ further reinforced the acceptance of young unmarried women transcending the boundaries of the feminine sphere to participate in what was considered a male activity. During the war, rural daughters were able, even encouraged, to move beyond the domestic sphere of the home to embrace the masculine sphere of the field.

In *Country Life*, there was a wide acceptance of expanded roles for young unmarried women living on family farms during the war. Training through institutions such as the University of British Columbia reinforced the acceptance of “outside work” for young single women. In June 1941, the following headline appeared in *Country Life*: “Young Women, Alert to Crisis, Take Advantage of Rural Occupational Schools.”⁴⁹ Under the notion of wartime need, women were invited to attend mechanical and

⁴⁷ *Country Life*, November 1942, back cover.

⁴⁸ *Country Life*, November 1940, 17.

⁴⁹ “Young Women, Alert to Crisis, Take Advantage of Rural Occupational Schools,” *Country Life*, June 1941, 8.

agricultural schools, which were previously reserved for young men. The article stated, “With the growing awareness of the role women must play in the life of the nation in war time, the women students have been more than willing to take courses in agriculture, mechanics and woodworking.”⁵⁰ Women were encouraged to take classes that had a “predominantly masculine enrolment.”⁵¹ However, these classes were not held with men: “...it was necessary to organize a special class in mechanics for the women. They are apparently determined to keep the farm machinery going even if the men folk are away on military duties.”⁵² It was acceptable for young rural women to participate in practical courses outside of the domestic sphere but not to share a classroom with young men. The reasoning behind separate classes was not provided. In 1947, the small number of young women, five in total, who enrolled in mechanics and blacksmith courses continued to make headlines: “Girls Take Blacksmith and Motor Mechanics Courses.”⁵³ With only five girls enrolled in 1947, the significance of young women participating in traditionally male courses should not be exaggerated. The importance of this trend lies in the profile it

⁵⁰ “Young Women, Alert to Crisis, Take Advantage of Rural Occupational Schools,” *Country Life*, June 1941, 8.

⁵¹ “Young Women, Alert to Crisis, Take Advantage of Rural Occupational Schools,” *Country Life*, June 1941, 8.

⁵² “Young Women, Alert to Crisis, Take Advantage of Rural Occupational Schools,” *Country Life*, June 1941, 8.

⁵³ “Girls Take Blacksmith and Motor Mechanics Courses,” *Country Life*, May 1947, 24.

was given in *Country Life*. While the number of girls participating was not substantial, the fact that it made headlines suggests that it was acceptable, even encouraged, for young women to engage in male activities during the war. The trend for women to take traditionally male courses continued until 1948⁵⁴ when young men and women were encouraged to take different courses; short courses on agriculture and mechanics were directed at men and homemaking and handicrafts were aimed at women.⁵⁵

World War II allowed both rural wives and daughters increased influence and activity beyond the domestic sphere; however, more influence and an expanded role may not have lead to equality or changes in attitude about women's role. An article written in 1941 reveals that not all women wanted to see women's role expand and change. The article stated,

Grandma made one mistake. She instilled ambition into her girls as well as her boys. She didn't realize that the most important, most wonderful, most necessary and interesting work on earth for a woman is being a homemaker, a good housekeeper, cook, wife, and mother and doing it intelligently...It isn't necessary for a woman to get out and prove that she can do anything a man can...Of course we can...We can never be the Father of the Nation. Mother, yes but never the Head of the House, we are meant to take second place and what a position that could be.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Articles appeared from 1941 to 1947 encouraging rural women to participate in short training courses. For example, see "Girls Take Blacksmith and Motor Mechanics Courses," *Country Life*, May 1947, 24; "8 Weeks Training Course in Rural Leadership at UBC," *Country Life*, Dec. 1946, 23.

⁵⁵ C.A. Hayden, "Timely Notes," *Country Life*, Dec. 1948, 18.

⁵⁶ Mrs. D.B Butchart, "Grandma Had Everything," *Country Life*, October 1941, 8.

This article expressed reservations about women's expanding spheres. In another article, the reader was reminded about the perimeters of women's sphere: "[e]very woman is interested in her home... She loves it because it is home, the centre [sic] of her sphere."⁵⁷ The article directly imposed a "sphere" around women and the home. Despite women's expanding sphere during World War II, the home was still seen as the center of their sphere.

After the war, there was an increased, and exaggerated, focus on the home and family. In *Homeward Bound*, Elaine Tyler May argued "that postwar America society experienced a surge in family life and a reaffirmation of domesticity that rested on distinct roles for men and women."⁵⁸ In Veronica Strong-Boag's study of postwar English Canada, she argued that the "growing numbers of married women" who entered "the paid labour force [were] met with mixed reception in the mass circulation press."⁵⁹ Further, Strong-Boag suggested that despite the debate on wives participating in the paid labour force, "there was little indication that Canadians were about to reconsider traditions that relied on a relatively strict division of labour."⁶⁰ Women were still

⁵⁷ "Better B.C. Farm Homes Is Prime W.I. Objective," *Country Life*, April 1945, 26.

⁵⁸ May, *Homeward Bound*, 9.

⁵⁹ Strong-Boag, "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives," 9.

⁶⁰ Strong-Boag, "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives," 9.

“responsible for domestic duties and men for breadwinning.”⁶¹ Neither May nor Strong-Boag explored these trends among rural populations in the postwar period. The debate over women’s roles in *Country Life* was not as prominent as Strong-Boag has suggested existed in the urban middle-class population. Instead *Country Life* supported women’s return to the domestic sphere. In rural British Columbia, farm women were “released” from their national duties and urged to return to the home as sons and other male labourers returned from war. The emergence of clearly defined and separate gender roles for men and women was inferred by Mabel Johnson who wrote, “Isn’t it the truth that, however, stimulating the career life may be to women, there’s just no employment so satisfying as raising a family.”⁶² This article reinforced women’s separate sphere and their role in the home.

The number of advice columns on domesticity increased after World War II, which further reinforced the distinction between women’s work and men’s work. Sewing patterns, virtually non-existent during the war years, became a regular feature in *Country Life*.⁶³ Another column that focused on homemaking through helpful hints on

⁶¹ Strong-Boag, “Canada’s Wage-Earning Wives,” 9.

⁶² Mabel Johnson, “Between Ourselves,” *Country Life*, October 1952, 21.

⁶³ For examples, see *Country Life*, April 1955, 25; July 1955, 21; August 1955, 23; September 1955, 21; January 1957, 22; August 1958, 18.

cooking and cleaning was “Wife Preservers.”⁶⁴ Advice ranged from restoring velvet gowns to adding “a new flavor to dried prunes.”⁶⁵ Basic household tips were also included such as, “To make mirrors shine after they have been washed, fold a newspaper into a pad and use it for polishing the surface.”⁶⁶ Other articles appeared on spring and fall cleaning, cleaning wallpaper and organizing cleaning to allow for Sundays off.⁶⁷

After the war, the home and family was established as women’s sphere and the importance of housekeeping was emphasized. Articles on the home and family replaced the articles on producing food and working in the barnyard. Furthermore, women recognized and described their responsibility to the home: “The garden work and sweeping would be easy and sublime if that date I wasn’t keeping when ‘its nearing dinner time.’ I’d trade places with my husband and in overalls arrayed I would hoe the corn and turnips – but I know he wouldn’t trade!”⁶⁸ Women recognized the different roles that husband and wife had on the farm. Here it was clear that the women were primarily responsible for preparing dinner not gardening.

⁶⁴ For examples, see “Wife Preservers,” *Country Life*, April 1955, 25; May 1955, 22; June 1955, 22; March 1956, 21; June 1957, 3.

⁶⁵ “Wife Preservers,” *Country Life*, May 1955, 22; April 1955, 25.

⁶⁶ “Wife Preservers,” *Country Life*, June 1955, 22.

⁶⁷ Mabel Johnson, “Between Ourselves,” *Country Life*, April 1948, 27; September 1950, 8; March 1952, 17; Jane Dale, “One Day in Seven,” *Country Life*, August 1952, 17.

⁶⁸ Margaret Elson, “Dinner Time,” *Country Life*, December 1949, 25.

To further ingrain family values and women's role in protecting family values, Mabel Johnson compared the patriarchal family of the early settlers with the rural families of the late 1940s. Romanticizing the life of early settlers, Johnson stated, "...wife and children were subject to the authority of the father. This type of family was stable and settled and lasted for generations." She argued that rural families were much closer to the patriarchal family and, therefore, "farm and rural families are a closer-knit organization than many city units."⁶⁹ This article demonstrated the resurgence of family values in the postwar period and the valourizing of separate spheres for men and women.

To argue that men and women on the farm were expected to operate solely in separate spheres is too simplistic. Despite the evidence of separate spheres for men and women, there was a strong sense that mutuality, in the form of cooperation between the two spheres, was essential to farm survival. In discussing his column, "What's Wrong With the World?," C.A. Hayden explained that the purpose was "to try and figure out what each one of us, in his or her sphere, may do towards arriving at solutions." He identified that there were separate spheres for men and women, but he also recognized that cooperation between men and women was essential to the family farm: "we can do our bit to the best of our ability and be on the lookout for odd voluntary jobs [on the

⁶⁹ Mabel Johnson, "Between Ourselves," *Country Life*, May 1949, 20.

farm]. It is all part of teamplay.”⁷⁰ Separate spheres and mutuality were not exclusive on the farm. In order to be successful, men and women were required to forgo rigid definitions of gender and engage in acts of mutuality. In January 1947, *Country Life* published an article announcing, “a farmer’s wife, if a good one, is worth 69,000.” Professor George A. Pond from the Department of Agriculture and Economics at the University of Minnesota used a mathematical equation to determine the financial value of the farmwife. From Pond’s survey with American farmers, he discovered that based on the participation of women “...those farmers who said ‘the cooperation of the wife was keynote’ made an average of \$2,760 a year more than” farmers “reporting their wives did not cooperate extensively.”⁷¹ In an attempt to define the financial value of women’s work on the farm and in the home, this article drew attention to the necessity of cooperation between husband and wife.⁷² In the editor’s response to this article, he stated, “There cannot be a set of values too high for those women who are the partners in Canada’s basic and most important industry.”⁷³ Other articles identified women as partners in the

⁷⁰ C.A. Hayden, “What’s Wrong With the World?,” *Country Life*, September 1940, 9.

⁷¹ “Farm Wife Is Worth \$69,000,” *Country Life*, January 1947, 18.

⁷² Numerous other articles that discuss the value of women’s work appear in *Country Life*. For example, C.A. Hayden, “Farm Wife’s Dollar Value,” *Country Life*, February 1947, 5; “The Forgotten Women,” *Country Life*, October 1947, 22; “A Pearl Beyond Price...Farm Wife Worth A Million,” *Country Life*, February 1954, 26.

⁷³ “Farm Wife’s Dollar Value,” *Country Life*, February 1947, 5.

farm as well. One pointed out that, “The amazing thing about Canadian farmers is that they have done so many things and have done them so well...and in this competent work their partners, who really have the greater responsibility are their wives.”⁷⁴ Another claimed that, “After all, the women of the farm, ranch and orchard areas are fifty percent partners in the activities of their men-folk. Fifty percent is probably too low an estimate...”⁷⁵ In these articles, women were portrayed as being more than equal partners economically. Viewing women as partners in the farm operation was important to the notion of mutuality.

Mutuality may have existed but it did not necessarily result in equality between women and men. In the “Monthly Letter” from the Royal Bank that was reprinted in *Country Life*, an argument was made for farm women’s equality with farm men,

One homemaker has kept a scientific record for 15 years. She has proven to her own satisfaction that the average woman who prepares meals, cans, bakes, and launders at home, for her family, produces substantially the equal value of the man’s economic contribution in industry. There can be no doubt that farm women make this equal contribution and usually more than this. If city women rate equality with men in industry, the farm women of British Columbia, lacking in the main these facilities [power and other conveniences of the city], assuredly merit a higher rating.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *Country Life*, September 1945, 31.

⁷⁵ “Unsung Heroines,” *Country Life*, October 1940, 15.

⁷⁶ “The Part Women Play,” from the Royal Bank “Monthly Letter” reprinted in *Country Life*, August 1946. 7.

Whether farm women should have been equal to farm men or not, equality did not exist. Women's inequality with men was recognized in Barbara Elliot's column where she stated, "...a perfect home is one where everyone has equal rights and everyone talks and plans out any problems that arise."⁷⁷ Possibly, Elliot was accurately describing home life; however, it was more likely that Elliot felt the need to print this in her column because the "perfect home" was not a reality. Even though women's roles were recognized as valuable and, in some cases, crossed over into the masculine sphere of field work, women did not achieve equality with men during the 1940s and 1950s.

While women's sphere revolved predominantly around the home, their roles and responsibilities fluctuated during times of war and times of peace. Prescriptive literature during the Second World War encouraged women to move beyond the home and increase garden and barnyard activities under the guise of "national duty." Women were allowed to expand their sphere to encompass more than the home. Through their participation in the war effort, women received recognition for their roles in fighting inflation and their influence on the market because of their purchasing power. At the end of the war, women are encouraged to withdraw from "outside work" and once again focus on the domestic sphere of home and family. Articles on women's work outside disappeared and were replaced with advice on the home and family. Women were considered partners on

⁷⁷ Barbara Elliot, "Homemaking," *Country Life*, September 1944, 15.

the farm because their work was considered vital to the survival of the family farm;

however, equality between women and men still did not exist.

Chapter 2: “I’ve always worked outside”: Farm Women and the Construction of Femininity

This chapter uses oral histories from women who lived in rural areas surrounding Kamloops to recreate farm women’s perceptions of their lives and to understand their identity as farm women. This chapter focuses on women’s roles in the home and on the farm¹ as well as how the women adapted outside farm labour to fit notions of femininity. In this chapter, I argue that women expanded their roles in the home to include outside farm labour and adapted their notions of femininity to legitimize it. Mutuality is an important concept to analyzing women’s work.

For the purpose of this chapter, mutuality is the notion of shared space for men and women that does not challenge women’s domestic roles. Through their narratives, women maintained their domestic role in the home but blurred the lines between home and farm to allow for mutuality. While women defined the ranch and their role on the ranch as encompassing both the home and the ranch, men continued to define the ranch as outside labour and maintained their sphere exclusively around the ranch work. For farm women, the ranch and home were not separate; to create a distinct separation between the needs of the ranch and the work in the home was not a reality for farm women. Farm life necessitated the notion of mutuality. As Nancy Grey Osterud argues in

¹ Since the terms "farm" and "ranch" were used interchangeably by the interviewees, this chapter will also use them interchangeably.

Bonds of Community, “women and men interacted on the basis of mutual interests rather than on the basis of their differences.”²

In working toward the mutual interest of the farm, women rarely had the option of removing themselves from farm activities. Furthermore, the majority of women in this study did not want to. Farm women recognized that their responsibilities in the home extended to the farm. I argue that women viewed their roles in the home as important activities on the farm and, as a result, erased separate spheres in favour of mutuality. Women were active participants in outside labour by choice and, thus, they removed the notion of masculine and feminine spheres to create a mutual space. Farm women adapted and expanded their domestic sphere to allow for working outside. For women, their perspective on ranching and their identity as women encompassed both home and ranch; for men ranching was strictly “outside labour.” For women, ranch life did not allow a separate sphere strictly for the home but necessitated a mutual space for all work associated with the ranch.

The value of oral history must be discussed before oral history is used to explore farm women’s lives. Historians have used the oral history methodology for decades; however, mainstream historians have been slow to include oral history in their research.³

² Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 9.

³ Denise Axhorn and Holly Jackson, “Oral History in Canada: A Survey of Trends,” unpublished paper.

The debate over oral history has centered on whether people's memories can be viewed as "true" and "objective." In defense of oral history as a valuable source, Paul Thompson in *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* states that all forms of evidence used by historians are "the *social perception* of facts; and all are subject to social pressures from the context in which they are obtained."⁴ He continues, "With these forms of evidence what we receive is *social meaning*, and it is this which must be evaluated."⁵ More recently, Robert Rutherford, in "Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory," argues that "Studies that use oral history might benefit from approaches that treat individual memories as subjective products of social relations rather than as objective records of personal pasts."⁶ Alexander Freund and Laura Quilici in "Exploring Myths in Women's Narratives" discuss the value of oral histories as "subjective products of social relations" in more detail. Freund and Quilici argue that subjective experiences are just as valuable as so-called objective facts to understanding the past. They write, "myths, both in content and form, shape people's perceptions of reality. Myths, then, are just as real and true as

⁴ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 106.

⁵ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 106.

⁶ Robert Rutherford, "Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory: Breadwinning and Male Parenting on the Job Frontier, 1945-1966" in *Gender and History in Canada*, Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld, eds. (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1996), 358.

are ostensibly objective accounts of the past.”⁷ Freund and Quilici argue that oral narratives are “One of the best ways to understand the subjective experiences...”⁸ In other words, how people construct their lives through the telling of oral history creates a “truth” or their own perception of reality. In her in-depth discussion of oral history, Valerie Yow also argues that oral history is valuable in exploring “the meanings of lived experience.”⁹ Yow states, “subjectivity is at once inescapable and crucial to an understanding of the meanings we give the past and present.”¹⁰ For the purpose of this chapter, the oral histories of the men and women I interviewed are understood as subjective accounts of their own truths; the interviewees’ stories reflect how they viewed their lives. Through oral history, I gained an understanding of how farm women created their identity in relation to outside forces such as prescriptive literature and demands of farm life.

For my research, I interviewed eleven women and six men from ranching and farming communities around Kamloops, British Columbia. Some of these interviews

⁷ Alexander Freund and Laura Quilici, “Exploring Women’s Narratives: Italian and German Immigrant Women in Vancouver, 1947-1961,” *BC Studies*, nos.105-106 (Spring/Summer 1995): 159.

⁸ Freund and Quilici, “Exploring Women’s Narratives,” 161.

⁹ Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide for Social Scientists* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 1994), 25.

¹⁰ Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 25.

were conducted as husband/wife teams and others were conducted individually.¹¹ In one case, I interviewed a mother and daughter together.¹² All of the interviewees married between 1940 and 1955 with the exception of two women who married in the 1930s. Three of the women married and remained within the same community in which they were raised. Prior to marriage, the backgrounds and levels of education of the women differed extensively. One of the women was from Victoria, one was from London, England and the rest were from rural or semi-rural areas in British Columbia. Of the eleven women interviewed, six were raised on farms. One woman was born and raised on a farm until she was four years old. She continued to live in a rural area and spent many summers on her grandparent's farm. The other four women did not have any knowledge or experience of farming prior to marriage. Four of the female interviewees were teachers, one was a nurse and several had only minimal education. All of the men were at least second generation farmers in the Kamloops area with the exception of one who was from Prince George and did not grow up on a farm; he purchased his first ranch after

¹¹ For the most part, I have focussed my discussion on my interviews with the women and husband/wife teams. My interviews with men tended to focus primarily on their labour and the ranching operation.

¹² When I arrived for the interview, the daughter was there. Although our families knew each other, it was likely a cautionary measure. The mother/daughter interview provided both challenges and benefits to interviewing and transcribing.

serving in World War II. All of the interviewees participated in ranching and farming activities in rural areas around Kamloops between 1940 and 1960.¹³

After selecting my interviewees, I began my interviews with a carefully constructed list of open-ended questions; however, I soon realized that in order to foster discussion and open the door to the interviewees' lives and their personal perceptions, the interviewees needed to guide the interview around their experiences. Therefore, after the initial questions to break the ice, I allowed the interview to take on its own direction, rather than rigidly navigating my way through my prepared list of questions. With regard to my questions, I found they were often answered without being asked. By allowing people to formulate their own stories, I learned what was important to them. As a result, this chapter reflects their memories of work in the rural areas surrounding Kamloops.

In Chapter One, I used prescriptive literature to determine how the public realm defined gender roles between 1940 and 1960 for farm women and men. I suggested that World War II provided women with the opportunity to work outside on the farm because of the labour shortage. This appears to have been the case. Mary,¹⁴ one of the farm women I interviewed, pointed out, "Wartime, I think, affected agriculture in a very difficult way because they took all our hired help..."¹⁵ However, Mary did not

¹³ One couple lived in Kamloops; he continued to work on his family's farm and she taught full-time.

¹⁴ In order to maintain the privacy of the individuals I interviewed, pseudonyms are used for all persons.

differentiate between wartime labour and postwar labour. Through my interviews, only two women briefly discussed the differences. Susan, who was raised on a farm and did not marry until after the war, remembered: “well I ran that ranch for a while because my brother was in the army and my dad had heart troubles and that. He couldn’t work so I practically ran the ranch myself for two years.”¹⁶ Elsie also suggested that her work on the farm increased during the war: “I remember [my sister-in-law] and I had to help the men. There were no men around for awhile because they had all gone to war ... we drove the derrick team.”¹⁷ Although Susan and Elsie recalled their roles expanding during the war, they also suggested that they continued to work on the farm after the war.¹⁸ Does this mean that women’s opportunities to work in the field and the barnyard did not decrease after World War II? While this may seem logical considering the majority of women interviewed did not differentiate between the type of work they did during and after the war, I suggest that it was the amount of work that increased not the type. Katherine Jellison, in *Entitled to Power*, argues that farm women’s “wartime field work...actually represented an expansion of the farm duties they had known before the

¹⁵ Interview #12, January 22, 1997

¹⁶ Interview #14, January 24, 1997

¹⁷ Interview #1, December 18, 1996

¹⁸ Interview #14, January 24, 1997; Interview #1, December 18, 1996

war”¹⁹ and would continue to do after the war.²⁰ Furthermore, I argue that the women viewed their work on the farm as help, and thus, they would have viewed their extra work during the war as a natural extension of their role on the farm – not a special opportunity as was suggested by the prescriptive literature in Chapter One.

In this chapter, I argue that women who wanted to work outside in the fields and barnyard did so whether it was wartime or not; women who did not want to work outside did not. Furthermore, for all of the women I interviewed, the home and family were their primary responsibilities and only in rare situations did men help in this realm.

The home and the family were central to the construction of femininity on the farm. In particular, childbirth was considered a strictly women’s sphere. Childbirth was separated from the ranch and was generally established as a female realm. When Elsie gave birth to her first child, she went to Kamloops and stayed with her sister: “they made me go to town and stay there until I had the baby because they were so afraid I might have the baby out there...I guess I was in town a good six weeks...because [the baby] was late in coming...”²¹ After Elsie was released from the hospital, she went and stayed with her mother: “I went out to my mother's first, the first night or two and then [my husband]

¹⁹ Jellison, *Entitled to Power*, 131.

²⁰ Jellison, *Entitled to Power*, 148.

²¹ Interview #1, December 18, 1996

came down with whatever we had at the time...and took me home."²² Giving birth was separated physically from the ranch and the husband. Women relied on female family members for support. Elsie constructed her narrative of childbirth around her female family network; she stayed with her sister instead of a brother and her mother instead of her father even though her parents lived together.

Women who moved away from their families had to make adaptations in relation to their female networks. Joan, who moved from Victoria to a ranch outside of Kamloops when she married, returned to Victoria for the birth of her first child.²³ While Joan had her other two children in Kamloops, she still relied on her mother. Joan explained, "Oh yeah, my mother came and stayed for nearly a month at the birth of both the children, the second and the third child, great help too."²⁴ Ruth depended on the female network of her husband's family during childbirth because her own family was too far away. Ruth stayed with her husband's aunt prior to entering the hospital and relied on her mother-in-law once she returned to the ranch.²⁵ Joan and Ruth had to make changes to their female realm to ensure that they had female support during childbirth.

²²Interview #1, December 18, 1996

²³Interview #4, January 3, 1997

²⁴Interview #4, January 3, 1997

²⁵Interview #10, January 21, 1997

For much of the 1940s and 1950s, women were required to stay in the hospital for up to two weeks with a newborn. Ruth had eight children and she explained how childbirth in the hospitals changed:

When I had the first ones you had to stay in the hospital for two weeks and you had to stay in bed for ten days. You didn't dare even put your feet over the edge and all this nonsense...but with the other ones, well, three days was good...you really felt much better that way.²⁶

The remoteness of the farms and the extended stay in the hospital required that men and women create a separate sphere for childbirth. In the women's narratives on childbirth men were largely absent except to mention that their husbands picked them up from the hospital. While women tended to discuss childbirth comfortably, the men interviewed individually did not mention childbirth and those that were interviewed together with their wives were noticeably quiet during discussions of childbirth.²⁷ This further reinforced that childbirth was a female realm.

Women's work in the home, which included laundry, cleaning, child-rearing, cooking and bookkeeping, were described in the women's narratives. These tasks were harder for women to separate from the ranch. Ida recalled her work in the house:

In the house?...[I did] all the work in the house...wash all the clothes in with the washboard in those days and then we got a washer. First washer

²⁶Interview #10, January 21, 1997

²⁷ Interview #2, December 22, 1996; Interview #3, December 28, 1996; Interview #7, January 17, 1997; Interview #8, January 19, 1997; Interview #11, January 22, 1997

machine was, it was like a copper kettle, copper cap on it and we had to put the soap and the clothes in there and then we had to pump it up and down like this and the agitator would go around like that and then we had a ringer. You had to turn...the handle on the ringer on this washer...it was a long time before we got a gas washer...We ironed everything too you know. We ironed... we had to heat the irons on the stove you know. We had no electric iron or anything in those days. We just had to heat the irons on the stove and then you ironed everything in those days...but we survived.²⁸

Ida's memories of housework focussed on washing and ironing clothes as well as how the work was performed. Without electricity, Ida manually operated her first washing machine and heated her irons on the stove. The majority of farm women that I interviewed did not have electricity until at least the 1950s and, in some cases, the 1960s or 1970s. Thus, similar to Ida, they would have either washed by hand or used a manual or a gas operated washing machine. In Ida's narrative, society's expectation of women's work was suggested. Women were responsible for "all the work in the house" and despite the lack of electricity and conveniences as well as the expectation of ironing everything, farm women "survived."

In her narrative on laundry, Ruth described how she survived and adapted society's expectations of cleanliness. With eight children, Ruth remembered washing clothes everyday:

²⁸ Interview #13, January 23, 1997

I washed by hand for a long time because we didn't have electricity until just a few years before I left. When I first went there, we used coal oil lamps and gas lamps and so on and I washed by hand and then when I got a gas washer that was a real treat. When I think of it now we always had hot and cold water which was a blessing but the hot water was heated from the wood stove so in the summertime you had to keep your stove going full blast to have any hot water...Yes, [laundry] was just there everyday. That's why I used to wash pretty near everyday because there, for a few years, I had one or two in diapers and there were no pampers. You had to wash them. I used to wash pretty well everyday and like their bedding, babies bedding, and stuff that would have to be done near everyday. But it worked somehow...you know how fussy some of them are about changing the bed every week, we didn't have fitted sheets in those days so we changed the bottom sheet and put the top one to the bottom and put a clean one on the top every week...But I had to or I wouldn't have gotten around to all the sheets otherwise.²⁹

For Ruth, laundry was one of the biggest chores in the home and was very prominent in her memories of living on the farm. In light of the amount of work, Ruth adapted her view of washing to what her time and routine allowed. Ruth recognized that even with a washing machine and washing clothes everyday, she could not meet the expectations of washing all the sheets each week. Farm women's lives did not allow them to conform to society's expectations for women.

Joan, who lived in "a little rather crude log cabin"³⁰ with "no running water,"³¹ remembered how her first washing machine reduced her work:

²⁹ Interview #10, January 21, 1997

³⁰ Interview #4, January 3, 1997

³¹ Interview #4, January 3, 1997

I don't remember laundry funnily but I remember the old washing machine I had, it was a gem. It was a wedding present. It was fueled by gas because we didn't have electricity and the beautiful thing about it was the central agitator, you know. It came out and then there was a tripod that sat on top and the tripod held the butter churn. Yeah, so that when you plugged it in, it swished and churned the butter.³²

In contrast to Ruth, Joan did not remember laundry. Joan's memories of laundry revolved around her washing machine and how it increased her work efficiency by washing clothes and churning butter at the same time.

Elsie lived in close proximity to her mother-in-law and sister-in-law. She remembered how the three households shared a washing machine: "It seems to me there was always a washing machine somewhere and I would take my washing over there, to the other place, ...and do it in their house and then would pack it home and ... hang it on my clothes line outside."³³

The washing machine was shared between the women but the engine was also shared with the men. Elsie recalled that the engine on the washing machine worked so well that it was used to run the bale elevator:

Oh it was really a good machine...and that little engine on there worked very well. It worked so well that ...when the men acquired what you would call a bale elevator it had to have a little engine so they would take

³² Interview #4, January 3, 1997

³³ Interview #1, December 18, 1996

it off the washing machine and put it on that...we couldn't wash until we got that thing back.³⁴

According to Elsie's story, farm work, such as stacking hay, would have been a priority over housework. Elsie accepted that the ranch operations would come before washing clothes. Although laundry was clearly separated from the farm, in Elsie's narrative the washing machine was shared with the farm.

Unlike laundry, cooking was not clearly separated from the farm. Although cooking took place in the home, the work benefited the farm. Cooking expanded women's domestic role into the male sphere of the ranch. As Joan explained, she cooked for her husband and the hired hands: "Oh yeah, well the house and the kitchen kept me busy most of the time because... I thought I had married one man but I discovered every time the dinner bell went about five appeared [laughter]."³⁵ Joan's narrative is a very poignant observation about the melding of home and farm. For women, marriage to a farmer meant marriage to the farm. Cooking was one of women's responsibilities to the farm. Ten of the eleven women interviewed cooked for work crews; the only exception was Linda who lived off the ranch and worked full-time.³⁶

³⁴ Interview #1, December 18, 1996

³⁵ Interview #4, January 3, 1997

³⁶ Interview #2, December 22, 1996. Linda's sister-in-law lived on the ranch and cooked for the work crews.

Each of the ten women described the work involved in cooking for work crews; the descriptions ranged from brief responses to in-depth narratives. Tracy briefly mentioned that she cooked for hired hands: "Yeah, we had a bunkhouse and then...we fed [the ranch employees]."³⁷ Tracy's short answer can be understood in the context of the interview, which was conducted as a husband and wife team. Tracy was a war bride and was introduced to ranching after the war. As a result, the interview was dominated by extraordinary stories of ranch life and focussed little on the day to day activities. Pam discussed cooking for work crews in more detail than Tracy did. Pam's narrative demonstrated the importance of cooking for work crews. When Pam married her husband, his parents still lived and worked on the farm. Over time, Pam became more active on the farm and gained more responsibility. Pam described how the work of feeding the hired hands was passed on to her from her mother-in-law:

[the] first year I never did feed men until it came to sheep-shearing time, [my mother-in-law] did that and then it was handed down to me...but I had been brought up seeing my mother doing these things so it wasn't an impossibility if you could just get your act together and get it done.³⁸

According to Pam, cooking for the hired hands was not an easy task but her childhood had prepared her to do the work. It was also clear from Pam's narrative that cooking was

³⁷Interview #7, January 17, 1997

³⁸Interview #3, December 28, 1996

part of women's roles on the farm; the cooking was passed from mother-in-law to daughter-in-law.

Other women remembered the work involved in cooking for work crews. Martha spoke about the structure of mealtimes: "You fed [the work crews] three meals a day.

You fed them breakfast at six, dinner at twelve and supper at five and that was that."³⁹

Martha's narrative suggested that mealtimes for work crews followed a rigid schedule.

This was reinforced by Joan's more thorough description of the amount of work required to get the food prepared for the hired hands:

I can't say the word haying now without getting a shiver down my back. It just seemed to go on forever, this crowd of men to feed, especially when I had the three little children...Breakfast was a big thing. When I think of now a simple little breakfast, we had eggs and porridge, eggs, milk, toast and pancakes, that was breakfast. I would only get the dishes washed up and it was time to get ready for a big meal at noon, which would be potatoes and one other vegetable and perhaps soup or a meat dish of some kind and a dessert. Then it was time to get supper and I can remember in the very hottest weather I used to be brave and let the fire go out after lunch and I would just about cry if anyone came in the afternoon for tea because it would be nearly half an hour before I could serve them a cup of tea by the time I brought in the kindling and put the paper in and got the fire going.⁴⁰

Joan also discussed her cooking experiences as part of the ranch: "But the things to do with the ranch, about cooking, I was totally ignorant. As I told you custard nurses are

³⁹Interview #6, January 5, 1997

⁴⁰Interview #4, January 3, 1997

very proficient at custard jelly and chicken broth period.”⁴¹ Joan’s narrative clearly linked the cooking responsibilities with the ranch. Cooking was not a major task in Joan’s daily routine until she married and moved to the farm.

Elsie provided another example of how cooking crossed into the realm of the ranch. In Elsie's case, she was sometimes required to leave her home to cook for the work crews in the field. As Elsie explained,

Either [my husband or brother-in-law] would have to go and stay up there and feed the cattle in the winter. I would go up one winter and stay with them and bring all the kids...then the next year [my sister-in-law] would go up...but most of the time [my husband] wanted me up there because he didn't like cooking for himself ...and of course, in the summertime one of us had to go up because they had to hire a haying crew...that was a lot of cooking.⁴²

If the men could not come to the home, then the home went to the men. External camp cooks were not hired and the men did not cook for themselves. Instead, farm women like Elsie temporarily moved their home and family to provide men with meals in the field. Furthermore, cooking required that the line between home and ranch be blurred. Due to the close physical space of the home and the ranch, as well as the responsibilities of cooking for the work crews, women viewed cooking as part of the ranch activities. Even more importantly, rural women perceived cooking as important to the farm and

⁴¹ Interview #4, January 3, 1997

⁴² Interview #1, December 18, 1996

production. Figuratively, women expanded the boundaries of the kitchen and home to incorporate the farm through cooking for the work crews.

Cooking for work crews was essential labour that contributed to the farm's success. Often work crews were poorly paid and, as a result, meals were essential to keeping work crews. Ida's recollection of cooking for work crews supports the idea that meals were considered part of the wages. Ida recalled, "we had big meals you know. They all had big appetites, they worked hard and they didn't get much money."⁴³

Women's cooking contributed indirectly to the farm as a supplement to wages.

Similar to cooking, bookkeeping was primarily the women's responsibility. Bookkeeping was the task of recording and balancing wages, expenses and income. Elsie took over the bookkeeping. She explained, "then I did get interested in helping with the income tax. [My husband] was just happy to give me that bookwork. He could ride a horse for miles but he didn't like that bookwork."⁴⁴ Similarly Ruth inherited the bookwork from her father-in-law. She remembered, "I did in later years, yes, but to begin with [my father-in-law] did it all but afterwards I helped with that quite a bit. It was all straight forward though with us not having hired help...just incidental help."⁴⁵ Both Elsie

⁴³ Interview #13, January 23, 1997

⁴⁴ Interview #1, December 18, 1996

⁴⁵ Interview #10, January 21, 1997

and Ruth taught school prior to marriage and as result, enjoyed the challenge of the bookkeeping.

Education was not the only factor in deciding who was responsible for looking after the books. In her narrative, Martha, who had a grade eight education, described her role as bookkeeper: “Yes, I still do...well, it’s just something I like to do...I like to add figures. It's not that I am good at it. I like to do it, it’s good for your mind.”⁴⁶ Martha chose to look after the bookkeeping because it was a task that she enjoyed.

Not all of the women were responsible for the bookwork as Ida explained: “Oh he used to [do the bookkeeping]. The men used to do that. We didn’t bother too much about bookkeeping in those days you know not like now...”⁴⁷ Ida’s husband looked after the record keeping, which Ida expressed as normal; “the men used to do that.”

Even those women who did the bookkeeping did not do it in isolation.

Bookkeeping also had elements of mutuality. This is demonstrated in Mary’s recollection of bookwork:

I used to [do the bookkeeping]. I never had any practice. It evolved through the years and I used to be able to do the ranch books...I guess that [bookkeeping] was one thing women were able to do you know and I mean not that [my husband] wasn’t capable but then he was tired often he

⁴⁶ Interview #6, January 5, 1997

⁴⁷ Interview #13, January 23, 1997

came in and I was interested in it...if there was something I couldn't do I just went to him and we figured it out together.⁴⁸

Mary described bookkeeping as primarily her responsibility but she was careful to explain that her husband was capable of bookkeeping. She explained that it also required cooperation from her husband. Most of the bookkeeping would have focussed on the sale of farm produce, the purchase of implements for the home and the farm, and the payment of wages to the work crews. As a result, bookkeeping can be seen as an overlap of women's domestic sphere into the masculine realm of the farm.

Rural women wanted to include the men in the domestic realm of the home.

When I asked women if their husbands worked in the home, the women constructed narratives to include their husbands in housework or to justify why their husbands did not help. As Elsie described, "Now what [my husband] did, well he built the house and he used to fill the gas tank and the gas lamps ...make sure we had wood in the house...he didn't do the cooking and he didn't do the laundry. No, he didn't do that."⁴⁹ Although her husband did not cook or do laundry, Elsie attached his work to the home. Elsie also attached her husband to the children: "oh sure he was a really good dad. I don't know what you mean by what he did with them...He made a little fence so the kids couldn't get

⁴⁸ Interview #12, January 22, 1997

⁴⁹ Interview #1, December 18, 1996

away out of the yard.”⁵⁰ Elsie’s narrative suggested that fathers had a different role in raising the children. While he did not change diapers or feed the kids, in her mind Elsie’s husband still participated in caring for the children.

Joan’s husband did not help in the house. Joan excused her husband because as she recalled, “Oh no, he was so busy outside. Not that he wasn’t willing. He was just so busy outside.”⁵¹ In a similar manner, Pam created a narrative to justify why Larry did not help when the children were small.⁵² In responding to whether she had extra help with the children, the following conversation took place:

Pam: Just Larry.

Larry: And I didn’t help much then.

Pam: Well, he was outside most of the time.⁵³

In another narrative on housework, Larry stated, “I can’t say that I really helped out much no”; however, Pam remembered Larry’s help: “[The shepherders] had an early breakfast, Larry was always there to help me...”⁵⁴ Pam and Larry’s different memories can be reconciled by understanding the context of the interview. The interviews took place in the late 1990s when some men and women are striving for more balance and

⁵⁰ Interview #1, December 18, 1996

⁵¹ Interview #4, January 3, 1997

⁵² Pam and Larry were interviewed together.

⁵³ Interview #3, December 28, 1996

⁵⁴ Interview #3, December 28, 1996

equality in the home. Pam likely wanted to portray Larry in a positive light by today's standards. This is similar to how Elsie attached her husband's work to the home and how Joan justified her husband's lack of housework because "he was so busy outside."

Mary and her husband had a different relationship because of Mary's health.

Mary explained that her husband did work in the home:

I was sick quite a bit, the late 50s early 60s and he did a lot of [housework]. The poor kids, he was getting them breakfast one morning and scrambled eggs and there was some garlic salt on top of the stove so he decided to change the flavour a little bit...that had made her sick...he, being the only [child], he helped his mother quite a bit when he was a kid so...he knew what the inside of a house was.⁵⁵

Out of necessity Mary's husband participated in the domestic sphere. Furthermore, he was capable of working in the home because he was an only child who assisted his mother: "he knew what the inside of the house was." Mary's husband was an exception. For the most part, farm men did not transcend the boundaries of the female domestic sphere and women were more likely to participate in work outside of the home than men were to participate in work in the house.

As Chapter One suggested, women's outside labour was socially acceptable only in certain situations such as World War II. Most of the women I interviewed believed that their outside labour was essential to farm survival throughout the 1940s and 1950s.

⁵⁵ Interview #12, January 22, 1997

Furthermore, many of the women enjoyed working outside of the home. Women's participation in outside labour varied. Some women engaged in outside labour extensively and others did not; women's narratives on milking cows demonstrated these different choices. Joan and Ruth did not milk the cows whereas Harriet did. As Joan described,

We had two dairy cows. That was the dear old hired man that I told you about...that was his first job in the morning. He used to get up and put the horses in, several teams depending on the season, milk the cow and then come up and run the separator. There used to be lots of fresh milk, beautiful cream. I used to make baking powder biscuits with cream not butter...that was one of the big jobs though, was making butter two or three times a week...Nobody left their husbands in those days Holly, they didn't have time to pack (laugh).⁵⁶

In her description of who milked the cow, Joan included a discussion of her role in processing the milk; thus, she attached herself to the work physically. Joan ensured that her identity as a farm woman was tied to the notion that she worked hard and contributed to the success of the farm. Joan joked, "Nobody left their husbands in those days...they didn't have time to pack." Femininity on the farm included a woman's ability to work hard.

Similarly, Ruth's narrative illustrated the connection between farm women's femininity and hard work. Ruth, who did not participate in milking the cow or other

⁵⁶ Interview #4, January 3, 1997

outside labour explained, “I didn’t do much [outside labour], no I didn’t have time. I was too busy having babies and you know cooking.”⁵⁷ Joan and Ruth suggested that they did not milk the cow because they already had plenty of work to do. Both women remained primarily in the domestic sphere and, therefore, created a notion of womanliness that encompassed the amount of work they performed inside the home.

Harriet, on the other hand, chose to milk the cow and defined her idea of femininity on the farm to include this work:

Well, there was a chore boy. He couldn’t milk that was why I milked and [the] one chore boy we did have that could milk, the cow’s foot was in the bucket more than the milk. Well as soon as I got rid of him well then I stick with my cows. I like to have my milk clean and there was always a pitcher of milk on the table and there was cream on the table.⁵⁸

Even though a chore boy was employed to milk the cows, Harriet “got rid of him” so she could “stick with [her] cows.” For Harriet, femininity involved being capable of milking a cow and being in charge of her work. Harriet justified milking the cow because she wanted to serve clean milk: “I like to have my milk clean.” This statement suggested that the chore boy was not able to provide clean milk. Harriet tied her outside labour to her pride in her home: “there was always a pitcher of milk on the table.” Harriet may not have spent as much time inside the home as Joan and Ruth did but she ensured that she

⁵⁷ Interview #10, January 21, 1997

⁵⁸ Interview #9, January 20, 1997

maintained the presentation of domesticity. Farm women defined outside work to encompass farm survival and the women made links between their outside labour and the domestic sphere throughout their interviews to legitimize their participation in outside labour. Women did not see the home as separate from the farm which allowed them to expand their notion of womanliness to the entire farm.

Femininity for farm women was also tied to production. Ida contributed directly to the home economy through the sale of the “barnyard produce.” As Ida explained, in her situation the money from eggs and butter was separated from the farm revenue:

We, you’d take like butter and eggs and stuff from the farm. That was to buy the groceries for the house you know but the implements and things they bought for the farm well it came from selling the grain. We used to grow the wheat and the cattle they used to sell the calves and what not in the fall and all that and that went for buying implements for the farm... We used to have customers in town that used to take our butter and eggs and then we used to trade them at the grocer took whatever we had left over and he paid us...we took groceries for whatever he owed.⁵⁹

Butter and eggs were traded for groceries or the money was saved to purchase implements for the home. Through the purchase of goods and groceries for the home and family, Ida was able to participate in work outside the home because her work benefited the female sphere. Also, her financial contribution to the farm and home allowed Ida

⁵⁹ Interview #13, January 23, 1997

some independence in her purchases. Other women spoke about selling milk, eggs, butter, and poultry to town but did not discuss how the money was used.⁶⁰

Whether women worked outside or not, they tied notions of femininity to their labour and defined femininity to meet their needs. Furthermore, farm women suggested that their participation in outside labour was a personal choice. When I asked Ruth if she preferred to work in the house, she responded,

I did yes. I was not really the labourious type. I didn't miss not riding and those kinda things. I was kinda happy I didn't have to do it. But I didn't mind the gardening. I didn't do a lot of it but I helped and then when the kids got bigger they did a lot of it but I did a lot of canning and making jam... I didn't ride very much. I did when I first went out there because I thought I had to. I thought it was the thing to do and everyone did it so I had to do it too but I was never that fond of riding so I didn't ride a lot.⁶¹

On the other hand, Susan, Mary, Martha and Harriet all told of how they preferred to work outside. As Susan states, "I just liked it so I just worked outside."⁶² Susan was raised on a farm and always enjoyed outside work:

I've worked outside all my life yes. I just love out milking the cow and feeding pigs and chickens and all that. That or working in the field.... I liked the farm and stayed with it. I never worked one day out of my life not another job of any kind, always on the farm...no I liked the farm. I love animals.⁶³

⁶⁰ Interview #1, December 18, 1996; Interview #3, December 28, 1996; Interview #6, January 6, 1997; Interview #9, January 20, 1997; Interview #14, January 24, 1997

⁶¹ Interview #10, January 21, 1997

⁶² Interview #14, January 24, 1997

⁶³ Interview #14, January 24, 1997

In Mary's interview, she described the work she preferred: "I think I liked the riding as well as anything and I enjoyed gardening in the good weather. It was nice to be outside. I used to help in the winter to feed."⁶⁴ Martha summed up her preference with three simple words, "I hate housework..."⁶⁵ Similarly, Harriet explained, "it troubled me the day I worked in the house if I had a choice."⁶⁶ Farm women participated in outside labour because they wanted to.

Women constructed their notion of the "accepted role" around the type of work they engaged in. Joan stated, "And it was just sort of the accepted model. I can't think of any women who did much apart from the like garden and poultry and that sort of thing...that it was just the accepted role for women."⁶⁷ Similar to Joan, Pam explained that her duties in the home were more important than riding:

Oh there were times, I guess, that I would really have liked to have gone riding or things like that but it didn't, it wouldn't have ranked number one when you knew you came back what you would have to do and I think the age of liberation didn't happen for a few years after that. There was a pattern you followed, your mother did it or your mother-in-law did it and parents before them and I never felt hard done by ever.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Interview #12, January 22, 1997

⁶⁵ Interview #6, January 5, 1997

⁶⁶ Interview #9, January 20, 1997

⁶⁷ Interview #4, January 3, 1997

⁶⁸ Interview #3, December 28, 1996

Pam continued, “You have shepherders around. They don’t want anything to do with women...you know it’s their territory and I had all I could do anyway you know.”⁶⁹ Pam did not challenge the accepted role because as she explained, “I had all I could do anyway...” and “I never felt hard done by.” Joan and Pam were influenced by the roles of their peers and female family members on the farm and this contributed to their understanding of women’s accepted role on the farm.

While Joan and Pam constructed their narrative of the “accepted role” to reflect the limited work they performed outside of the home, Mary and Harriet expanded women’s accepted role to include outside labour. Mary recalled,

...countrymen aren’t against women doing outside things too much. Although a story, out of context, but an American couple ... lived up here for a few years ...she was quite surprised that a lot of the women worked outside and she had been raised I think either in Kansas or Iowa...but they the girls were never allowed to do anything outside not even milk a cow. I think she learned to cook and sew, of course, and spent her time making clothes as far as I could see...no I think a lot of the agriculture people the women do work hard outside.⁷⁰

In this description, Mary accepted working outside as part of her life on the farm: “I think a lot of the agriculture people the women do work hard outside.” She made it clear that

⁶⁹ Interview #3, December 28, 1996

⁷⁰ Interview #12, January 22, 1997

men accepted women working outside and she expressed her own surprise at another family where “the girls were never allowed to do anything outside not even milk a cow.” Furthermore, Harriet recalled that her husband accepted her work outside: “It didn’t bother him [that I worked outside] as long as I didn’t get in his way. Well, he could tell me where to go and what to get in the line of stock and I knew the animals enough so that I could bring in pretty well what he wanted.”⁷¹ Harriet’s ability and willingness justified her work outside on the farm; she helped her husband and contributed to the farm.

Both Mary and Harriet, who chose to work outside, felt it was the accepted role for farm women to participate. Women such as Pam and Joan, who did not work outside as much, constructed narratives around the socially accepted model that women did not work outside. Mary, Harriet, Martha, Susan and Pam all had knowledge of farming prior to marriage; Joan did not. Therefore, it is difficult to conclude that women’s choice of labour was associated with their upbringing. However, the level of women’s education may be linked to whether or not the women preferred to work in the home or outside. Mary, Martha, Susan and Harriet did not pursue further education after high school; on the other hand, Joan and Ruth were trained as a nurse and as a teacher respectively.

No matter how much work women did outside, they constructed their narratives around the home and/or the family and often placed emphasis on their domestic

⁷¹ Interview #9, January 20, 1997

responsibility. The influence of children in the daily lives of farm women demonstrated that home and family came first and that domestic responsibility came before women's outside labour. Susan discussed how raising children restricted her movement outside of the home: "Randy [my husband] would get help course when the kids were small. I couldn't go out and do too much cause I didn't have a babysitter. I never ever did have a babysitter."⁷² This was also articulated by Martha who described, "Always, I've always worked outside...Yeah well, for a while I didn't do too much when the kids were smaller but as they got bigger well sure we went out fencing. We'd take the kids along. It wasn't no big deal."⁷³ Both Susan and Martha set aside their outside work until their children were old enough to be left on their own or to come with them; they took care of the domestic roles before they participated in outside work.

Mary and her mother-in-law balanced outside labour with their domestic role when everyone was required to work outside. Mary described,

...my mother-in-law did, we both worked out in the field in the summer time because we needed every hand that we could get of course. She would come in early for supper. She'd make supper but we'd be out haying most of the time. I can remember seeding on the tractor in shades of safety with a two year old sitting between my feet.⁷⁴

⁷² Interview #14, January 24, 1997

⁷³ Interview #6, January 5, 1997

⁷⁴ Interview #12, January 22, 1997

In Mary's narrative, she included how she and her mother-in-law managed to look after the domestic realm and work in the field. They made adaptations to their outside work to ensure that they took care of the home and the family.

Harriet also recognized that her primary responsibility was to her family and her home. Nevertheless, she revised her childcare to ensure she could work outside. Harriet, who enjoyed riding, described how she brought her son along: "It made it pretty tough for [my first son] cause just as soon as he could sit up he was sittin' on a cushion on the front of my saddle and I was riding with the poor kid..."⁷⁵ Another story by Harriet suggested that the home and children came first:

One day, there was a deer that was coming across below the timberline there and we were all outa meat... I grabbed the rifle and gave [my oldest son] the bottle for [my youngest son] and went up there ... but just as I shot that dangblang dog went ripping past me and the deer laid down and the dog scared it and it got up and ran...but I went home to see ...how everything was and [my oldest son] had fed [my youngest son] so I got a saddle horse and I went over in the direction the deer had gone and there it was laying so I cut its throat...and I cut the hind quarters off it and took that home..."⁷⁶

Harriet transcended into the male realm of "provider" but maintained her female role of "caregiver" for her children. Before Harriet decided to follow the deer she returned home

⁷⁵ Interview #9, January 20, 1997

⁷⁶ Interview #9, January 20, 1997

to check on her children. Harriet constructed her narratives of outside work to encompass her children and her home.

While women engaged in horseback riding and other outside work, their homes and their families were the first responsibilities. Harriet recalled how she tried to have extra help to allow her to ride:

I wanted to ride so I tried to keep a cook. That was pretty hard to do, usually either had to help the cook or cook myself but I always had a saddle horse or two and just as soon as the dishes were washed I was outa there...⁷⁷

Harriet's recognition that the "dishes were washed" prior to engaging in a secondary activity shows that her duties as wife, mother and homemaker were not neglected. Harriet recognized these as her primary duties.

Similarly, Joan described her work in the garden as her "top priority" during the summer months:

We grew all the vegetables for the year round. We have done that ever since I've been here...In the summer time, I only garden...we grow vegetables for the year round. I've got a huge flower garden and which I love and that gets top priority and the house has to survive on a lick and a promise...I baby it up in the winter.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Interview #9, January 20, 1997

⁷⁸ Interview #4, January 3, 1997

Although Joan gave the garden priority in the summer, her house was given extra attention in the winter. Joan was careful to add that her primary responsibility, the home, was not neglected. Joan created a balance between her work outside and her domestic sphere.

Mutuality allowed farm women to participate in outside labour. Mutuality, as discussed earlier, was the removal of separate spheres in favour of shared space for the benefit of mutual interests; it allowed women to participate in realms considered “male” and to create a feminine identity through the work. It was through women that mutuality between the genders was fostered and encouraged.

Farm women described their work outside as help and thus maintained the notions of femininity. Elsie remembered her role in outside labour during the war:

Oh yes, during the war, I remember [my sister-in-law] and I had to help the men. There were no men around for awhile because they had all gone to war...well anyway we drove the derrick team... we often we had to help in lots of ways, in calving, I've helped pull calves...I didn't do much riding. I was never very comfortable about riding.⁷⁹

In addition, Mary portrayed her work as “help” several times in her interview:

Well I helped. It was like when Dr. H. said when do you work in the house? And I said well whenever there's time and there isn't much in the summertime. And I helped...I did a lot of hay-stacking you know... and go up to the house and clean it a bit...

⁷⁹ Interview #1, December 18, 1996

Well I was naturally that way inclined [to work outside] but...yes I was supposed to help where possible. One did what one could...[my mother-in-law] did a lot of work as far as the chores are concerned and keeping the place going. That is what a lot of women spent there time at I think not counting all the other things. A woman has lots to do, especially with children around.⁸⁰

Elsie and Mary justified transcending the boundaries of the feminine sphere to the masculine sphere by characterizing their work as help to aid in the survival of the farm.

As Mary described, “I guess I was someone to pick up the pieces and do a little extra somewhere.”⁸¹ The term “help” suggested that the women did not consider outside work as their primary responsibility but rather that they had entered a realm not traditionally considered feminine. Although Mary’s narrative suggested that she spent the majority of her time in the summer outside, she still described her labour as help. The dominant discourse of femininity necessitated that farm women maintained the notions of womanliness.

While women helped men with outside labour, men also helped women with work that was considered feminine. In Pam’s narrative on gardening, she described the garden as her responsibility: “Yes big garden, big garden...Well I think basically it was [my responsibility].”⁸² Even though the garden was Pam’s duty, the work was still shared:

⁸⁰ Interview #12, January 22, 1997

⁸¹ Interview #12, January 22, 1997

⁸² Interview #3, December 28, 1996

Well anyway I was planting the garden one day and we had company come for supper from town and so I didn't get it covered up so ...[a friend] he said he was going to help Larry cover up the seeds and he says to Larry 'what's in this row?' and Larry said 'oh those are beets.' He said, 'let's cover those beets I don't like them.' But nobody, nobody hesitated to help somebody out you know. If your job was in the house and somebody needed you outside well you went.⁸³

Larry helped Pam in a similar way that Mary and Elsie helped their husbands.

Pam's description espoused the notions of mutuality: "...nobody hesitated to help somebody out you know. If your job was in the house and somebody needed you outside well you went." It was through "help" that men and women created the shared space necessary for mutuality and maintained the notions of womanliness and manliness.

Elsie's two discussions on raising turkeys suggested that work required cooperation. Raising turkeys, as described by Elsie, was often her job because the men would be away in the fields: "I feed the turkeys, many a time, and I used to have to go out looking for turkey eggs. The turkeys would wander around, away from the farm and if you didn't watch the coyotes got them. I learned to shoot a gun and I used to protect those turkeys."⁸⁴ In a later discussion on raising turkeys, Elsie again suggested that caring for the turkeys was primarily the women's responsibility and that the men helped:

⁸³ Interview #3, December 28, 1996

⁸⁴ Interview, November 9, 1994

We started raising turkeys...we were raising quite a few turkeys two or three years after I got married. What a time I had with them! You didn't keep them in a pen, you let the turkeys run all over and find their own nests and wander after them to find these nests to get the eggs before the other birds did...well the men would make sure we got the grain there and they would probably help us because there was a lot of turkeys ...⁸⁵

In my initial discussion with Elsie, she described only her role in caring for the turkeys.

In a later narrative, Elsie added the men's role. The addition of the men's role is important because it suggests that although the women had the primary responsibility for a chunk of outside labour, women wanted to ensure that their femininity was not compromised by performing outside labour.

In Harriet's case, she recalled how it was the blacksmith, not her husband, who assisted her: "I milked the cows and the old blacksmith when he was there, I'd have two buckets of milk and as soon as he saw me coming out of the barn with the milk, he'd come and meet me, then he'd pack it all up to the house...that was nice it really was."⁸⁶

Harriet and her husband worked for a larger cattle operation and her husband was often away from the house and the barnyard; therefore, the blacksmith provided the support.

Through the creation of a mutual space women expanded their feminine sphere⁸⁷ into

⁸⁵ Interview #1, December 18, 1996

⁸⁶ Interview #9, January 20, 1997

⁸⁷ Prescriptive literature, especially during the 1950s, suggested that there was a feminine sphere around the home.

work outside of the home. This allowed mutuality to be formed between genders in a world where separate roles were encouraged. Women justified their outside labour through mutuality and ensured that their work was considered feminine.

Further to the concept of mutuality, work was not separated at all on the level of the family ranch. For example, Ida discussed the garden without attaching a specific person to it. In a narrative on the garden, Ida used “we” instead of “I”:

Oh yeah, we always had a garden...you know we had two or three gardens in front but they but some dry years you didn't, we didn't have any irrigation or anything, you know, some years you had a big garden and some years you, it didn't amount to too much and but we always had a quite a good root house to put our carrots and potatoes in there...⁸⁸

The use of “we” suggested that the work was shared and that all parts of the ranch were linked with the survival of the family and could not be separated. Ida remembered that on the farm, “We all worked together.”⁸⁹ Ida’s simple statement erased the distinction between the home and the ranch as well as between her work and her husband’s work.

Mutuality required that women and men could be associated with parts of the farm even if they did not perform tasks related to those parts. In discussing the ranch’s horse operation, Elsie used “we” to describe work associated with the ranch but confessed she was not involved in the work: “we raised a few horses, I don’t think I had

⁸⁸ Interview #13, January 23, 1997

⁸⁹ Interview #13, January 23, 1997

much to do with that I can tell you...anyway we raised quite a few horses.”⁹⁰ Even though Elsie did not directly work with the horses, the ranch and all that went with it was considered a joint operation.

The farm created a unique environment where the physical performance of labour was not the deciding factor in who was associated with task. Women commonly used “we” in their narratives to describe their work in the home or barnyard as well as work not performed by them but associated with the farm. The use of “we” suggested that the farm itself created a blurred notion of roles because both husband and wife were working toward the same end.

The blurred lines between home and ranch are illustrated in Tracy’s story of nursing sick calves:

It was a mess and what we did ... the kitchen being downstairs, we had these tubs of hot water and they the guys were bringing these calves in and we were dunking `em in the hot water and then laying them out all over the basement ... boy what a mess trying to save those animals.⁹¹

In the instance of sick calves, the ranch came to the house and the obscure line, as defined by prescriptive literature, between the home and ranch was erased. The idea that the home and the ranch cannot be separated is further enforced when I asked Elsie about her duties on the ranch. Elsie replied, “Oh good heavens, well, certainly looking after the

⁹⁰ Interview #1, December 18, 1996

⁹¹ Interview #7, January 17, 1997

house and the cooking and cleaning and the laundry.”⁹² This statement emphasizes the notion that the home and the ranch can not be separated and that they were considered “one.”

Martha further reinforced that the home and ranch were intricately linked. In my interview with Martha, the following conversation took place:

Martha: For years [my husband] and I calved all the cows out. Well a few years, we calved out 50-60 heifers all by ourselves.

Holly: Did you do night checks?

Martha: Oh yeah.

Holly: Did you take turns?

Martha: No, he always did it. Yep, I never did night checks. I just helped if there was problems.⁹³

When I asked Martha “Did you do night checks?,” she answered from the perspective of the farm; yes, they checked their heifers at night. When I questioned her further about her specific role in checking the cattle at night it is revealed that, in fact, she did not partake in night checks. This emphasizes the idea that the farm and its associated jobs were considered mutual, even if the actual tasks were separated by gender.

⁹² Interview #1, December 18, 1996

⁹³ Interview #6, January 5, 1997

Mary explained the unique dynamic of farm life that allowed for mutuality and working together:

mostly because of lack of money that started us just working together but your able to, its not like other work where you can't work together you know its one person's job or another but agriculture is quite different its often the way to start things...you have to, well, you do much better if you like the work...⁹⁴

According to Mary, agriculture both required and allowed for the relations of mutuality.

Although many of the women participated in various tasks outside of the house, there was work they all performed hesitantly. Farm women felt their husbands, who would have worked with machinery regularly, were better suited to drive the tractor and work with equipment. The women created a masculine sphere around machinery and only occasionally did the women cross over to this realm. As Mary remembered, "Well I wasn't that skilled at a lot of things like baling and well I did some but a lot of other things that needed more careful handling with a tractor or something well [my husband] would do all those things naturally."⁹⁵ Elsie sometimes drove a tractor but as she claimed, "there was always enough men for that, besides, I could never do it to their liking."⁹⁶ In a similar way Martha discussed, "I'm not a very good person with anything

⁹⁴ Interview #12, January 22, 1997

⁹⁵ Interview #12, January 22, 1997

⁹⁶ Interview, November 9, 1994

mechanical...I used to drive tractors but I'd just as soon throw the hay off the back."⁹⁷

Mary, Elsie and Martha all explained that they did not participate in tractor driving because it involved skill and practice. It was likely that they did not get the opportunity to drive tractors or work with machines enough for them to be comfortable with it. As a result, the women created a masculine sphere around machinery and machine work.

The physical labour of the home and farm was generally shared between husband and wife. Decision-making on the farm provided another opportunity to explore the interaction of rural men and women. Similar to outside labour, the decision-making process was as individual as the couples themselves. In a brief answer referring to who made the decisions about buying and selling cattle as well as decisions about the ranch operation, Martha stated, "Usually me [laughter]."⁹⁸ Both Martha and her husband were raised on ranches and Martha described her work on her parents' farm as "the hired hand. I guess, hired man without pay, I just worked there."⁹⁹ Martha's experience on the farm provided her with the confidence to make decisions about the farm. Furthermore, Martha felt it was within her realm to make decisions.

Elsie and her husband made the decisions together. In 1954, Elsie and her husband purchased a new ranch. She described the purchase: "[My husband] rode down,

⁹⁷ Interview #6, January 5, 1997

⁹⁸ Interview #6, January 5, 1997

he heard that Carl Wilson wanted to sell so he rode down that day and bought it. That was all there was to it...Oh yeah, he came back and told me. He didn't just say I'll tell my wife when I get home, no, he did come discuss it."¹⁰⁰ In addition to this story, Elsie recollected that decisions about the ranch were made together, "Oh well, we all had a hand in it you know. Yep, [my husband] and I always worked that way."¹⁰¹ Elsie was raised on a farm. She met her husband when she boarded with his family. Elsie's background and period of independence prepared her to make decisions about the farm with her husband.

Mary also remembered that decisions were made with her husband:
Well, we did it pretty well together but it was, [my husband] has so much more knowledge of it then I had. But he probably took the lead in most cases. He asked me, I won't say he referred to me, but he asked me what I thought and he tried to explain why it should be this way instead of the other way. He was very good that way.¹⁰²

As Mary discussed earlier, she felt her and her husband worked together; therefore, Mary viewed the decision-making process in a similar light. Mary considered the relationship to be cooperative even if her husband "took the lead."

⁹⁹ Interview #6, January 5, 1997

¹⁰⁰ Interview #1, December 18, 1996

¹⁰¹ Interview #1, December 18, 1996

¹⁰² Interview #12, January 22, 1997

While Mary and her husband made decisions together, other couples did not.

Tracy was from London, England and had not lived on a ranch prior to marriage. In

Tracy's description, it was clearly her husband's decision to purchase the ranch:

Oh he wanted, that's what he really wanted to do he just wasn't happy in Prince George...so anyway he wanted to go ranching so that's when he decided to come down here [Kamloops] and we looked for about a year and he was dealing on this place...so that's how we got it, got to be on that ranch. But it was one thing after another there and then no lights you know. You had the oil lamps and everything like that...But anyway we survived there...¹⁰³

Tracy recognized that her husband's happiness was reliant on the ranch purchase and without foreknowledge of ranching, Tracy allowed him to make the decision.

The decision-making process for rural men and women differed between household and was loosely linked to the women's experience and participation on the farm. Susan and Ida were the exceptions. Susan explained some of the decisions were made cooperatively but others she left to her husband: "Between us...yeah. Oh [my husband], he was pretty particular about his cattle. I didn't say too much. [He could] do what he wanted with them."¹⁰⁴ Prior to marriage, Susan claimed to have operated her

¹⁰³ Interview #7, January 17, 1997

¹⁰⁴ Interview #14, January 24, 1997

parent's farm.¹⁰⁵ While this likely involved some decision-making, once Susan married, her husband made the decisions about their major source of income, which were cattle.

Ida viewed the decision of selling one ranch and moving closer to town as a logical necessity if they wanted to educate their children: "Oh well we had to decide because we moved to Knutsford...so the kids could go to school. That's why we moved to Knutsford, otherwise, we would have never moved..." Ida felt it was the accepted pattern for the men to make the decisions: "The men usually did most of the deciding in those days too, you know."¹⁰⁶ Although Ida grew up on a farm, she maintained the idea that men made the decisions. Ida may have accepted this because she had a pre-established relationship with her husband and his family: "I was a housekeeper for [my husband's family] for quite awhile before we were married."¹⁰⁷ Through her work as a housekeeper, Ida likely established a stronger connection to the home than to the farm, which she carried with her into marriage.

While farm women painted their power differences with men as quite minimal in their oral history narratives, other historical research has suggested that the relationship between men and women was not as harmonious and equal as was portrayed by the farm women in this study. Annalee Golz, in her study of late nineteenth-century and early

¹⁰⁵Interview #14, January 24, 1997

¹⁰⁶ Interview #13, January 23, 1997

¹⁰⁷ Interview #13, January 23, 1997

twentieth-century Ontario, argued that families were “not exclusively characterized by companionate marriage and the egalitarian economic cooperation that was necessary for rural and urban survival.”¹⁰⁸ Golz’s research revealed a tale of economic dependence, wife abuse and abandonment.¹⁰⁹ Although there was not any suggestion of similar situations in my study, it would be inaccurate to suggest that they did not exist in rural British Columbia between 1940 and 1960. Furthermore, there are two reasons that power structures of rural families were masked through my research. First, some of the interviews were conducted as couples and as a result, the women would not have had the opportunity to discuss the family power structure without fear of retribution. Second, all of the women in this study were either still married to their husbands at the time of the interview or were widowed,¹¹⁰ which suggests that the relationship between husband and wife had endured even if it was not harmonious. As a result, the women would have been less likely to discuss conflict. Rural families, as is suggested by my research, may have been more egalitarian than urban families; however, without solid data on wife abuse and abandonment, I would hesitate to suggest that it did not exist.

¹⁰⁸ Annalee E. Golz, “‘If a Man’s Wife Does Not Obey Him, What Can He Do?’: Marital Breakdown and Wife Abuse in Late Nineteenth-Century and Early Twentieth-Century Ontario,” *Law, Society and the State: Essays in Modern Legal History*, Louis A. Knafla and Susan W.S. Binnie, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 323.

¹⁰⁹ Golz, “‘If a Man’s Wife Does Not Obey Him, What Can He Do?’,” 323-350.

¹¹⁰ Only one of the widows had remarried.

The rural women I interviewed constructed their narratives to legitimize the type of work they chose to engage in, whether it was primarily in the home or outside. The women did not focus their decision on a specific sphere but rather fostered the notion of mutuality. Women's participation in outside labour varied and depended on women's preference. In the interviews, the women adapted their perception of women's accepted role to the work they performed and adapted their work outside to ensure that they cared for the home and the family. Through the interviews, the women were careful not to challenge femininity and their accepted role but they subtly attempted to redefine them. Women created a masculine notion around work with machinery, which they rarely performed. Farm women justified their work through redefining the notions of womanliness and the creation of mutuality.

Chapter 3: “That’s the only entertainment we had”: Women’s Institutes and Rural Community

This chapter examines the notions of separate spheres and mutuality in local Women’s Institutes surrounding Kamloops, British Columbia from 1940 to 1960 through oral interviews, the Beresford Women’s Institute (BWI) Minute Books, the *Kamloops Sentinel* and *Country Life*. The movement to establish Women’s Institutes in British Columbia was initiated by the provincial Department of Agriculture in 1909 with the formation of the British Columbia Women’s Institute. By the end of 1909, sixteen Women’s Institutes (WI) had been organized.¹ The oldest active WI in the Kamloops Region, the BWI was established in 1930 under the auspices of Margaret Lauder, the secretary to the District Agriculturist.² Women from areas surrounding Beresford including Knutsford, Rose Hill, Anderson Creek, Edith Lake, Long Lake and Kamloops joined the BWI.³ In this chapter, I argue that the Women’s Institute functioned both as a separate sphere for women and as a space of mutuality for women and men in the rural community surrounding Beresford.

¹ Carol Joy Dennison, “The Women’s Institutes in British Columbia 1909-1946: Housewives `For Home and Country’,” (M.A. Thesis, University of Victoria, 1983), 5-7.

² Heritage Committee, Rose Hill Farmers Institute, *Bunch Grass to Barbed Wire* (Cloverdale, B.C.: Friesen Printers, 1984), 44.

³ Heritage Committee, *Bunch Grass to Barbed Wire*, ix-xi

The relationship between the analytical concepts of separate spheres and of mutuality in Women's Institutes is complex. To date, only two works have dealt specifically with British Columbia Women's Institutes and both viewed the organization as a separate sphere. Carol Joy Dennison in her study of the WI from 1909 to 1946 analyzed the activities of the local Women's Institutes by exploring such areas as membership, local activities and charity work. Central to her thesis was how the objectives of the BCWI played a role at local, district and provincial levels of the Women's Institutes organization. Dennison argued that they were linked to the Department of Agriculture and thus, were influenced by the government's agenda, among other influences. Funding from the provincial government "placed the Women's Institutes under obligation to forward government policies and limited their freedom of action."⁴ She suggested that the Department of Agriculture and the British Columbia Women's Institute were part of a patriarchal structure that placed women in a position of dependency.⁵ Dennison's "housewife ideology" was based on the idea that "the home was the foundation of society and the housewife was the one responsible for its health."⁶ Furthermore, she argued that "the nation was seen as an extension of the home and the

⁴ Dennison, "The Women's Institutes in British Columbia 1909-1946," 179.

⁵ Dennison, "The Women's Institutes in British Columbia 1909-1946," 5-7.

⁶ Dennison, "The Women's Institutes in British Columbia," abstract.

housewife's role was the same as in the home but on a larger scale."⁷ Although Dennison viewed Women's Institutes as a separate sphere, she argued that it was a sphere that women had little control over.

In contrast to Dennison, Alexandra Zacharias in "British Columbia Women's Institutes in the Early Years," viewed Women's Institutes as an impetus to "present day broadened concepts of the role of women in British Columbia society."⁸ She studied the women leaders and their role in shaping the Institute from its formation in 1909 to 1930. She emphasized the organization as an arena where "women [were] helping women both in the home and in the community."⁹ In her analysis, Zacharias limited the influence of the Women's Institute to women. According to Zacharias, the British Columbia Women's Institute was primarily focused on women's domestic sphere and rural women's move into the public and political realm in the "interests of child welfare" and the welfare of rural women.¹⁰

Both works on the British Columbia Women's Institute used the separate spheres construct to understand the WI's structure and function. While still maintaining the separate spheres concept, Linda Ambrose in her study of Ontario Women's Institutes

⁷ Dennison, "The Women's Institutes in British Columbia," abstract.

⁸ Zacharias, "B.C. Women's Institutes," 55.

⁹ Zacharias, "B.C. Women's Institutes," 55.

¹⁰ Zacharias, "B.C. Women's Institutes," 62-63.

focused on the WI's success in rural Ontario. In her article, "What Are the Good of Those Meetings Anyway?": Early Popularity of the Ontario Women's Institutes," Ambrose argued that "rural women reshaped the Institutes to meet their own needs by moulding the organization and using it to overcome the obstacles they faced in rural life."¹¹ Using a variety of primary sources including letters from the WI members and oral interviews, she clearly defined the organization as an arena where women had power. She acknowledged that rural women were "at the heart of community organization, providing facilities and programs otherwise unavailable to small rural neighbourhoods." Despite this, Ambrose did not see the Institute members as moving beyond the separate sphere of their organization. In general, WI's were viewed as separate through their nature as women's organizations.

This theme is carried into Ambrose's popular history written on and produced for the Women's Institutes in Ontario. *For Home and Country: The Centennial History of the Women's Institutes in Ontario* is important to my thesis because it is the only work to examine Women's Institutes during World War II or the fifteen years that followed. Two chapters in particular proved to be a valuable reference for the time period studied in my thesis: "Serving the Country: At War Again, 1939-1947" and "Belonging and

¹¹ Linda Ambrose, "What Are the Good of Those Meetings Anyway?": Early Popularity of the Ontario Women's Institutes," *Ontario History*, Volume LXXXVII, Number 1 (Spring 1995), 2.

Community: Postwar Branch Activity, 1947-1966.”¹² Through her excellent use of primary sources, Ambrose provided an in-depth summary of the work done by Women’s Institutes in Ontario from 1939 to 1966. Unfortunately, Ambrose provided only a limited analysis of the Institute in *For Home and Country*. Furthermore, she focused on the Institutes themselves and did not explore how dominant discourses of the era may have influenced the activities of the Ontario Women’s Institutes.

Current works available have not explored the dominant discourses in women's organizations during the Second World War. This chapter makes a first step towards addressing this gap by exploring the BWI and how dominant discourses of womanliness were at play in the organization. On the role of dominant discourses in women’s organizations during the postwar period, I was influenced by Tina Block’s thesis “‘Housewifely Prayers’ and Manly Visions: Gender, Faith, and Family in Two Victoria Churches, 1945-1960.” Block explored separate gender and mixed gender church organizations. Block argued that “postwar ideals of domesticity shaped the activities of women’s church based associations in Glad Tidings and First United.”¹³ In both of the churches explored by Block, the activities of the women’s groups “centered on making

¹² Linda Ambrose, *For Home and Country: The Centennial History of the Women’s Institutes in Ontario* (Erin, Ontario: The Boston Mills Press, 1996), 135-175

¹³ Block, “‘Housewifely Prayers’ and Manly Visions,” 75.

handicrafts and praying for home and overseas missionaries.”¹⁴ Her research is valuable to my thesis because Block explored the dominant discourses of the postwar period and analyzed how these discourses were at play in church organizations.

New works in gender history have informed my thesis by analyzing the relationships between organizations, gender and community. Mutuality was central to these discussions and the key argument in Nancy Grey Osterud’s book, *Bonds of Community*. Unlike the rural women in mid-twentieth century Canada, nineteenth-century Naticoke Valley women did not have separate rural organizations such as the Women’s Institute; therefore, Osterud explored the breadth of other organizations in the Naticoke Valley from farmers’ groups to churches to aid societies. She argued that the organizations were “kin-based, locally rooted, and informal forms of community organization [that] were hospitable to women.”¹⁵ Osterud argued that separate spheres did not exist in these community organizations; instead, mutuality was sustained through “formal and informal social activities” initiated by women, which “tended to counteract and overcome, rather than extend and reinforce, the separation between women and men which arose from their patterns of labor.”¹⁶ Although valuable to our understanding of Women’s Institutes in British Columbia, Osterud’s idea of complete mutuality is

¹⁴ Block, “Housewifely Prayers’ and Manly Visions,” 75.

¹⁵ Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 253.

restricted to exploring mixed gender organizations. Furthermore, Osterud did not account for the separate sphere of women-only meetings and activities.

Sheila McManus contributed to my understanding of mutuality in same gender organizations in her study of the United Farm Women of Alberta. The United Farm Women of Alberta began as an auxiliary to the United Farmers of Alberta but “became an autonomous organization in 1916.”¹⁷ While farm women of Alberta had created a women-only organization, McManus stated: “The United Farm Women drew the men into their activities by organizing community socials and fundraising events...”¹⁸ Where women had organized separately, mutuality was created at a community level by organized farm women in Alberta. Although she recognized the autonomy of the separate organization for farm women, McManus did not address the possibility of a separate sphere.

Were Women’s Institutes in BC a separate space for women or a mutual space shared with their husbands and families? Are separate spheres and mutuality rigid concepts that must exist in contrast to one another? This chapter addresses the issues of separate spheres and mutuality in one local faction of the British Columbia Women’s

¹⁶ Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 13.

¹⁷ Sheila McManus, “...these women realized the power of union...’: Mutuality as Empowerment in the United Farm Women of Alberta,” *Blurred Genres*, University of Victoria (Winter/Spring 1994): 114.

¹⁸ McManus “Mutuality as Empowerment,” 119.

Institute. I will argue below that both the separate spheres and mutuality constructs are necessary to understand the role of the BWI between 1940 and 1960, and therefore are not mutually exclusive concepts. The BWI meetings were both a separate sphere for women to meet and discuss issues relevant to them and a space for organizing socials for men and women. The Women's Institute organized community socials that brought men into their realm and, thus, moved beyond separate spheres to mutuality. Mutuality was furthered in the rural community by the cooperation of male-dominated organizations and the WI in organizing social events. The BWI invited male representatives into their meetings and created a mutual space with their husbands and families through community dances and parties. Through interaction at meetings and local activities, men and the larger community were brought into women's sphere and blurred the lines between the female and male spheres. Both the separate spheres and mutuality concepts are needed to understand the gender relations of the rural community and the BWI's interaction with the larger community.

Recognition of the social aspects of rural organizations appeared in the local history on Beresford and surrounding rural areas south of Kamloops written by members of the Beresford Women's Institute and Rose Hill Farmers Institute in 1984:

Before television, radio, prolific phone lines and easy access to daily newspapers, people on the hill, both young and old, depended on various

clubs and organizations for their entertainment, information and opportunities to socialize.¹⁹

While the Beresford Women's Institute was recognized as one of these organizations, it had a separate social purpose from the other organizations in the area: the Rose Hill Farmers Institute and the Beresford Athletic Club. The BWI was an organization made up entirely of women to meet the needs of rural women.

Women's Institute meetings provided women with a separate social space to interact with other women. A rural woman in the Beresford area, Ida, remembered the Women's Institute as her primary source of socialization: "that's the only entertainment we had was the Women's Institute you know...we used to have meetings at our different houses and we used to have them at our place too."²⁰ Linda, who joined the BWI when she was pregnant, mentioned that the BWI had a definite social purpose. Although she was only a member for a year, Linda felt that the BWI was an important social network for her during her time away from work.²¹ Elsie, who belonged to a Women's Institute in Merritt in the late 1950s, reminisced about meeting her neighbours through the Institute. Elsie reflected, "I got to meet some of [my neighbours] that I had never known before,

¹⁹ Heritage Committee, *Bunch Grass to Barbed Wire*, 43.

²⁰ Interview #13, January 23, 1997

²¹ Interview #2, December 22, 1996

which is rather nice...it was very nice in that way, you'd meet a lot of people."²² Harriet, a member of the Women's Institute near Cache Creek, felt that most of her friends were women who were members of the Institute.²³ In addition, Harriet remembers that they invited women who were new to the community to join the WI: "Oh yes, right away. Jill is the greatest one for that. Just as soon as a woman shows up that she figures she can get into the Institute she's there to get her [chuckle]."²⁴ While it is likely that the women were attempting to boost their membership, they were also ensuring, consciously or unconsciously, that new women would not feel isolated in the rural community. In September 1946, the BWI actively recruited membership:

It was suggested that as there are now a number of young married women in the Beresford district, they might be interested in helping to make it once more a country institute. Secty [sic] was instructed to write the following asking them to consider membership...²⁵

As suggested by this, the number of young women who married in the community appeared to rise after 1944.²⁶ Between September 1944 and March 1945, three separate

²² Interview #1, December 18, 1996

²³ Interview #9, January 20, 1997

²⁴ Interview #9, January 20, 1997

²⁵ BWI Minute Books, September 1946

²⁶ For national statistics on the increase of marriage rates after the war, see Pierson, "*They're Still Women After All*," 216.

wedding gifts were mentioned in the minutes.²⁷ To ensure that the newly married women were welcomed into the community, and ultimately into the Women's Institute, the secretary was told to send each woman a letter inviting them to join the BWI. While the numbers did not increase immediately, over the next year, seven women were mentioned in the minutes as new members.²⁸

The Women's Institute played an important role in providing rural women with female companionship. In January 1951, a WI member submitted the following poem to *Country Life*. The poem illustrated the importance of a female organization:

I've hurried with my luncheon work;
 I've tidied up the room;
 I've washed up all my dishes;
 Every plate, cup and spoon.
 I have also done the sweeping and put the broom away,
 And oh! How I have hurried for our W.I. has a meeting to-day[sic].
 And as I hurry down the street
 My thoughts are busy still.
 I think of things we'll do;
 And all done with will
 Yes, my mind is very busy
 As I hurry on my way
 And I am glad to be a member
 For our W.I has a meeting to-day [sic]
 And as I pause upon the corner
 I'll just wait a bit and see,

²⁷ BWI Minute Books, September 1944, November 1944 and March 1945. Prior to September 1944, no other wedding present or wedding was mentioned.

²⁸ BWI Minute Books, April 1947, May 1947, June 1947, August 1947. According to the 1947 Annual Report submitted by the Beresford Women's Institute to the Minister of Agriculture, the total membership only increased by one.

Perhaps there are other members
 Who will walk with me
 Some members are so busy
 With garden crops and hay;
 But I am sure they're coming
 As our W.I. has a meeting to-day [sic]
 Yes, there are members coming,
 They seem happy as can be
 I am so glad I waited for them to walk with me
 And so we laugh and clatter
 As we hurry on our way...²⁹

This poem demonstrated both the amount of work a woman would have to do before attending a meeting and the eagerness of seeing fellow WI members. The woman who composed the poem found the WI meetings a break from her regular routine and a much needed opportunity to meet with other women.

The need and desire for socializing with other women was also demonstrated by one woman who did not have the opportunity to belong to a WI. Ruth, who lived in a small remote community, reflected on how she “missed the WI and all those things.”³⁰ In addition, Ruth discussed the lack of interaction with other women, thus reinforcing the social role of Women’s Institutes. Ruth’s father-in-law operated the local store, once a stopping house for the stage line. Ruth remembered:

It was always a busy place with having the store. There was people who’d come to the store and they’d come in and have a coffee or a cup of tea or

²⁹ “The W.I. Meeting,” *Country Life*, January 1951, 16.

³⁰ Interview #10, January 21, 1997

have lunch...that was really the way we socialized because I didn't have time to go visiting so people came to visit me. But one thing I noticed in those years, it was always the men. I knew every man in the country but I hadn't a clue what their wives looked like because the women just didn't go. You know it wasn't just me, it was all the other wives were the same. They just didn't get to go, they had to stay home to do the chores [chuckle].³¹

For women who were unable to join the Women's Institute, the company of other women was often difficult to find. Women's organizations, such as the WI, provided one of the few occasions for women to visit each other. While Ruth's quote reinforced the social purpose of the Beresford Women's Institute by emphasizing the isolation that rural women endured, not all rural women desired female companionship.

Non-members may have perceived the Women's Institutes as a separate sphere that focussed on women's domestic roles. The notion of separate spheres was suggested in my interviews with two non-members: Susan and Martha. Susan stated, "No, I was never interested in anything like that. It was more farm work..."³² Martha reiterated this sentiment, "No, they tried to get me to join the Women's Institute but to be very truthful I was never very interested in women's organizations. I was only interested in what men did."³³ Both Martha and Susan, who were active participants in outside labour and had a

³¹ Interview #10, January 21, 1997

³² Interview #14, January 24, 1997

³³ Interview #6, January 5, 1997

strong interest in farm activities, perceived the Institute as a separate sphere that dealt only with women's issues and women's activities. Martha did not seek out companionship and enjoyed her relative isolation. As Martha recalled:

you know I guess I have always been kind of a loner person. I have always been alone and I am just not interested in getting' around a lot of people [it] makes me tired. I could never, I can remember years ago people used to come up here from Vancouver and say 'What do you do out here all the time, you must be so lonesome out here?' Well I was never lonesome and I always found things to do.³⁴

On the other hand, Susan was quite social and in her younger years went to dances and played baseball but the Women's Institute did not appeal to her. Susan explains, "no, no, no never belonged to anything just my farm. No, I never belonged to any except that ball club the we had...No there wasn't much to my life outside the farm."³⁵ The perceived womanliness of the Institute did not appeal to her.

It would be misleading to suggest that women who were active in outside labour did not join Women's Institutes. Harriet participated in outside labour and in her local Women's Institute. In fact, Harriet even held the position of President.³⁶ Reminiscing about the WI meetings, Harriet stated, "Well I didn't miss any if I could help it."³⁷

³⁴ Interview #2, December 22, 1996

³⁵ Interview #14, January 24, 1997

³⁶ Interview #9, January 20, 1997

³⁷ Interview #9, January 20, 1997

Therefore, the extent of women's participation in outside labour was likely not a factor in WI membership; however, as was suggested by Susan and Martha, the perception that the activities and issues undertaken by the Women's Institutes were domestic in nature was a consideration.

Was Susan and Martha's perception of the Beresford Women's Institute accurate? Certainly, the Women's Institute placed importance on femininity and the female sphere, which was dominated by the home between 1940 and 1960. The women structured the Institute as an extension of their homes through their meetings, which emphasized and praised domesticity. The location of the monthly meetings in different member's homes is evidence of the home as central to the BWI.³⁸ Throughout the year, members took turns hosting the meetings where they were able to showcase their domestic skills to their peers. Hosting the WI meetings involved baking, serving tea and occasionally decorating. Outside of the WI meetings, occasions to hostess would have been few because of the remoteness of most farms. Therefore, the meetings would have been even more important for rural women. Ida remembered the meetings as special occasions: "Oh yeah well we always had tea and goodies to eat and lunch... yes, it was the only time we used the fancy

³⁸ BWI Minute Books, 1940 to 1960. When the meetings were not held in the homes of members, they were usually held at Riverside Park in Kamloops during July or August or at the Knutsford Hall, which was the local community hall.

dishes [laughter].”³⁹ Using the fancy dishes for WI meetings was very symbolic and telling of the importance of such an event. The BWI meetings were an important social event for rural women. Furthermore, the fancy dishes reinforced the women’s emphasis on the domestic sphere through showcasing their homes.

The importance of the hostess was further emphasized in the minutes from the meeting. The hostess was recognized and complimented through the meeting minutes for her efforts. The acknowledgements ranged from a simple note of who had hosted the meeting to more detailed accounts of how the room was decorated. For example, “Miss Kay Farmere was hostess for the July meeting of the B.W.I.”⁴⁰ The hostess would receive recognition for serving tea or lunch in the BWI minutes. For example, “A lovely tea was served by Mrs. Frank Humphrey and enjoyed by all.”⁴¹ The minutes from the late 1940s and the 1950s took extra care to mention who served tea and who offered their home for the meeting. As May argued in *Homeward Bound*, the 1930s depression and the Second World War “laid the foundation for commitment to a stable home life,” and “traditional gender roles became the central feature of the ‘modern’ middle-class home.”⁴² Minutes from the September meeting in 1954 reinforced the importance of recognizing women’s

³⁹ Interview #13, January 23, 1997

⁴⁰ BWI Minute Books, July 1950

⁴¹ BWI Minute Books, July 1951

⁴² May, *Homeward Bound*, 20.

role and the social aspects of the meeting. The minutes from the August 1954 meeting “were adopted as corrected. Omission [sic] being that the hostess served tea.”⁴³

The extent to which members placed importance on the recognition of the women’s work was demonstrated in a confrontation that occurred at the Annual Meeting in 1946. At this meeting the secretary was confronted by another member who:

expressed her extreme dissatisfaction with the work of the retiring President and Secretary. The latter officer was particularly denounced and berated. The minutes were referred to in scathing terms. When asked if she could be more explicit re minutes (the possibility being to receive some helpful advice or suggestions from a member of so many years standing) the angry retort was ‘You must be pretty dumb if you don’t know whats [sic] wrong with the minutes.’⁴⁴

The only noticeable difference between the minutes from 1946 and those from previous years was the increased emphasis on the financial statement and a decreased emphasis on the social aspects of the meetings and recognition of women’s prescribed roles. Unlike in previous minutes, the minutes from 1946 detailed the bank balance and cash on hand but did not record who provided the refreshments and who served the tea.

The following year, an obvious change took place in how the minutes were recorded and how the meetings were conducted; a more gracious and formal tone was adopted. At the second meeting in 1947 the president opened the meeting by outlining the

⁴³ BWI Minute Books, September 1954

⁴⁴ BWI Minute Books, Annual Meeting 1946

objectives and aims of the Women's Institute.⁴⁵ Although not recorded in the minutes, the objectives of the WI were detailed in the 1947 Constitution and By-laws for the Women's Institutes of BC. The objectives are stated as:

- (a) To improve conditions of rural life, so that settlement may be permanent and prosperous in the farming communities:
- (b) To promote home economics, public health and child welfare, education and better schools, legislation, immigration, and settlement:
- (c) To encourage agriculture, home and local industries:
- (d) *To promote social intercourse, mutual helpfulness, and the diffusion of knowledge; to make settlers welcome and improve community conditions.*[my emphasis]⁴⁶

The recapitulation of the objectives by the president was significant because it served to remind the members of both the business and social purpose of the WI. Section (d) of the aims and objectives of the WI was of particular importance in 1947 as was expressed by the president of the BWI. The president hoped "that the meetings would be very enjoyable and the membership would increase."⁴⁷ An obvious effort to maintain the agreeable nature of the meetings continued throughout 1947. The majority of the meetings were opened with a poem and/or singing the WI ode or another form of pleasant

⁴⁵ BWI Minute Books, April 1947

⁴⁶ Women's Institutes of British Columbia. Constitution and By-laws, "Societies Act," 1947, Chap. 82, 3.

⁴⁷ BWI Minute Books, April 1947

opening address.⁴⁸ Poems included Sir Walter Scott's "Love of Country," a recipe for happiness and contentment, and one on teaching a calf to drink. The May or Mother's Day meeting began with a short speech on mothers and the August meeting opened with the origins of the WI and the Queen's address.⁴⁹ The social aspects of the meetings received increased attention in 1947 and therefore, reinforced the importance of the social function of the WI.

The women likely placed the same emphasis on the social aspects and recognized women's domestic realm during the 1940s as was demonstrated by a WI report in the local newspaper: "Tea was served by the hostess [Mrs. L.V. Shannon], assisted by her daughter, Verna, and the Misses L. and D. Hutchinson and Mabel Kepler. The table decorations were wild gardenias which were as large as the cultivated variety."⁵⁰

However, these tasks were not mentioned as frequently in the minutes; rather, women's charity work received the largest amount of attention.

During the Second World War, the Beresford Women's Institute focused most of its energy on charity work for the war. The focus on charity work was recognized in a report from the Annual Meeting for 1943, published in the *Kamloops Sentinel*:

⁴⁸ BWI Minute Books, June 1947, July 1947, September 1947, October 1947, November 1947, December 1947

⁴⁹ BWI Minute Books, May 1947, August 1947

⁵⁰ *Kamloops Sentinel*, July 18, 1940, 9.

The secretary read the report of the years [sic] work which, although they had not had so many dances or social evenings as customary, showed a very good account of monthly doings and quite alot [sic] of war work accomplished in spite of fewer working members.⁵¹

Charity was considered part of the female realm. The amount of charity work contributed by the BWI to the war effort reinforced the Institute as a sphere that focused on women's issues.

The BWI War activities took several forms, all of which reflected the acceptable roles for women in the public realm and perpetuated the WI as a separate sphere for women. Furthermore, the activities undertaken in the WI's charity work focused on women's domestic skills. Early in the war, a BWI report was published in the local Kamloops newspaper, which described how the institute raised money:

Funds for Institute activities were obtained by dances, cooking sales and a hint book compiled by Miss M E Lauder which is now on sale... War Saving certificates were purchased with the proceeds of a recent dance.⁵²

As described in the report, the BWI raised money by using women's domestic skills to make products that could be sold through a variety of events such as bake sales, quilt raffles, and members' teas.⁵³ In some cases, the WI planned their donations around their

⁵¹ *Kamloops Sentinel*, December 22, 1943, 5.

⁵² *Kamloops Sentinel*, June 20, 1940, 11.

⁵³ BWI Minute Books, July 1940, September 1940, October 1940, March 1941, April 1941, November 1941, December 1941, November 1942, January 1943, February 1943, April 1943, June 1943, November

fundraising efforts. In April 1944, the members decided to postpone their donation to the Salvation Army until after they had the bake sale on April 15th.⁵⁴ In other instances, events were organized for the purpose of fundraising for a specific charity. In September 1940, the BC Women's Institute requested that the local, individual WI's donate to a provincial Women's Institute fund for war work. The BWI members decided to hold a dance at the community hall to raise their contribution.⁵⁵ While the BWI held dances to raise money for some charities, the members maintained the right to decide when and for what charities they would sponsor a dance. Instead of complying with a request to sponsor a dance for the Kinsmen's Milk Fund, the members decided to send five dollars.⁵⁶ Thus, the BWI maintained control over their fundraising activities. Money for charities was also raised at their monthly meetings. At the November 1941 meeting, the WI members decided that the following year, the hostess would provide tea as well as bread and butter for the social hour and each member would be taxed ten cents for war effort activities.⁵⁷ The members "taxed" themselves for the purpose of donating money to

1943, March 1944, April 1944, May 1944, July 1944, October 1944, December 1944, April 1945, September 1945, January 1946, March 1946, April 1947, May 1947

⁵⁴ BWI Minute Books, April 1944

⁵⁵ BWI Minute Books, September 1940

⁵⁶ BWI Minute Books, November 1941

⁵⁷ BWI Minute Books, November 1941

charity.⁵⁸ Fundraising events did not always result in the donation of cash. Instead, clothing and other articles made by the WI members that were not sold at the bazaar would be donated to one of the Institute's war causes such as "Bundles for Britain."⁵⁹ The BWI followed the war time philosophy of no waste; through the donation of articles that were not sold, the members ensured that all goods were put to good use. Money and goods were donated to charities that benefited the Canadian war effort such as the Red Cross and Salvation Army. At virtually every meeting during the war, the WI donated to at least one charity.⁶⁰

While the WI's activities to raise money focused on women's domestic skills and separate spheres, the activities themselves often brought men and women in the community together. Many of the fundraising activities hosted by the BWI during the Second World War involved the whole community and encouraged socializing between men and women, such as dances and whist drives.⁶¹ Women's role in the fundraising events did not challenge women's prescribed roles in society. Instead, the women used their domestic skills to bring the community together. Furthermore, the WI members worked with other male-dominated community groups to put on social events. The BWI

⁵⁸ For another example, see BWI Minute Books, October 1942.

⁵⁹ BWI Minute Books, December 1944

⁶⁰ BWI Minute Books, 1940-1945

⁶¹ Whist is a card game that usually involves two pairs of players.

provided refreshments at dances initiated by other community groups in exchange for a share in the evening's profits.⁶² In April 1942, the WI wrote a letter to the Rose Hill Farmers Institute and to the Beresford Athletic Club requesting that all proceeds from the annual May picnic and dance be donated to the Red Cross,⁶³ bringing the whole community into the war effort. The women moved beyond their separate sphere by initiating social activities and by working with other organizations on events in the local community.

The BWI's war activities went beyond donations to local charities; cigarettes were sent to soldiers, in particular kin of the institute members, and tea, sugar and garden seeds were sent to Women's Institutes in England.⁶⁴ They also collaborated with other women's organizations in Kamloops such as the Local Council of Women and the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire to send supplies to soldiers and other families in

⁶² BWI Minute Books, March 1941, September 1941, November 1941, April 1942, November 1943

⁶³ BWI Minute Books, April 1942

⁶⁴ BWI Minute Books, November 1940, January 1941, June 1941, August 1941, October 1941, February 1942, October 1942, January 1943, May 1943, September 1943, July 1944, October 1944, April 1945, July 1945, April 1946, October 1946

need.⁶⁵ The Beresford Women's Institute used their domestic skills to provide for soldiers, children and Women's Institutes in England.⁶⁶

The women remained within the dominant ideology of domesticity by using their domestic skills to raise money. In "The Productive Farm Women and the Extension Home Economists," Kathleen Babbitt argued that handicrafts were an important source of income for American farm women in the 1920s and 1930s, but did not challenge women's domestic role.⁶⁷ The home and domestic skills remained acceptable activities for rural women in the 1940s and BWI members remained within the realm of acceptable activities in their war efforts.

The importance of wartime charity was highlighted in the minutes from March 1944. The Beresford Women's Institute, in conjunction with the Beresford Athletic Club, held a dance on February 23, 1944, which lost money. The Institute was responsible for half of the debt; however, the women decided not to pay until the Institute's funds were in a "better state."⁶⁸ At the same meeting the Women's Institute donated five dollars to

⁶⁵ BWI Minute Books, January 1943, February 1943, October 1943, February 1944, December 1945

⁶⁶ BWI Minute Books, April 1941, February 1942, October 1942, January 1943, February 1943, February 1944, April 1944, May 1944, August 1944, December 1944, December 1945

⁶⁷ Kathleen Babbitt, "The Productive Farm Women and the Extension Home Economists in New York State, 1920-1940," *Agricultural History*, Vol, 67. No. 2 (Spring 1993), 83-101.

⁶⁸ BWI Minute Books, March 1944

the Red Cross and purchased two dollars worth of war saving stamps.⁶⁹ Dances were a popular way for the BWI to raise money for charity; therefore, it is likely that the women had intended to use the money raised at the dance to donate to charity. Despite the deficit, the women still found other funds to donate. The message was clear; the dance deficit could wait but war charity could not.

The women were also sincere in their attempts to support the community through their contributions to the war effort. They purchased war savings certificates and Victory Bonds, which contributed directly to the war effort, and then gave the certificates as gifts to members of the community.⁷⁰ In June 1940, a local woman was given two war saving certificates “as a token of the community pleasure in her success.”⁷¹ In addition, war certificates were given as Christmas presents to the children of WI members from 1941 to 1944.⁷²

During the 1940s, charity not restricted to the war effort; the BWI also supported WI members and their families as well as the general community in sickness, death, marriage and birth. Community charity was an important function of the BWI, an important role for women in the public realm and reinforced women’s social role in the

⁶⁹ BWI Minute Books, March 1944

⁷⁰ BWI Minute Books, June 1940, January 1941, March 1941, December 1941, March 1944

⁷¹ BWI Minute Books, June 1940

⁷² BWI Minute Books, December 1941, November 1942, December 1943, December 1944

welfare of the community. Prior to 1940, the BWI developed a Sunshine Fund to spread sunshine throughout the local community. Over the years, the purpose and beneficiaries of the fund changed but its general purpose of helping members of the community remained.⁷³ The Sunshine Fund was only part of the member's community efforts; from the first meeting in 1940 when the BWI provided a local man with financial assistance to travel to the United States for medical treatment,⁷⁴ the BWI members ensured that community charity and support were continued throughout the war. Gifts for members of the community ranged from flowers,⁷⁵ to a vanity set,⁷⁶ to a box of fruit for a BWI member who had been ill,⁷⁷ to coffee for the Christmas Tree Party,⁷⁸ to simply a card or a letter.⁷⁹ In many of the cases, the actual gift is not mentioned; instead, the minutes only make note that a gift was to be purchased.⁸⁰

⁷³ BWI Minute Books, March 1945, February 1946

⁷⁴ BWI Minute Books, January 1940

⁷⁵ BWI Minute Books, January 1944, September 1944

⁷⁶ BWI Minute Books, December 1944. The reason for giving the vanity set is not mentioned in the minutes.

⁷⁷ BWI Minute Books, March 1944

⁷⁸ BWI Minute Books, December, 1941

⁷⁹ BWI Minute Books, March 1940, November 1942, February 1944, November 1944

⁸⁰ BWI Minute Books, December 1940, April 1944, May 1944

While it might be assumed that charity would decline during the war, the BWI Minutes Books indicated that the opposite was true. In fact, the amount of charity, both directed at the community and the war effort, recorded in the minutes increased as the war continued. From the minutes, 1944 to 1946 appeared to be the peak of broad charity work.⁸¹ Did the actual amount of charity increase at this time or just the frequency with which it was recorded? Likely, as the war continued, the women placed increased emphasis on their charity work, which translated into a more careful recording of the gifts and donations by the secretary. The Institute's emphasis does not necessarily correlate with the amount of actual time and effort dedicated to charity. As Ambrose demonstrated in her research on the local Ontario Women's Institutes, the WI's contribution to the war effort declined after 1943 because the number of WI members declined.⁸² Ambrose's research moved beyond the analysis on local Institute minutes and examined the records of Ontario's Provincial WI, which may have provided a more accurate record of the charity work. Similar to the Ontario trend of declining WI members, the BWI membership declined from 34 women in 1940 to 20 women in 1950, which was a total decline of 14 members.⁸³ As a result, it is unlikely that the Beresford Women's Institute

⁸¹ BWI Minute Books, 1944 to 1946

⁸² Ambrose, *For Home and Country*, 144-146.

⁸³ Annual Reports submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture, 1940 to 1950. Membership for this ten year period is as follows: 1940 – 34 members, 1941 – 27 members, 1942 – 26 members, 1943- 24 members,

performed differently than the Ontario Women's Institutes. Therefore, I would argue that the frequency that charity work was recorded in the BWI minutes resulted from an increased emphasis on charity work and should not necessarily be correlated to an increased amount of charity work.

The charity activities of the BWI were carried on after the Second World War; however, the nature of the groups that they donated to changed. In the postwar era, the BWI donated to the Cancer Fund, Red Cross, March of Dimes, Kamloops Restroom Association, Solarium for Crippled Children, Salvation Army, Red Shield, Christmas Seals, and the Arthritic and Rheumatism Society to name a few.⁸⁴ Some of these organizations were supported by the BWI during the war, such as the Red Cross and the Salvation Army; other causes, such as the Cancer Fund, were supported with increasing frequency after the war.

The most significant difference between war and postwar donations was the increased aid to international humanitarian causes. For instance, in 1954, the BWI sent \$1.50 to a fund that supplied milk to Korean children⁸⁵ and three dollars to "Sewing

1944 – 21 members, 1945 – 24 members, 1946 – 22 members, 1947 – 23 members, 1948 – 21 members, 1949 – 21 members, 1950 – 20 members.

⁸⁴ BWI Minute Books, April 1950, May 1950, September 1950, October 1950, December 1950, Annual Meeting 1950, May 1951, October 1951, April 1952, October 1952, May 1953, June 1953, November 1953, April 1955, April 1956, June 1956, May 1957, March 1958, October 1959

⁸⁵ BWI Minute Books, February 1953

Machines for India.”⁸⁶ While some of the money came directly from BWI finances, other money came from personal contributions by BWI members. In February 1953, the BWI donated ten dollars to the European Flood Fund and the “members present donated \$1.00 each to same fund.”⁸⁷ The total amount given to the European Flood Fund was \$18.00.

While the BWI Minutes did not provide insight into why the shift towards international relief work occurred, it is apparent in Ambrose’s study that “international relief projects” were encouraged by the national WI.⁸⁸

Similar to their charity work during the Second World War, the BWI continued to use their domestic skills to make quilts and articles of clothing for international groups in need, which conformed to society’s acceptable role for women in the public sphere. In her study of postwar churches, Tina Block argued that the activities of “women’s church based associations” were shaped by the “postwar ideals of domesticity.”⁸⁹ The activities of the BWI were similar to the associations examined by Block where the women used their domestic skills to make goods for missionary families.⁹⁰ The BWI president noted the importance of the members’ efforts and the role their domestic work for charities at

⁸⁶ BWI Minute Books, February 1954

⁸⁷ BWI Minute Books, February 1953

⁸⁸ Ambrose, *For Home and Country*, 162.

⁸⁹ Block, “‘Housewifely Prayers’ and Manly Visions,” 75-76.

⁹⁰ Block, “‘Housewifely Prayers’ and Manly Visions,” 76.

the Annual Meeting in 1957: “in the past year the B.W.I. had contributed more through work than through money although contributions were made to all the usual charities.”⁹¹

The BWI maintained its community charity in the postwar years. In September 1951, they decided to purchase bed sheets for a local family who lost their home in a fire. Furthermore, the members agreed to contribute towels, pillowslips and other linen articles to the family.⁹² Furthermore, the BWI continued to support members of the community who were ill.⁹³ In November 1957, the BWI added a new dimension to their charity work through a bursary for educating youth in the community: “after some discussion it was agreed to establish a bursary for the son or daughter of an institute member in the new district.”⁹⁴ In 1958, the BWI and six other WI’s around Kamloops split from the North Okanagan-Salmon Arm District to form the Kamloops District.⁹⁵

Charity was an important aspect of the BWI. The BWI continued to raise money through community dances and bazaars in the 1950s.⁹⁶ The purpose of the dances to raise

⁹¹ BWI Minute Books, Annual Meeting 1957

⁹² BWI Minute Books, September 1951

⁹³ BWI Minute Books, December 1956. For another example see BWI Minute Books for October 1952.

⁹⁴ BWI Minute Books, November 1957

⁹⁵ Heritage Committee, *Bunch Grass to Barbed Wire*, 45.

⁹⁶ BWI Minute Books, March 1950, May 1950, September 1950, October 1950, November 1950, June 1954, July 1954, September 1954, Annual Meeting 1954, June 1955, July 1956, May 1957, June 1957, July 1957, January 1958, July 1958, October 1958

money for community charity was stated explicitly in the minutes from June 1954 when the BWI wanted to challenge the new provincial “amusement tax,” which would apply to the WI dances. The BWI decided to write the Minister of Finance to request an exemption from the tax because “the dances were non profit and all proceeds were used for community work.”⁹⁷

By subscribing to the wartime ideal of resourcefulness and promoting the charitable side of the WI within the realm of expected roles for women during the Second World War, the BWI maintained a separate sphere for women and gave rural women an opportunity to contribute to society in a womanly way. In the postwar era, the BWI maintained its donations to charities under the discourse of family values. The women expanded their role as caregiver in the family to the entire community and made the nurturing of the community an extended part of their role in the home. Furthermore, charity work provided women a separate sphere over which they exercised power. BWI members decided who they donated money to, when, and how much. However, the BWI charity work was not strictly a separate sphere. Through fundraising events, for instance dances, the members attempted to bring the whole community together. In developing activities that required the participation of both men and women and did not challenge gender roles, the members of the BWI also created a mutual sphere.

⁹⁷ BWI Minute Books, June 1954

The idea of Women's Institutes as a separate sphere for women was demonstrated through the exclusion of members' husbands at the meetings. The women involved in the Beresford Women's Institute did not bring their husbands into this realm. In twenty years of minutes, there was only one example of a picnic lunch that men attended with their wives prior to the WI meeting – the husbands were not invited to the meeting portion of the day:

Our July meeting was held at the home of Mrs. Cora Frolek on Sunday July 10th. We arrived there about noon and had our picnic lunch outdoors. There were 8 members present. It was a lovely day...After visiting for a while the men went to look around the ranch and inspect the Palmer Dam while the children enjoyed themselves in the great outdoors. We women went indoors for our meeting.⁹⁸

This example illustrated that Women's Institutes meetings were a space that was rarely shared with men, not even kin. Similarly, Elsie remembers, "sometimes they brought their husbands too and they'd meet with the men and discuss things somewhere else like in the kitchen."⁹⁹ Meetings were an opportunity for women to discuss issues that were relevant to them. Although men may have used this time to meet with other men, they were separated from the women's meeting area and not included in the discussion or activities of the Institute meeting.

⁹⁸ BWI Minute Books, July 1954

⁹⁹ Interview #1, December 18, 1996

Perhaps the strongest evidence that the Women's Institute meetings were a separate sphere for women was the most obvious. During the twenty-year period from 1940 to 1960, women held all executive positions and all meeting motions were put forward by women and approved by women. If men were allowed to attend meetings, then they certainly were not allowed to participate in the discussion or the final decision of meeting business.

Occasionally, men made presentations at the Women's Institute meetings. Most of the male guest speakers who attended WI meetings were representatives from various interest groups or agencies. The Department of Agriculture's District Agriculturist and Assistant District Agriculturist were the most frequent male guests. After the Second World War, the BWI promoted agriculture through activities for themselves and for the children in the community. By 1949, the BWI was already cooperating with the Department of Agriculture on a children's poultry club and holding their own potato-growing contests, which were judged by the District Agriculturist.¹⁰⁰ With the assistance of the Department of Agriculture, the BWI organized a garden club for the children in the community. At the October meeting in 1949, the District Agriculturist "expressed hope" that the BWI would organize a garden club for the children in the spring.¹⁰¹ The following

¹⁰⁰ BWI Minute Books, October 1949

¹⁰¹ BWI Minute Books, October 1949

March, the women invited representatives from the Department of Agriculture to address the BWI on how to form a garden club: “We decided to invite Mr. Gray [District Agriculturist] out to the April meeting to talk on a garden club for the children. It was decided to have it as a community project and to invite everyone to attend the meeting.”¹⁰² Mr. Gray attended the April meeting, held at the community hall to accommodate the whole community, and explained the garden club.¹⁰³ The garden club became an important aspect of the BWI’s community activities with children.¹⁰⁴ The women expanded their sphere to include both male representatives from the Department of Agriculture and to encompass the local community. Furthermore, by promoting community activities for children, the BWI took family values into the public realm of their community. As Adams explained in her book on heterosexuality and the postwar period, *The Trouble with Normal*, the nuclear family and the values of the nuclear family were central to restoring peace and a sense of security “for both individuals and the

¹⁰² BWI Minute Books, March 1950

¹⁰³ BWI Minute Books, April 1950. While the BWI attempted to involve the whole community in the discussions of the garden club, the minutes do not indicate if members from the community attended.

¹⁰⁴ For mention of the garden club, see BWI Minute Books September 1950, October 1950, August 1951, September 1951, September 12, 1951, May 1952, July 1952, August 1952, August 1953, September 1953, Annual Meeting 1953

nation” in postwar Canada.¹⁰⁵ Family values permeated the postwar era¹⁰⁶ and the BWI formed youth clubs to bring these values into the community.

The District Agriculturist and his assistant attended BWI meetings as experts on agriculture, a realm complimentary to the objectives of Women’s Institutes in British Columbia; they came to judge potato-growing contests,¹⁰⁷ children’s garden books and chickens raised by the children through the community children’s poultry club.¹⁰⁸

Agriculture was only one of the BWI’s interests in the 1950s. Other experts provided lectures on topics relevant and important to the WI. A lecture on Mental Health originally intended for the Women’s Institute was also extended to the community. The meeting was held in the community hall rather than in a private home: “It was decided that the Mental Health lecture to be given by James D. Ward of Vancouver should be held in the Hall July 21st at 8-30pm.”¹⁰⁹ Mental Health was viewed as an important issue for the community and, therefore, the entire community was invited to the lecture. As this example illustrates, male guest speakers were not limited to representatives from the Department of Agriculture. Other guest speakers included Mr. Clark, Dr. Perret and Mrs.

¹⁰⁵ Adams, *The Trouble with Normal*, 21.

¹⁰⁶ Adams, *The Trouble with Normal*, 21.

¹⁰⁷ BWI Minute Books, October 1947, BWI Minute Books, October 1949

¹⁰⁸ BWI Minute Books, October 1949

¹⁰⁹ BWI Minute Books, July 1954

R.L. Johnston who were representatives from the Canadian Cancer Foundation¹¹⁰ and Mr. L Gray from the Kamloops and District Appeal Association:¹¹¹

The guest speaker Mr. L. Gray a member of the Kamloops & District United Appeal Assocn [sic] gave an informative address. He explained the workings of the organization and of the advantage of one annual appeal. He stressed that public endorsement is necessary to enable the Association to function at its best. It was moved by Margaret and seconded by Pearle that we endorse the United Appeal movement. carried.¹¹²

The BWI welcomed a variety of topics and representatives; some provided information on an area of interest and others, such as Mr. L. Gray, represented an organization seeking endorsement or financial assistance. The BWI acted as an arena to gather and dispense information for their members and the local community.

In the postwar era, the BWI was a forum to gather information and learn skills relevant to the domestic sphere. The BWI ordered pamphlets for the members that related to health and food preparation and sewing skills, such as “Family Meals, Food for the Family and Healthful Eating,”¹¹³ “Meat Manual,”¹¹⁴ and “sewing secrets.”¹¹⁵ In addition

¹¹⁰ BWI Minute Books, June 1949

¹¹¹ BWI Minute Books, April 1959

¹¹² BWI Minute Books, April 1959

¹¹³ BWI Minute Books, December 1950

¹¹⁴ BWI Minute Books, August 1954

¹¹⁵ BWI Minute Books, July 1954

to ordering information pamphlets, domestic skills were demonstrated at the BWI meetings. In some cases, BWI members or kin of members demonstrated domestic skills such as “modeling clay fish”¹¹⁶ and “making carnations from kleenex.”¹¹⁷ In other cases, experts attended BWI meetings to answer questions on sewing problems, to demonstrate proper sewing methods¹¹⁸ or other handicraft skills.¹¹⁹ In each case, the secretary noted the “pleasure” of the members in the demonstration.¹²⁰

While the members discussed issues relating to women’s separate sphere at the meetings, the members also strove to create mutuality in their rural community. The BWI organized community events that included their husbands and families to provide a mutual space for socializing; these included dances, Halloween parties, Christmas parties, wiener roasts and achievement days for the children.¹²¹ The women divided the organizational tasks among themselves; they made candy, brought refreshments, prepared games as well as decorated and cleaned the school or hall.¹²² In May 1957, the WI

¹¹⁶ BWI Minute Books, August 1950

¹¹⁷ BWI Minute Books, April 1953

¹¹⁸ BWI Minute Books, May 1958

¹¹⁹ BWI Minute Books, August 1958

¹²⁰ BWI Minute Books, August 1950, August 1958

¹²¹ BWI Minute Books, January 1940 to December 1959

¹²² BWI Minute Books, November 1947, October 1952

decided to sponsor a community dance and the evenings tasks were divided among the members: “Each member to bring a loaf of sandwiches – coffee, sugar, milk, spoons, cups to be bought. Elsie and Edith to be doormen and Betty would look after the kitchen.”¹²³ When the BWI organized activities, the members took on the full scope of responsibilities from making refreshments to acting as doormen.

Many of the events were designed to include the entire family: “Mrs. L Shannon offered her home for the WI members and families and 4H Club members skating and tobogganing party Sunday Jan 20 when the children would receive their prizes.”¹²⁴ These special activities brought WI members, their families and the community together in a mutual space to socialize.

While the BWI organized some community events by themselves, in other cases, the BWI worked with the other community groups, the Rose Hill Farmers’ Institute (RHFI) and the Beresford Athletic Club (BAC), to organize dances and other social gatherings. Each year, the community groups arranged a number of dances and picnics together.¹²⁵ Cooperation between groups was found throughout the BWI Minute Books

¹²³ BWI Minute Books, May 1957

¹²⁴ BWI Minute Books, January 1957

¹²⁵ BWI Minute Books, January 1940 to December 1959

from financial statements for the community picnic¹²⁶ to agreeing to cooperate on community events. In April 1944, the BAC, made up of young adult men and women in the district,¹²⁷ asked the WI to collaborate on the May 24th picnic and the WI decided to work with the BAC on the picnic as they had in previous years.¹²⁸ On another occasion, the secretary was instructed to write the BAC, “accepting their offer to hold joint dances.”¹²⁹ The BAC did not initiate all the joint social activities. In October 1947, the BWI discussed a whist drive and dance and the women agreed to ask the RHF and the BAC to cooperate.¹³⁰ While all three of the community groups cooperated on community events, the BAC and the Women’s Institute generally instigated the activities. Furthermore, the BWI did not limit itself to organizing within the local community. On one occasion, the BWI organized a joint event with the Kamloops Farmers Institute, which was the umbrella group for all of the Farmers Institutes in the Kamloops area. The Farmers Institute had the idea for a community movie and dance night and the BWI helped to organize it:

¹²⁶ BWI Minute Books, June 1940, September 1946, June 1953

¹²⁷ Heritage Committee, *Bunch Grass to Barbed Wire*, 54-55.

¹²⁸ BWI Minute Books, April 1944

¹²⁹ BWI Minute Books, June 1943

¹³⁰ BWI Minute Books, October 1947

The Kamloops Farmers Institute last week undertook a new departure, the holding of social meetings in the country districts, alternately with the institute meetings held in the city... The social meeting at Knutsford on Wednesday evening week was held in conjunction with the Beresford Women's Institute, and was exceedingly well attended.¹³¹

Events were initiated by men's groups as well as by women's groups. Osterud argued in her study that rural women were the main initiators of activities involving both men and women because women had the most to gain from mutuality.¹³² However, this was not the case with rural women surrounding Beresford by the 1940s. Both men and women groups initiated joint community activities because they all benefited from creating mutual spaces for socializing. Mutuality allowed rural organizations to bring their separate spheres together to share in a common activity. The organizations encouraged men and women to work together for the community.

Within joint events, the women participated in a variety of roles from canvassing for the community picnic with the men's committee¹³³ to preparing a "delightful supper."¹³⁴ However, most consistently, the women provided the refreshments for communal events. As discussed in Chapter One and Two, within the home women were

¹³¹ *Kamloops Sentinel*, April 25, 1940, 9.

¹³² Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 13.

¹³³ BWI Minute Books, May 1944

¹³⁴ *Kamloops Sentinel*, April 25, 1940, 9.

responsible for cooking for their families and the hired help. The women transferred the domestic role of cooking to the public realm through the community socials. The women were able to break down the distinct lines between the spheres to create mutuality by cooking for community socials. While men and women may have played different roles in organizing an event, they were successful in creating a mutual space for men and women. Furthermore, within the mutual space of a community event, the reciprocal activities of the men and women made the event a success. Rural women did not challenge their domestic role; instead the women used that role to create mutuality.

The local groups organized events for the purpose of bringing everyone together.

A BWI report to the local newspaper pointed out:

It has been 33 years since the first Empire [D]ay community picnic...That was back in the horse and buggy days. Even in this modern age it is still the great occasion when neighbour meets neighbour and the townspeople come to enjoy a day in the country.¹³⁵

In reference to the Father's Day Picnic in 1947, the BWI secretary wrote: "We all felt that much pleasure and benefits would result from a community get together."¹³⁶ Women felt that community gatherings, which created mutuality, were beneficial to the whole community. Ida reiterated the importance of community activities:

¹³⁵ "Beresford Plans Picnic For May 24," *Kamloops Sentinel*, May 29, 1941, 15.

¹³⁶ BWI Minute Books, June 1947

We used to have a picnic every year and yeah we used to...have races with the kids and that kinda thing...we had free ice cream and ...well that's the only entertainment we had and at the schoolhouses we used to have entertainment you know dances...and we used to have good times at the Beresford schools...we used to go to all of them.¹³⁷

Ida's memory emphasizes the importance of community events to local residents. Her use of "we" suggests that the entire family attended the community activities and, therefore, the activities represented a mutual space for socializing.

The BWI and other local groups created mutuality in two ways. First, they worked together breaking down the notion of separate spheres between male dominated organizations, such as the Farmers' Institute and the Beresford Athletic Club,¹³⁸ and the women's organization. Through organizing joint social activities, men and women's organizations allowed mutuality to develop at a community and social level. Second, the separate spheres were eroded through the participation of both men and women in the community social activities. By socializing together, the gender divisions between men and women were removed in favour of mutual community activities. Third, the women did not challenge the domestic sphere in the public realm; rather the women used the domestic sphere to create mutuality.

¹³⁷ Interview #13, January 23, 1997

¹³⁸ Heritage Committee, *Bunch Grass to Barbed Wire*, 43, 54.

In the case of Women Institutes in rural British Columbia between 1940 and 1960, WI's were separate spheres for women and spaces of mutuality. As this chapter has demonstrated both notions of separate spheres and mutuality exist at different times and in different spaces. Husbands may have traveled to meetings with their wives but they did not join in the meetings. Rather, the men would have socialized in a separate space such as the kitchen reinforcing the notion of WI meetings as a separate sphere for women accepted both by the women and their husbands. On the other hand, male representatives from the Department of Agriculture or other interest groups were invited to the meetings to present on topics of interest to the rural women. By inviting men into the meetings, the notion of the WI as a separate sphere was removed and replaced with a space of mutuality to discuss relevant issues. In addition, the Beresford Women's Institute organized community socials both by themselves and in conjunction with other local groups which created a social space for men and women. Clearly, neither concept of mutuality nor separate spheres are adequate in themselves to understand the dynamic nature of the BWI. The concepts taken together provide a fuller explanation of gender relations within the BWI.

Conclusion

Historians of women and gender have typically viewed the concepts of separate spheres and mutuality as mutually exclusive. In general, the idea of separate spheres suggests that women had separate and distinct roles from men; on the other hand, mutuality suggests that reciprocal relationships between men and women defined their working relationships without challenging women's domestic role. In my thesis, I have demonstrated that viewing these concepts as dichotomous is unnecessary and limits our historical understanding of women's lives. As my research on farm women suggests, when only separate spheres or only mutuality is applied to the study of women's lives it does not present a complete picture. In my thesis, the concepts of separate spheres and mutuality were both explored to gain a better understanding of farm women's gender roles between 1940 and 1960 in the rural areas surrounding Kamloops, BC.

In addition to applying both mutuality and separate spheres constructs, a variety of sources were used to examine different aspects of farm women's lives. I analyzed *Country Life*, a B.C. farm periodical, to determine the defined, acceptable roles for farm men and women as defined through rural prescriptive literature. Oral history interviews with local farm men and women provided insight into how farm women and men viewed their work relationships and how they defined their gender roles. Finally, the Beresford Women's Institute Minute Books, as well as WI reports in the local Kamloops

newspaper, the *Kamloops Sentinel*, were examined to gain an understanding of farm women's and men's patterns of socialization.

Each of these sources provided a different perspective on the public and private relationships of farm women and men in a portion of BC's Interior region during the Second World War and postwar periods. In Chapter one, I focused on the dominant discourses that surrounded farm women and men from 1940 to 1960 through an analysis of prescriptive literature directed at the rural audience in B.C. *Country Life* provided both farm men and women with a plethora of advice on their roles in the home, on the farm and in relation to one another. According to the majority of prescriptive literature, men and women were to uphold their separate spheres during the Second World War and the postwar periods. During the war, under the guise of "national duty," women were encouraged to expand their sphere beyond the home into the garden and barnyard. Although women were moving beyond the domestic sphere of the home and family, it was still considered a separate sphere from the men. Women worked in the garden and barnyard to free up the men to work in the fields. After the war, women were to return to the domestic sphere. In *Country Life* articles on women's outside labor vanished and advice on women's domestic realm surfaced.

Although the majority of prescriptive literature preached separate spheres for men and women, there was evidence in the pages of *Country Life* that cooperation between the spheres was necessary for farm survival. Even in prescriptive literature, it was recognized

that separate spheres did not meet the realities of farm life and that men and women needed to step out of separate spheres and engage in mutuality to be successful and to survive.

While literature in *Country Life* suggested that both mutuality and separate spheres existed for farm women and men, the women's oral interviews provided the strongest evidence that both concepts are necessary to define women's lives on the farm and relationship to their husbands. As a result, I used separate spheres and mutuality to understand how the women created their identity as farm women. Although the farm women described their domestic role in the home as their primary responsibility, they recognized that their responsibilities in the home extended to the farm. Furthermore, there was overlap between women's work in the home and the needs of the farm. For example, farm women often cooked for employees as well as their husbands; thus, the work of the home benefited the farm.

The demands of farm life did not allow women to maintain strict definitions of gender roles and farm women did not make a clear separation between the home and the farm. Therefore, farm women linked their outside labour to farm survival and adapted their notions of femininity to meet their needs. Many of the women participated in outside or "male" labour and, thus, composed their narratives to justify their labour on the farm as acceptable. In varying degrees, farm women participated in field work, milked cows, rode horses, worked with cattle and raised turkeys. The women described women's

acceptable role to meet the amount of work they performed outside of the home. For example, women who performed extensive work outside such as Mary and Harriet described women's acceptable role as including outside labour. On the other hand, women who worked more extensively in the home expressed their understanding of women's acceptable role to largely encompass the home. Regardless of the amount of outside labour performed by women, the farm women constructed their narratives so as not to challenge the dominant notions of femininity. Furthermore, the women adapted their outside labour to ensure that the home and family were always cared for.

Mutuality was the primary concept by which women identified themselves as farm women; however, there were instances when separate spheres was more applicable to understanding women's roles in the home. For example, women had a separate feminine sphere around childbirth and some household tasks. Through their oral narratives the women also created a separate masculine sphere around operating farm machinery.

In my examination of rural patterns of socialization as explored through the Beresford Women's Institute, I again used both the concepts of mutuality and separate spheres. The BWI was a separate sphere for rural women to meet and discuss topics relevant to women and served, in part, to disseminate dominant discourses of womanliness. The BWI provided women a separate sphere for members to meet without their husbands or other men; however, BWI members did open their meetings to men

who represented an interest group or who were experts in their field. Through the inclusion of men in their meetings, the BWI members adapted their separate sphere into an area of mutuality. Mutuality was also nurtured through the community meetings, dances and other joint events organized by the BWI.

This thesis demonstrates that the constructs of separate spheres and mutuality must be taken together in order to gain a more complete picture of farm women's lives. When used alone either concept glosses over, ignores or misses important aspects of farm women's lives between 1940 and 1960. Furthermore, the study of Canadian farm women may benefit from stepping beyond the separate spheres and mutuality dichotomy to gain a fuller understanding of farm women's lives.

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