



# Being a farmer's child

The silent making of a farmer

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Adjani Isabelle

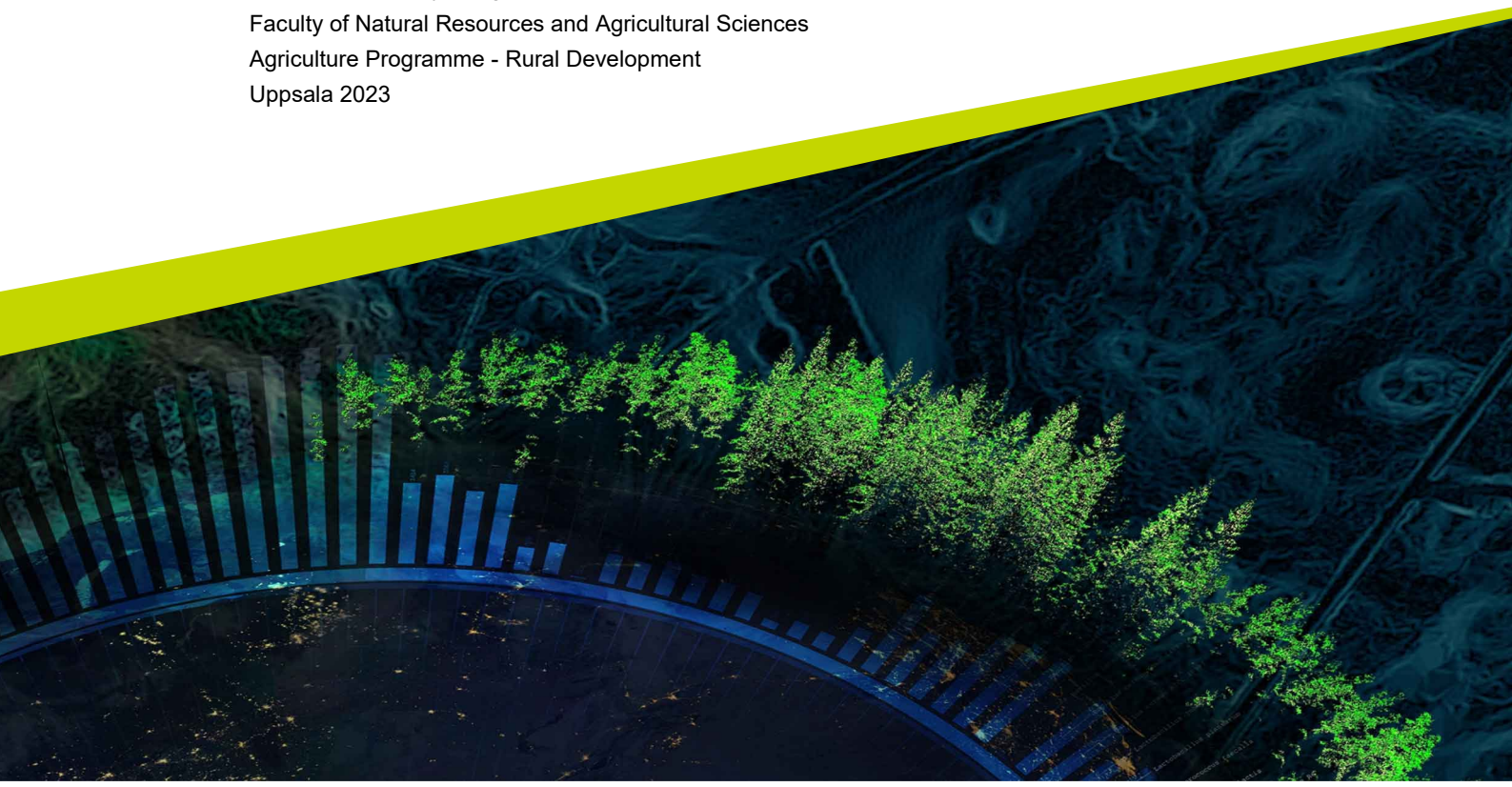
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# Being a farmer's child. The silent making of a farmer

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## Abstract

As many farms in the European Union and within Sweden are family farms, farm inheritance becomes a relevant topic. Many children of farmers grow up in the agrarian world and stand to one day be farmers themselves. The aim of the thesis is to understand how children of farmers in Sweden are socialized into the role of farmers and how their gender impacts both their chance at being a successor and how they perceive the idea of succession. This thesis seeks to understand how the upbringing of children on farms involve gender-specific socialization into the role of farmer and how the gender of the children impacts their view of their ability to take over the operations. To answer these questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 participants. The participants had grown up in a family farm context and had reflected upon a possibility to inherit the farm. The analysis of the interviews showed that parents do not wish to pressure their child into becoming a farmer and adopts a silent policy regarding succession talk. The silent policy does not always result in less pressure. Young women have interacted with machinery in their childhood but still struggle to confidently operate and care for them, thus making them prone to desire a partner with whom they could share the workload with. Men, on the other hand, desire partnership with non-relationship related entities, such as neighbors or institutions. This research is of value when trying to understand the early stages of generation shift processes and how different genders perceive the opportunity to inherit a family farm.

*Keywords:* generational shift, succession, farming, gender, silence, machinery, socialization, family

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# Abbreviations

SLU            Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

## Preface

In the fall of 2018, I began my agronomist education as the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. At the time, I was 24 years old and felt, foolishly so, quite old to be starting a five-year education. Behind me stood abandoned dreams of multiple hypothetical careers. I had grown up in Canadian suburbs and had very rarely spent time in rural areas, only a few family visits to a cousin once removed farm and some farming summer camp experiences as a child stood as my only real interactions with the agrarian world. I had managed to surprise myself by choosing this education. Two things had greatly influenced my decision to undertake agronomy as a subject: my crippling climate anxiety and my love of food. I envisioned that, one day, I might own a farm and directly contribute to food systems in a sustainable way and get to live an idyllic rural dream. I also felt like in times of climate change, one would be crazy not to want fertile land to grow food from.

That specific interest, to own a farm, slowly vanished as the years went by. At SLU, I was surrounded by people who grew up on farms or in rural areas, and I started to question the feasibility and the enjoyability of being a farmer. If the ones that were born into it, ones that had the chance of inheriting an operation they had worked within for their entire lives, were greatly unsure about it, how could I assume I would be able to do it? I had myself grown up in a family business environment, albeit not a agrarian one. I had never envisioned a future where I would want to take over and dedicate my career to the family business. It always felt pretty clear. What I witnessed in my peers was a much more emotional struggle regarding the business they stood to maybe one day inherit: frustration, longing, stress, joy. The farming operations were often inherited through multiple generation, and the family history was deeply tied to the land. Additionally, the rural setting and the daily witnessing of the natural world most probably elicited a greater emotional response in them than I could imagine. In other words, their inner battle is a complex one, and yet none of them are alone in this conundrum. There are many children of farmers, and a high number of them are, or were, studying at the same university as I was. This led me to wonder about farmer's children's decision-making process: how do they eventually arrive to a decision regarding the age-old question of 'what do you want to do with your life'? What pressure, obstacles, or maybe encouragement and already-laid path, are they dealing with?

# 1. Introduction

As farms in the European Union are mainly family farms, the ageing of the workforce brings an urgency to farm transfer processes that get played out within family units. In these family units, children are born into a potential career path as farmers. This path can be the one they chose, the one they are pressured into, the one they renounce or the one that their parents renounce on their behalf. This experience is impacted by a variety of factors, a very prominent one being the gender of the child, as statistics shows women being a minority as farm managers in the EU.

It is important to put these young adults in the context in which they operate, which is a context across the European Union of mostly family farms with a prevalence of older farm managers<sup>1</sup> and a minority of women farm managers. According to the latest data from 2020 (Eurostat 2022), an overwhelming majority of farms in the EU (94.8%) fall under the category of family farms. These are defined as farms where more than half of the regular agricultural labour force consists of family members. As for who are the head of these farms, 57.6% of farm managers of both sexes combined were at least 55 years old. In 2020, male farm managers constituted the majority, accounting for 68.4% of all farm managers across the EU's 9.1 million holdings. Eurostat (2022) also highlights that only 11.9% of farm managers of both sexes combined were under the age of 40, but that the proportion of female farm managers across all age groups has risen from 26.4% in 2005 to 31.6% in 2020. Parallel to this trend, the number of farms and farmers are declining within the EU. The EU experienced a loss of share of people employed in agriculture, from 6.4% in 2005 to 4.2% in 2020.

In Sweden, there is a loss of active farm happening across the country, but a slight increase in women as sole proprietor of an agricultural business. According to the Swedish Board of Agriculture (2021), since 1990, the number of farms has decreased by 39%. Every third agricultural entrepreneur who ran a sole proprietorship was 65 years of age or older in 2020. As for gender, in 2020, the number of women who were agricultural entrepreneurs in sole proprietorships was

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<sup>1</sup> A farm manager, as defined by Eurostat, is the farmer who oversees decision-making and mainly conducts financial decision and production related routines. It is argued that for statistical purposes, only a single individual per farm can be considered farm manager.



9,724. This is slightly fewer than in 2013 but slightly more than in 2016. The percentage of women who were agricultural entrepreneurs was 18%, which is one percentage point higher than in 2016. As of 2020, the proportion of farmers under the age of thirty-five was 6%.

In other words, both the EU and Sweden is experiencing an ageing workforce in terms of farm managers, while farms still being family farm with a family-based workforce. Women are underrepresented as farm managers, but we are seeing a slight increase in their presence compared to previous years. Agriculture as an industry must find a way to renew its labor force in a sustainable and inclusive way if we are to feed the planet's growing population. To do this, we need to better understand how these family farms approach the topic of farm transfer and ensure continuation of the agrarian business.

## 1.1 Purpose and research questions

The aim of the thesis is to understand how children of farmers in Sweden are socialized into the role of farmers and how their gender impacts both their chance at being a successor and how they perceive the idea of succession.

Based on this aim, the following two research questions have been identified:

- How does the upbringing of children on farms involve gender-specific socialization into the role of farmer?
- How does the gender of the children impact their view of their ability to take over the operations?

Much research has been done with existing farmers and exploring their thought regarding succession, but this thesis aims to shift the focus from existing farmers to potential farmers. Children of farmers experience a particular upbringing and the way they perceive inheritance and expectations surrounding is often overlooked. As we are seeing an increase in female farm managers in Sweden, the phenomenon of female inheritors must also be explored to understand the shifts in gender dynamic regarding farm transfers, which is what this thesis aims to do.

## 2. Methods

To fulfil the essay's purpose and answer the research questions, I have conducted a literature review in tandem with an interview study. The literature review focuses on understanding past research on generational shift and women's role in agriculture, in order to establish a baseline for comparison when analysing the stories of the interviewees. The interviewees conducted focus on current lived experiences of children of farmers of both gender in Sweden. The interview process is explained in more details in this section.

For the literature review, a selection of relevant literature was done, and certain research articles were selected and summarized. The selected literature had to be related to farming, generational shift and/or gender in agriculture. Extra focus on the European and Swedish context was prioritized. From the literature review, articles were selected to provide analytical theories and concepts that facilitated the analysis of the material.

As for the interviews, they followed a semi-structured approach, allowing informants to discuss the topic in an open and flexible way (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Some questions were prepared in advance, to ensure that a minimum of useful information could be harvested, but the interviewees were given room to explore themes and timelines they felt were most relevant. The interviews fell mainly into linear timelines where each interviewee explore different life stages and their relationship to the family farm. Following the first few interviews, certain topics emerged organically, and I raised them in subsequent interviews if they were not already mentioned by the interviewees themselves.

An initial list of questions was created but was quickly discarded as the interviews developed organically. The interviewees were generally asked to describe their childhood on the farm, their career interest through their life, their parents' reaction towards their career interest and explain how farm transfer was discussed within their family unit. Almost no questions were the same in each interview as the interviewees had unique stories that required adapted questioning.

The interviews were conducted either in person, on campus at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) or via Zoom, depending on the availability of the interviewees. The interviews lasted between one to two hours and were recorded with the consent of each interviewee. The interviews were then transcribed. To analyse the data collected, a thematic coding analysis was employed. The themes identified were the following: farm work, career interest, parental expectations, silence, siblings, parents' role on farm and succession talk. This involved reviewing the interview transcripts and identifying sentences and quotes that pertained to similar themes. These quotes were then organized into

groups related to each theme, and particular similarities or contrast between stories could be identified. The interviews were then summarized as life stories for each participant, taking care of including quotes and description of the previously identified common themes. This choice of presenting the result as life stories was done as an initial iteration of the result was received negatively by peers. They deemed it too confusing when interviewee's stories were not presented in a linear way. Thus, life stories help the reader understand each individual story and lessens confusion.

## 2.1 Selection of informants

To answer the research questions, the choice of interviewees was narrowed down to Swedish individuals who were born and grew up in a family farm context. This factor was important as it determines the possibility of inheriting a family farm operation. The selected interviewees were either currently studying or have completed studies within the agronomy profiles at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. This choice was done to ensure that the interviewees would have, as a base, an interest for the agricultural sector. This interest was deemed important as it increases the chances of having interviewees that have considered inheriting the family farm. The age range for the interviewees was determined by two factors: at a minimum, they should be at an age allowing them to study at university, and their age should not exceed the age of 36, determined by the age range of the Federation of Swedish Farmers for their youth section (LRF 2023). 8 interviews were conducted in total, with 5 women and 3 men.

## 2.2 Ethics and reflexivity

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), reflexivity in research involves acknowledging personal and ethical issues that may influence our interpretation of data. They suggest reflecting on past experiences and how they shape our perspectives. For my study, my identity as a non-native Swedish citizen, and my lack of experience in agricultural work, despite my agronomist profile, distances me from the lived realities of my interviewees. Due to these factors, it may be challenging for me to fully understand the experiences of children of farmers who grew up in rural Swedish areas. However, this did allow me to identify patterns that could be hidden if a native Swede would have conducted the interviews, as I lacked the cultural context and had to request explanation for things that might of seemed as a given for someone sharing the same culture.

Ultimately, my analysis and interpretation of data is based on my own worldview shaped by my experience and greatly influenced by the knowledge and concepts explored during my time as a student at SLU.

Furthermore, many interviewees are individuals with whom I have spent a great amount of time with during my education at SLU. Some of them are even my friends. In one way, this has allowed for deeper, more complex interviews as there is a basis of trust already established between the interviewer and the interviewee. On the other hand, this means that I might have gotten more personal answers from these individuals than others I have interviewed. Additionally, many personal and sometimes sensitive themes came up during the interview, such as mental health, family relationship or even romantic relationship. From a researcher's perspective, I have tried to make use of the life story that were shared with me without being exploitative of the interviewees trust in me.

All interviewees were given false names and identifying details were omitted to a certain extent. This was done to anonymized and protect the identity of the interviewees.

## 3. Literature review

In this section, I will present relevant literature that has been selected due to their relevance for the previously stated research question. Research regarding the European and Swedish farming context and gendered farming experience was prioritized.

### 3.1 Choosing an inheritor

To be able to analyze farm transfer processes in farming families and how it is manifested through decisions and actions, a paper about Estonian family farms in transition where Grubbström & Sooväli-Sepping (2012) explored values associated with the farm succession decision was selected. The authors explore gender-specific socialization of children of farmers, which is relevant for this thesis research question regarding the socialization of a successor.

Socialization according to Grubbström & Sooväli-Sepping (ibid) relates to the transfer of intangible assets, from parents to children, beginning in childhood and creating the grounds for a farm transfer process. These intangible assets are defined as family relationships, knowledge, and values. This socialization prepares the successor, which requires parents to choose a successor at a very early stage, to ensure that the chosen child develops farm-specific capita enabling them to be able to manage the farm later in their life. Historically, the land transfer was framed by gender, with women taking care of domestic work while men could be found in the field or in the forest. Grubbström & Sooväli-Sepping (ibid) highlights that, in Western Europe, research has shown that the division of labour based on gender on farms has been and continues to be a crucial factor in shaping the different socialization processes experienced by sons and daughters. This socialization involves gender-specific roles and responsibilities, where daughters often accompany their mothers and sons accompany their fathers during their childhood years. This results in daughters being less prepared to take on the role of a successor. Women traditionally held expertise in domestic work, while men were responsible for fieldwork. Farms tended to be inherited by the oldest son of the family, and if there was none or something happened to the son, only then would a daughter be considered. In this gender-specific socialization process, with duties being gender-specific, the successor socialization usually started with sons who, at six or seven years of age, began to accompany their fathers on the farm. In that way, the chosen child was raised into the role of farmer with the idea that said child would eventually be ready to take over as farm manager. This was discussed openly, and the siblings of the successor were made aware of this succession at an early age. The

interviewees stated, however, that today the gender of the successor is not as relevant as it used to be.

To further understand what the socialization of a successor could look like in family farm, more context is needed on how farm labor within childhood frames the path to succession, which is facilitated by the categorization of children as helpers or workers in Cassidy and McGrath (2015) research paper on Irish farm youth. The authors explored the connection between involvement in the farm and its influence on the youth's relationship and connection with their local community. According to authors, the Irish cultural system of farm inheritance is called "impartible inheritance" which means that only one child, usually a male, inherits the entire farm operation. This has been the dominant cultural norm for farm inheritance in Ireland. Cassidy and McGrath (ibid) interviewed 30 university students that were from a farming background. The group studied were heterogenous regarding what type of farm was owned, the family size, age, if the farm was a full time or only part time operations, age of the youth, etc. The gender of the interviewee was, however, split evenly.

What Cassidy and McGrath (ibid) found was a distinction on how the youths referred themselves regarding their contribution to the family farm, with some describing themselves as 'helpers' and some as 'workers'. The helpers self-described themselves as manly 'helping out' when growing up on the farm, while the workers described being very much involved in the farm work. 'Help' was mainly associated with tasks that are considered 'unskilled' and take place only occasionally or during emergencies. These tasks are not considered to be essential and are traditionally seen as being appropriate tasks for women on the farm. Examples, such as feeding animals or aiding during high workload season such as harvest or lambing. Helpers are more often involved in the household, helping the mother with chores in the home space. Although the notion of 'helping' was associated with less emphasis on obligatory labour, it was noted that if young people were to ask to do something, non-compliance was not an option.

For the definition of 'work', the tasks were perceived as routine tasks requiring skills and were greatly physical, with the expectation of performance on a regular basis, such as after school and during weekends. The 'work' was perceived as some type of apprenticeship, where technical aspects of the farm was explained to the youth. Workers were associated with traditionally male were expected to be available to take over the operation at some point in time where it be necessary. These two distinctions were not separate, as many interviewees reported shifting between the roles throughout the years, sometimes due to individual preferences or even things such as changing family circumstances. The authors described how, with the exception of three cases, all girls referred to themselves as helpers and all but three male referred to themselves as workers. For workers, parental pressure

was identified as key motivator for continuous involvement in farm work as well as expectations for taking over the farm, whether the offspring was interested in the idea or not. The lack of belonging-feelings was also associated with less chances of seeing a future in farming as the women interviewee would report feelings of not 'socially belonging' like their brothers and were instead more encourage to study. Tying the knot with the socialization of a successor, the concept of 'worker' in Cassidy and McGrath (ibid) is like the socialization of a successor, once again favoring a male inheritor who is trained throughout their life and expected to take over operations.

### 3.2 Gender, farm labour and the tractor

The division of labor on the farm needs to be put in context to understand how a gender-specific socialization takes place. In research done in France, Saugeres (2002) explores the ways in which women and men reproduced gender relations, ideologies, and identities in farming family. Many of the interviewees reported at the time that due to rise in mechanization, women's work in the field was not needed anymore. The interviewees described how women, who previously had to be in the field to plant and harvest some crops, were described as replaced by men in their tractors. The interviewees, usually men farmers, also express finding that their sons have an innate taste for machinery and that their daughters don't. Daughters reported that they rarely asked to be on a tractor since it didn't seem like a possibility for them to do so. Many women interviewed reported fearing driving the tractor or simply not liking to drive them. The few women who were driving tractors were doing so either to help their husband or because there was no man on the farm to do so. Saugeres (ibid) describes the tractor as a symbol of male dominance in agriculture, one used to perpetuate the importance of men in the role of farmers but can also be used by women to reclaim power in the narrative.

As a reader, one can interpret the picture painted by Saugeres (ibid) as meaning that the tractor replaced the labour needed by women, thus one could assume that the socialization of a successor is made to ensure the continued existence of the farm, and not that there is extra labour needed. The tractor can be interpreted as representing a barrier to entry to farming, requiring the 'farmer' in the family to be able to master its use.

The research done by Saugeres (ibid) is as of now more than twenty years old. The reality that the situation in Sweden as of 2023 is different is highly likely. However, one needs to understand what was happening on farms in the turn of the century as those years are also the childhood years of the interviewees in this thesis.

Although time has passed, similar themes are present in Shortall et al. (2019) where women in Scotland are described as being structurally excluded from the farming context. Male interviewees reported not being favourable to choosing

women as farm managers as they are seen as not suitable when in childbearing age, and seen as more suited for livestock care than arable farming. One woman reports how her family at first consisted only of daughters, which led her to be the one being selected to inherit the family farm. When she reached the age of thirteen, her brother was born and she immediately understood that he would now be the chosen inheritor. This led her to restructure her career interests.

Although seventeen years separates these two papers, the exclusion of women in the agrarian sector seems to be a trend that is not quickly fading.

### 3.3 The Swedish context

To highlight recent findings regarding the Swedish farming context, two papers have been selected to illustrate how both the parents and the children of Swedish farmers are thinking regarding farm transfers.

In a report by Hajdu et al. (2020), many Swedish farmers have expressed that their children are not really interested in taking over the farm due to a high work burden and too little free time. The farmers also express how much change has happened within a few generations, and they perceive their attitude towards their children and grandchildren as being more gender equal. The notion of not encouraging young girls to drive the tractor is brought up as an example of change with the new generation, with some parents reporting actively trying to encourage their daughters to use machinery. This stands in contrast, however, with the fact that many farmers express hopes regarding their sons taking over, despite having daughters as well. Daughters are thus perceived as a second option. Gender norms are still influencing the thoughts of farmers regarding who can, in actuality, be a farmer.

In general, the farmers that are parents reported wanting someone to take over the farm but being clear about wanting their children to explore their interest freely. The parents believe generally that it is important that if a child wishes to take over it must stem from genuine interest and not from parental pressure. At the same time, some farmers report being sad over the idea of no one taking over the operations.

To contribute to the contextualization of what it means to be a future inheritor of a farm in the Swedish context, Grubbström et al. (2014) research exploring the gendered strategies for achieving future resilience among agricultural students has been selected. The study covers Swedish students at upper secondary school, aged 17-18 with an agricultural focus. The students in the study testified that they perceive it as crucial for the older generation to pass on interest and motivation to



the younger generation. The students experience different types of generational succession anxieties, with gender differences as some girls report not being taken seriously when expressing wanting to take over. Many interviewed students express being interested in farming but also feeling restricted by the responsibility of the continuity of the family traditions. The students put emphasis on farm work as important means of passing on knowledge and describes a parent-child relationship as involving a lot of work and feelings of responsibility towards the family farm. Interest is cited as the most important factor when deciding on a successor for the family farm, in contrast with previous tradition of choosing a son as the inheritor.

The students also thought that cooperation with neighbors would be an important aspect in their farming future, which could help them feel less isolated and lonely, thus making the idea of succession more attractive. The relationship between the parent and the child involving a lot of work and feeling of responsibility is similar to the gender-specific socialization explored earlier, with children undergoing knowledge transfer through farm labor and parental guidance with the expectation of the child taking over the operations. However, in this context, interest would be the main indicator for the chosen successor, with still some gendered differences with women's interest not being taken as seriously as men.

Relating to this need of help on the farm, Grubbström et al. (ibid) establish a new resilience dimension to the generational shift with the concept of work-love balance. Work-love balance refers to the importance and impact of romantic relationships for aspiring farmers. Different views were expressed, split into three categories. One view, mainly held by boys, is that it is in one's own best to be the sole owner of the farm, as it minimizes the risk of losing the property were divorced to occur. As for the second view, some students believed there is some advantages to having a partner that is involved and shows care for the business and wants to contribute to the work in a greater sense than a simple employee. Finally, the third view is that having a partner helps alleviate the burden by sharing it with someone else. This illustrates how in the Swedish context, partnership is still desired and needed, despite the mechanization of agriculture.

An additional layer regarding succession is explored in this paper as emotional ties are cited as being a main reason as to why a family decides to stay on the land they use for farming. There were split feelings amongst the youth interviewed regarding whether they feel it is their choice or if they are force to take over the family farm. Parental expectation can both be the motivator but also a source of stress. The study concludes that traditions of choosing a son as a successor is being challenged, but that gender roles around what type of tasks each youth can do on a farm are still prevalent.

## 4. Theoretical framework

For this thesis, a selection of concepts taken from the literature study was chosen as the basis for data analysis. Each concept was presented above in the literature review, and they will be reassessed here and explored as analytical concepts for the analysis of the material.

The main framework for this thesis is gender-specific socialization, a term inspired by the study of Gubbström & Sooväli-Sepping (2012) on Estonian family farm transfer. The authors had found a pattern where a child, often a son, would be selected to be socialized into the role of successor by accompanying their father into the fields from an early age. The girls were, on the other hand, found mainly with their mother doing domestic work. Thus, the assets, such as farm specific knowledge, were only transferred to a male child. Women were only involved if there was an absence of a male child in the family. The concept of a *chosen successor* is applied in the analysis of the material for this thesis by exploring if the interviewees parents have chosen a particular offspring to socialize into the role of farmer. It is explored whether a male child was chosen to undergo this gender-specific socialization process of shadowing their father to gain knowledge and experience on the farm for an expected succession, as well as determining if a female child was exposed to such succession socialization.

To fully define what the process of socialization looks like, going beyond a general view of following one's father around, the concepts of *'helper'* and *'worker'* as explained in Cassidy and McGrath (2015) will be used in this thesis as an analytical tool to assess each interviewee's role on the farm during their upbringing. For this thesis, the involvement of the child towards agrarian activities will be assessed to determine if it fits more the worker or helper classification. The worker classification will then be compared to the future of the interviewees regarding farm succession, to assess if the future inheritors had childhood resembling the *'worker'* classification. This thesis will also try to determine if the gender division between the two terms is also observable in the Swedish context.

An additional concept has been created to contribute to the analysis of the gender-specific socialisation process. As explained above, this process would require the parents to choose a child as a successor. For this, it is assumed that there is explicit communication about expectations for the future of the selected child. However, as explored in the literature review, many Swedish farmers who are parents wish for their children to explore their own interest and do not want to put pressure on their children. To explain a phenomenon that has appeared in many interviews, the concept of *silent parental pressure* was created. Although not a concept anchored in literature, it is used in the material to highlight the silence

regarding generational shift in the interviewee's families which itself forms a dimension of the socialization process experienced by the interviewees.

When it comes to the gender lens of the socialisation process, inspired by the research of Saugeres (2002), the concept of *the tractor as a tool for male dominance* over women and for replacement for labour provided by women will be applied to analyse the material. A more general reference to machinery will be used, however, as the tractor is not the only machine present on the farming operations. In this thesis, the use of machinery will contribute to the analysis of the perception of the interviewees regarding their abilities to take over.

Finally, the concept '*work-love balance*' from Grubbström et al. (2014) will be used to illustrate the different views of both gender when discussing a potential succession future.

## 5. Growing up as a farmer's child in Sweden: farm work, silence and future aspirations

In this section, each interviewees life story will be presented. This presentation of each individual allows the reader to gain understanding on what it was life for each interviewee to grow up as a farmer's child in Sweden and helps in not creating confusion.

All interviewees showed some commonalities with their life stories. This doesn't come as a surprise, as they have in common an agrarian childhood and a desire to become an agronomist. It is mainly not in the larger resemblance strokes of their stories that we can identify the path their parents envisioned for them, but in the details of their lived experiences.

### 5.1 I don't want to be locked to the farm – Elinor's story

Elinor is a 26-year-old women who grew up on a farm with sheep for meat production. The number of sheep varied over the years; 10 years ago, there were approximately fifty ewes which resulted in approximately 100 lambs. Today, there are only twenty-two ewes that are used for breeding and a few rams. In total, her family owns around 30 hectares of land of which 10 hectares is used for cereal harvest and the rest for cultivated grassland, as well as natural pastures. They also own 60 hectares of forest. The farm belonged to her father's family and her father purchased it from them. When her father took over, he worked full-time in a sawmill and had at first the milk production before switching to meat production. It was when Elinor's father met her mother that they started with the lamb production instead. The lamb was her mother's interest. Her mother also worked full time as a district nurse. Elinor describes a childhood where she occasionally was expected to help on the farm, such as during lambing season or during harvest. Her own description of the operation is as a side project for her parents, specifying that meant she was not as involved compared to children who grow up on farms that are full time businesses. She says of her childhood involvement in farm related tasks:

'I have never reflected on whether it was hard or easy [doing chores on the farm]. In the same way young ones have to learn how to empty the dishwasher, my dad or mom would ask me 'can you go throw in some wood'. It is not hard or easy.'

During her childhood, Elinor describes her parents as being encouraging and supportive of whichever interest or career path she was interested in. She illustrates it by saying:

‘If I would have said ‘I want to be a lawyer’, then no one would have said anything about it. If I said ‘I want to be a police’ or ‘I want to be a florist’ then they would of never opposed it. I always got to choose what I wanted to do.’

She developed a horse interest at a young age which would eventually grow into a career interest that ended quite abruptly after testing the waters in that field. It was after her stint in the horse world that she decided to study forestry, an interest that she and her father shared as the family owns forest as well.

While she was studying forestry, her father suddenly passed away. This family tragedy led to her quitting her forestry studies and moving home to help her mother take care of the farm operations. Elinor says that, had her father lived, she would maybe have worked in forestry now, and even maybe taken over the farming operations at home. She expresses why that would have been possible with the following statement:

‘I would have maybe taken over if I could have done it with him. It would have been fun; it would have been our project together. And then I would have received help – it is him who repairs machine, drives the tractor, etc. He knows everything. It would have been more smooth sailing, because for example if the tractor would break down then he would go and fix it. I wouldn’t have to, like, call a service repair man and stand there, unsure of what to do.’

After her father’s passing, Elinor was working alongside her mother at home on the farm. This move home would not have happened if there was not a farm to take care of. She describes her mother as having never sat in a tractor before, which meant that Elinor took it upon herself to take over this aspect of the operation. She explains that her interest dwindled after her father’s passing, stating that if she could of chosen, after her father’s death, she would have sent the animals to slaughter and either leased out or sold the land. She worked on the farm and eventually decided to study to be an agronomist with a focus on rural development. She still returned home during weekends to help her mother, stating that the operation is ‘too heavy to do it all yourself’. Her choice of studying to be an agronomist was greatly influence by the environment in which she grew up; she had an interest in food and cooking and a passion for Swedish agriculture. Despite that interest, taking over the farming operations entirely is not appealing to her for many reasons. She explains how heavy the obligations are:

‘It is a very big house on the farm. It is a house for a family with 5 kids. Should I move there myself? It might sound banal, but if you move to a big house alone, with a farm that you can’t work on 100% of the time and have to have it as a hobby and work full time to have money to survive. And then if you meet someone, it must be someone who wants to have this kind of life. I cannot hire workers. It is very heavy.’

My mother had no machine experience. Now she has, but before I was driving the tractor. It is very hard to work full time and run the side project alone. Unless you meet someone that wants to run it with you, and then it becomes a joint hobby.'

This question of taking over the operations never really occurred before her father passed. Afterwards, her mother expressed wanting Elinor to stay behind on the farm and take over the operations. She has, however, never felt pressure from her two siblings to take over. Eventually, Elinor's sister, decided to lease her own farm out, and take over the family operations to keep the farm in the family. Elinor mentions that this is mainly possible due to the fact that Elinor's sister has a partner who is willing to share the work burden. According to her, it also helps that he is a mechanic:

'My sister has a farm. But she would have never had a farm if it wasn't for the fact that she has a partner. Her partner is a mechanic. He can repair everything. Then you are a team. It's so heavy, tough, and lonely to do it alone. If something goes wrong, like if a sheep is sick and needs help, well I might have to go to work. It's very lonely.'

For Elinor, she is happy with her choice of education as an agronomist and looks forward to working with producers without being one herself. She mentions wanting to live closer to mountainous areas and spend more time exploring her hobbies in her free time. She seeks new experiences which clashes with a possibility to be on the farm:

'I am 26 years old, I want to try other things. If I want to travel to Scotland and see things and work there, then I want to have time to do it. I don't want to be locked to the farm.'

## 5.2 I've started to think that maybe I could do it – Sonja's story

Sonja is a 33 years old woman who grew up on a dairy farm belonging to her father. The milk production lasted until 2006 and had 43 cows at its peak. It then became beef production, and the number of animals has been decreasing ever since. There are currently 20 cattle on the farm. There is also forest for production purposes. Her father has worked full time on the farm all her life and farming has been in her family for more than 100 years. Sonja describes always having a positive outlook on the farm, thinking that it was a great environment to grow up in, even describing it as a privilege to be able to understand where food comes from. She describes her and her siblings' involvement on the farm from an early age:

‘I think that when we were quite small then I think we were out very much. Dad had us with him in the tractor all the time. Then, when we got older, we were obligated to help a little bit. To get our weekly allowance we had to go out in the pasture and check on animals, empty the water or change a battery.’

Sonja helped on the farm through her childhood and teenage years even travelling home on weekends to be able to work alongside her father. She expresses both wanting to be home to help but also feeling a little bit of pressure:

‘I chose to be home a lot during the weekends. I wanted to help out at home. Help was needed, and I wanted to help. I wasn’t forced but I also felt a little bit of pressure, not that it was dad’s intention but still you would feel it a little. It was more that I had bad conscience if I didn’t go home and help out during the weekend.’

Sonja also remembers having operated the tractor at some point, and how it didn’t go as expected as she accidentally drove the tractor through the gate. This led her to feel like the farm machinery were a little bit scary to operate, and she mentions only driving the tractor to the field or home, but not feeling confident to operate it in other ways.

Her father, who was a passionate dairy farmer, eventually took the decision to shut down the dairy operations and scale down to a smaller beef production due to health problems. When questioned whether her and her sisters were involved in this decision or if there were a discussion regarding it, Sonja explains that it was not really discussed:

‘I don’t think there was directly. It wasn’t like we sat down and were asking ‘ok, is there anyone that wants to take over?’ I think it was more implicitly understood that no one had shown a big interest. I think, since he took over quite early and he was involved and interested in farming early on, I think he thought that had we been interested we would have shown it more clearly. We would’ve hanged around more, driven the tractor, been in the barn, been there a lot more than we were. I think he noticed it, at there was no burning interest from our part.’

She describes that this also happened in conjunction with a shift in the agricultural landscape at the time, one where mechanization became increasingly prominent. Sonja explains that she believed that her father would have considered investing in modern milking equipment had she or one of her sisters shown interest in taking over the operation someday.

The atmosphere at home was also a bit different after the shift in the operation. Sonja reflects on a particular time where her father was outspoken about his disappointment:

‘There was a period after dad got sick where he was very much like...He doesn’t do it anymore, but there was a while where he put a lot of guilt on others. For example: *‘If I had gotten more help it would have been better and it things would*

*have been better I wouldn't have shut down. It would have been better if you could of helped me. There was a while where it was pretty hard to hear it all the time.'*

Although her father expressed disappointment with the turn of events, he still encouraged Sonja to do what she wanted to do. Sonja spent a few years studying and working different jobs, with many years spent working in the music industry. Sonja gradually grew disillusioned with the industry and started to get tired of it. This led her to change her career path.

Sonja explains that she wanted to work with something that she qualified as important, as contributing something important. She came to the realization that she wanted to work with something relating to farming and food production, which eventually led her to study to become an agronomist with a focus on rural development. As for the farm, Sonja expressing wanting it to stay in the family but not having figured out what that could look like. When asked if having a partner would influence her decision to take over, Sonja explains that it used to be the case:

*'I have for a long time thought that I do not want to take over the farm on my own. When I think about what one could do with the farm, I think about the fact that I don't want to do it alone. I don't want to have a rural business, it feels heavy and lonely. Now I've started to think that maybe I could do it, but for a long time I thought I needed to be with someone.'*

The idea of planning for the future is not openly discussed in Sonja's family. When asked if she would have been keener to take over the operation if succession was discussed more openly, Sonja doesn't seem sure. She describes not being too involved in the decisions, but also attributes it to her lack of interest. She isn't sure what she would have done if her parents had asked her about taking over when she was 18 years old. Emotional discussions are not frequent in her family, as Sonja explains the fear of having uncomfortable discussions:

*'No. I think both my parents are like that and me and my siblings are also like that. It's unnecessary to talk about something that is troublesome. It's easier to talk about something else than 'how does it feel, how do we want to do things, how do we think about the future'. It's better to talk about something else than all those other uncomfortable things.'*

Sonja is still studying to become an agronomist and is still unsure of what will become of the family farm and whether she will be involved.



### 5.3 Am I passionate enough about this? – Linnea’s story

Linnea is a 25 year old women who comes from a farm with 180 cattle and 65 milk cows. Her family owns between 150 and 200 hectares of arable land and pasture, which some part belongs to the family and other parts are leased from others. They also have 150 hectares forest. She has 3 younger sisters. Her dad took over the family farm, which has been in the family since 1601, when he was 15 years old and has worked full time with it together with his brother. Her mother used to work outside of the farm but had to take start working on the farm when Linnea’s uncle passed away.

Linnea and her sisters grew up helping around the farm. At home, there was a point system where each child could get a point for doing chores such as emptying the dishwasher or being out in the barn. The points would be translated into a weekly allowance. Until 2008, the barn was located right next to their home and Linnea remembers getting the animals from the pasture and bringing them to the barn to milk them. Things changed drastically when her uncle passed away, as Linnea explains:

‘I remember more from when we built the new barn, because it was then that my uncle passed away, and he was the one who was dad’s partner on the farm. Then it became less joyful and more of a necessity. My parents were wondering how they could make everything work. Then we [the children] were more focused on trying to help out, to be useful, to make it work. Then we started getting hourly pay if one was out and working.’

Linnea describes the work-life balance for her parents as more sustainable before her uncle’s passing, as her father would be free every second weekend. Linnea’s father and uncle had debated whether they should invest in the family farm or shut it down, and ultimately decided to invest. They built a new barn 300 meters away from the family home and brought in milking robots. Following her uncle’s death, Linnea’s father took over the entire operation and Linnea’s mother took leave from work to also work on the farm. Linnea describes being worried for her parents following the family tragedy and explained that all the children tried to contribute in some way. Her and one of her sister spent more time in the barn while the two others helped more in the home. Linnea explains how her parents were very clear about not putting pressure on the children to take over the farm as there was already an underlying pressure due to the farm being in the family since 1601. This fear of putting pressure also impacted their decision making, as Linnea explains:

‘It is also why they decided to build a new barn 300 meters away from the family farm. They thought that we can keep the house without feeling like one needs to be a farmer.’

When asked who mentioned the talk about the generational shift first, Linnea specifies that it was her, as her parents did not want to put pressure on her or her siblings. Linnea describes how she felt the pressure despite her parents wish for it not to be so:

‘I always felt that I was in a pressurized situation anyways, even if they tried not to make it that way, because we need to take a decision eventually regarding if we keep the farm or sell it. I felt that was uncomfortable. But during my secondary education I thought that that decision would happen later on. Then I was working seasonally away from home and felt like OK now I need to take a decision. I was 19 years old.’

Linnea’s career interest varied through her life. After working in an architect office after graduating from her secondary education she realized that farming was important to her and that she was very passionate about it. This led her to undertake studies to be an agronomist with a focus on rural development. She explains how that decision was based on her burning interest for food and the climate, and how at the time she had a lot of anxiety related to climate change. Linnea also explains that, on the other hand, she also perceives some negative aspects with being a farmer, such as the lack of social interactions. She also expresses worrying about whether she was interested enough to be a farmer. She feels an attachment to the land and expresses that losing the land would bring on unpleasant feelings. Through doing some internships in ‘typical 9-to-5 jobs’, she realized that both being a farmer and having an office job is complicated and stressful. It was during said internship that she contacted a therapist that focused on generational shift. Her therapist and her discussed that she should mention the farm transition topic to her family. Linnea describes her motivation for this experience:

‘Before, we all knew we would need to talk about it and take a decision, but we hadn’t really talked about it. Everyone assumed what the others were thinking. But it would have been nice to talk about it and know what my sisters and my parents thought.’

Linnea describes the family therapy session as uncomfortable at first:

‘It was during the pandemic, so it was over zoom. It was very uncomfortable and hard. We talked about my uncle and everything. Me and my siblings explained that it was hard for us, that we were worried for our parents. (...) What came up was that my parents didn’t want to pressure us, but that me and my sister were interested, and we could see if we could run it together. It was like *‘ok we wait two years and see how you feel then’*. We said, ok, that’s how we feel now, but we know it isn’t set in stone, we can change our minds. I felt like it was nice that we talked about it.’

Linnea and her parents agreed that she would work outside of the farms for a few years at first, before taking over to ‘get use out of her education’.

## 5.4 I want to take over -Malin's story

Malin grew up on a dairy farm in the north of Sweden with her four siblings, 2 older brothers and 2 younger brothers. Both her parents have worked on the farm all her life. Her parents' dairy farm evolved through her life, going from 35 cows to 42 cows. They now cultivate approximately 100 hectares.

Malin has worked on the family farm from a young age, and has spent a lot of her childhood alongside her mother, taking care of the farm animals. Malin describes starting to work around the age of ten, and makes a point of highlighting that it was indeed work, not simply going out to play with the cows. A salary was provided by her parents to the family children for their work on the farm. Malin describes her parents as being welcoming and hard workers, which meant that to spend time with them one had to be in the barn, but that one of them would always be present to take care of the children. Malin had brothers who had varied interests in the farm work and not all siblings were consistently engaged in the same way on the farm. Malin's mother had a strong horse interest, which she passed on to her daughter. Malin describes how her animal interest brought her closer to her parents:

'I felt like animals was a way to connect with them [my parents] because we have a shared interest. I see it with my brother that they don't have... they have probably another way of contact that I don't see, but they don't have what I have with the farming.'

Malin bought her first horse when she was fourteen years old and would wake up early in the morning to get the horse ready and out in the pasture before she would head to school, which meant that her normal wake up time was around 5.30 am. She describes being a very responsible child and how her parents didn't have to constantly remind her of her responsibilities, which she puts in contrast with her brother who was deemed not as responsible as Malin. Malin felt that her parents provided enough support, but mentions that it wasn't a shared sentiment amongst her siblings:

'If someone would have asked me spontaneously if my parents were home when I was young, I would of said yes, they were home all the time because my home is the whole farm. My home is as much my bedroom as the barn. But I don't think my little brother would have said the same thing. He has a whole other perspective.'

With great trust from her parents and encouragement to explore her animal interest, Malin began competing with horses at the age of fourteen. This led her to study at gymnasium in a horse-related program and eventually venture out at nineteen years old and do internships in stables across Sweden and Germany. She kept working in stables until she was twenty-two years old. It was a phone call from her parents that changed her career trajectory:

‘I got a feeling that I wasn’t of any benefit to society. I started to *wonder ‘what is the point with this sport?’*. Approximately at the same time, my mom gets injured. She is going on sick leave and asks me if I could come home and work. And then I got the feeling that that (working on the farm again) was so fun.’

Working at home in the barn brought her a lot of joy. She describes how, when she was younger, she wanted to leave Västerbotten and the country side, she wanted to see something else. When she did see something else, she realized that her home was actually quite nice, and she wanted to go back. As Malin describes it, she *‘needed to go out and see something else, and get some form of perspective on what I had, on opportunities, on what there is.’* Although Malin currently studies in Uppsala, she is most often at home working on her parent’s farm during her free time. Simultaneously, Malin began thinking about taking over her parent’s farm and decided to bring up the topic at home. She describes the following:

‘My parents have never talked about it [taking over the farm]. There was never such talk. I got interested in the recent years and began thinking that it would be fun to take over the farm. But they are not interested in that idea.’

As for why her parents are not interest, Malin is not sure. She makes a few guesses, that maybe her father is struggling to release control over the operations or that he perceives it as his farm, but Malin isn’t sure of the reasoning behind it all. She mentions that it is her who had to kickstart the discussion and that her parents are not really taking it seriously at this point in time. For Malin, who’s current partner owns a dairy farm itself, the question has a different weight. On one hand, she feels satisfied with the idea of working on her partner’s farm, on the other hand she thinks of the societal impact if her parent’s farm was to shut down as it is the last farm left in the village where it is located. For Malin, it is clear that someone needs to take over. She describes that she felt ‘a little bit weird taking it up with them’ and wondered why they hadn’t done it themselves, asking herself if ‘they have just assumed’. Malin clarifies the following regarding her desire to take over:

‘I have said I want to take over, and I meant it, but at the same time I’ve felt like *‘Do I want to take this over alone?’*. Is that how I want it? One wants to be two, one wants someone.’

As for the future, Malin continues to study in the agronomy program and hopes to someday work on a farm and combine farm work with another type of work, such as advisory services or even politics.

## 5.5 I feel an immense pressure - Viktor's story

Viktor is a 27-year-old man who grew up on a farm in the south of Sweden with his younger brother and his parents. Viktor's mother worked as a massage therapist and helped a little bit on the farm. Viktor's father worked full time on the farm with Viktor's uncle and together they have 600 hectares of arable land where they grow barley, wheat, rapeseed, and sugar beets. Additionally, they also grow red and yellow onions as well as grass seeds. During some seasons, the total number of employees on the farm can reach up to 6 individuals.

For Viktor, working on the farm began at the age of five years old. He remembers going out in the sugar beet fields in the summer and removing weeds. However, he did not really feel like it was a family activity:

'As a small child, neither me nor my brother has any big interest, but I think that part has a lot to do with the parental involvement with the child as well. Me and my little brother rarely were desired to be hanging with on the tractor which I can now see that it was a bad investment from my father. It would have been a good investment to have us in the tractor. Yes, ok, it would have maybe not been as efficient to have us there, but it would've generated something over time that maybe would've made us interested and made us want to work with this ourselves.'

Viktor also goes on to state that in fact, when he was out on the farm, it was the farmhand that took care of Viktor and his little brother, not his parents.

Viktor describes how when he wanted to follow in his mother's track when he was younger. Viktor followed his mother's interest, who was a massage therapist and considered working with something related to bodily health. Viktor describes his mother as being very strict regarding not wanting to influence the children towards a specific career choice, while also voicing advice such as 'one should never marry a farmer'. It was around the age of twenty-one years old that Viktor seriously started to consider potentially taking over the operations at home. Partially, many people around him had reminded him of 'how sad it would be' if none of the children would take over the farm, and partially after realizing he had an interest in machinery and physical work. Viktor describes how he developed self-confidence while working away from the farm:

'Like working with machines. I might have thought that what my dad was doing was unachievable, but then I worked other jobs where I had to maneuver machines and quickly realized that nothing is impossible. One can manage, it isn't a problem. It is quite valuable to have a job where you try things outside of the family, because there can be so much stigma.'

For Viktor, the idea of taking over the farm is both exciting and scary. His little brother is completely uninterested in taking over the farm, which was made evident throughout his life by intentionally distancing himself from the business. Viktor, on the other hand, has started to imagine what he would like to do with the farm once he inherits it. He sees the 550 square meters house as being too big for a family to live in and envisions using it as a meeting place for a Swedish agroforestry learning node, involving many different actors in the form of a partnership. Viktor raises the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) as a potential partner, as well as partnership with his neighbour, someone who Viktor considers having extensive technological knowledge. He also mentions a friend of his, a landscape architect, that could develop a rehabilitation centre in the form of gardens. For him, this vision is quite far away, and Viktor describes a future where he would have to work many years with something that doesn't make him happy to be able to reach his dream vision.

For Viktor, collaboration is a key part of a farming future that would make him satisfied with his choice to take over. He also describes how he wishes to meet a future life partner 'who is very driven, someone who wants to do big things'.

The farm transfer is set to happen in 2028. Viktor expresses dealing with a lot of stress every time he is at home as he describes feeling overwhelmed by 'all the things that need to be done'. The transition has already been set into motion. After Viktor expressed his interest, the family met with a generational shift consultant. Although his intent with his family is clear, Viktor expresses some frustration with his family communication by saying 'I don't know if this is a thing with all farming families, but I think we are so bad at communicating with each other'. Viktor explains that he feels an immense pressure on his shoulder regarding taking over the farm, a farm that has been in the family for multiple generations, but that he is aware that this pressure is coming from himself and not from his family. However, he hasn't been able to express his feelings clearly to them:

'The communication within the family is not optimal, we don't talk about everything. It has made that if I think something is hard, I don't say it directly to my parents, I instead go around and be passive-aggressive. We must begin talking with each other. It is so important for this to work. Since I have these five years, I also have an opportunity to start this dialogue on what is required for me to take over. In some way educate myself and my parents on emotional intelligence and how we can talk on things that are uncomfortable. So we can together, as a family, do this generational shift.'

At the time of the interview, Viktor was planning a long trip outside of the country and referred to his trip as 'running away' from the farm transition process, as it is not something he is looking forward to. Viktor also points out that, were he to change his mind regarding taking over, he does not feel like any of his family members would resent him for doing so.

## 5.6 I don't want an office job, I need to be active – Linus story

Linus come from a crop cultivation farm of approximately 100 hectares. The farm grows older grain varieties and is certified organic. The farm belongs to his father, who also works as a security guard. Linus father owns two different plots of land, of which one has been in the family since 1640. Linus is the youngest of three siblings, he has a sister and a brother, none of which are interested in taking over the farm.

Linus spent his childhood working on the farm, which he describes as a family activity. Linus began working at the age of 8 years old, with what he qualifies as 'easy tasks'. His father was out working in the field while his mother was more focused on household work and childcare. Linus childhood was spent outside, as he recalls 'never sitting inside and playing video games'. When he was twelve, Linus learned how to drive the tractor and began helping his father during the busier season. Linus sister showed early on her disinterest in farm work, which meant that it was mainly Linus and his brother who were out on the farm. Linus enjoyed driving the tractor and his brother enjoyed doing repairs around the farm. Linus expressed, however, that both him and his brother received similar levels of education regarding agriculture. Linus father would take the time to explain to his sons different aspects regarding the farm and the work, not differentiating between the two siblings. Linus career interests changed through his life. First, as a child, he dreamed of being a firefighter, before discovering a passion for football. As he states himself, he quickly realized he would not have a career within football, but not exactly sure what he wishes to do. What he knew for sure is that he did not want an office job, as he wanted to be more active.

Linus describes the shift from conventional to organic agriculture which was made on the family farm many years ago as the starting point for his interest. His father noticed the improvement in the soil and made a point of showing it to Linus, and there were many family discussions around the dining table about this subject. This sparked an interest in Linus to want to make farming more sustainable and encourage consumers to buy organic and Swedish produce. Linus attributes his decision to study at university level to his sister, whom was insistent that it was beneficial for one to get a higher education. When asked if his parents ever talked about the generational shift, Linus says:

'Not that I can remember, but I can believe that it did happen. We talked a lot about earlier generations and how they farmed the land, what they went through. We have had that family feeling that at least the farm will stay in the family, quite early. But

there was no pressure that we must take over, that we must work in farming. It was always quite free that it was ok that we work with what we want but that we want the farm to stay in the family.'

Linus also describes how being surrounded with peers who share a similar future during his time at university has helped increase his interest and excitement with taking over. Linus makes it clear that he wishes to have another job alongside his work on the farm, as he explains:

'I think since we have such a small farm, and we don't have animals, one almost must have a side job to be able to develop the farm more or have the ability to buy more land. It's hard to compete with farmers who have animals and receive money every month because it is harder to get loans from a bank. So, I realized I need another income. I also realised I am not too fond of the practical things, like carpentry, so then I'd rather leave that to someone else, and then I need money to pay for that. If I had a bigger farm, then I would have wanted to only work with farming. Now I want to do something else.'

He also states that he 'also realized that it could be a bit lonely on the farm', which is another reason for him to seek employment outside of the farm, so he can get to have two different experiences. Linus also mentions how he hopes to find a romantic partner that would agree to live on the farm with him and would hopefully have animal interest. For him, the animal interest would be beneficial as he wishes to have a few animals on the farm to 'bring some life' to the place. For when he takes over, Linus expects that his father will continue to work alongside him on the farm, continuing to pass down knowledge and be of help in terms of extra labor.

## 5.7 We always had a dialogue about it – Jessica' story

Jessica grew up on a farm where 800 hectares of forest were exploited as well as 70 to 80 hectares of pastures. The farm currently has approximately 28 ewes and some horses. The animals are mainly there to graze the land and keep the landscape open. Jessica lives on the farm still with her partner, and currently works in a bank. She has a sister who is not interested in farming.

Jessica describes how she has 'always worked on the farm' and always been included, especially with the animals. Jessica's younger sister, on the other hand, never worked with the production side of things as Jessica explains that she actively showed that she wasn't interested. Jessica explains how things were for her in comparison:

'For me it is different. It is maybe a bit more expected. I was born into it, and I am the oldest. It is something I actively chose to stay in. But it is maybe true that I



haven't had the normal summer jobs that all others have had, I worked quite a lot on the farm, and I still do it today. Actively, after work hours and during weekends. (..) I was home quite a lot. I helped on the farm and took care of my horses.'

Jessica explains that she believes her work on the farm from a young age as helped her shape her work ethic and develop strong leadership skills. This, she highlights, also comes with some downsides, as she explains maybe having a little bit too much responsibility from a young age compared to other children who don't grow up on farms. For Jessica, this meant that she had to do home chores and then go out and make sure that the horses and the sheep have food and had to ride her horse every day. Jessica describes feeling very at ease and confident with her agriculture background and interest, and explains how it was not hard to discuss a future generational shift:

'We always had a dialogue about it. Not necessarily when, but more like how it could look like, how it would work. We always talked about it, but it was never the case that my parents put pressure on one of us to take over the farm or have that as a future plan.'

As she expressed, she was 'absolutely not' the only one to bring up the topic of generational shift and mentions that it came up quite naturally.

Although she worked all her life on her parent's farm, it was after her secondary education that Jessica decided to test the water elsewhere and worked on different farms and gained experience outside of the family farm. It was while working and getting 'a little bit bored' that she realized that 'the agricultural sector stood still' and she wondered how she could contribute to developing it forward. This line of thinking led her to undertake her studies to be an agronomist. This has become a source of family pride, as she explains: 'My parents are super proud that I chose to study this. My dad almost presents himself first with his name and then that his daughter is an agronomist.' For Jessica, however, the farm transition lies many years in the future as she does not expect the generational shift to happen earlier than 15 years ahead.

Jessica is currently working at a bank and helping her parents on the farm during her free time. For her, currently, she does not envision that she would want to work full-time on the farm. She rather sees maybe a future that means working part time on the farm and part time somewhere else. Jessica's partner, who lives with her currently on the farm, might jump in and put in some work on the farm as well. When asked why she doesn't want to work on the farm in a full-time manner, Jessica explains:

'Because I think it is a bit lonely. Even if I am passionate about it, I am not very into driving a tractor, or use the chainsaw in the forest, or drive machines. I don't think it is very fun, even if I know how to do it, it doesn't inspire me, and I don't want to spend the rest of my life doing that. It is the animals and the rest that I like

a lot and want to invest time in. When it comes time to plough, these machine times, then I'd rather delegate it to someone who is interested and then I work somewhere else. I realised it isn't my thing.'

As the transition lays many years ahead, Jessica reports feeling 'absolutely no pressure' in terms of the transition timeline. As she expresses, it all depends on when her father decides to retire.

## 5.8 Collaboration is the future of farming – Jon's story

Jon is a 27 years old man who grew up on a cereal farm which is currently leased out to a machine park. The farm also has had a long-standing history of horse breeding that goes back approximately 9 generations. The farm belongs to his mother's side of the family. His family also owns a forest in another part of Sweden. Jon grew up in both areas.

Jon remembers helping on the farm during certain periods, such as harvesting. For him, however, it was mainly an activity that involved interaction with the ones who leased out the farm, and only sometimes were some of his family members present. He remembers being expected to contribute something during his childhood, but that he didn't feel obligated to help. He describes a bit of a more consistent routine when it came to the horses, however, as they needed daily care.

Jon's career exploration started with an interest in the military or the police. He was in the military following his secondary education studies and realized the amount of risk that such work entailed. Additionally, he always had in the back of his mind that 'farming was fun' and that 'farming should continue to exist as we need to have food on the table'. This sparked his interest that would eventually lead him to undertake studies to become an agronomist. When asked how his parents approached the subject of career paths with him, Jon describes the following:

'When we have talked about it, their logic was that one shouldn't press someone to do something because it will never be a good result. One should choose one's own path. It makes the most sense. No, one cannot pressure someone to be something. One must have some form of interest.'

Jon expresses wanting to take over the farm but unsure exactly of how that could look like. He could continue to lease out the farm, but he reckons that there are other options too, although maybe not easy ones as 'it is very hard to be a young person that starts a business'. For him, it is clear that doing it alone is not really optimal. Jon reflects as such: 'Collaboration is the future of farming. It doesn't work to try to do everything yourself, you must have machine collaboration, and work together.'

Jon is almost graduated from his agronomist education and continues to reflect on what exactly it is he wishes to do post-graduation.

## 6. Analysing the making of a farmer

In this section, I analyse the life stories provided by the interviewees to better understand how the upbringing of the interviewees involved gender-specific socialization and how does the gender of the interviewees impact their view of their ability to take over the operations.

### 6.1 The gender-specific socialization process

As a reminder, this part of the thesis aims at answering the first research question: How does the upbringing of children on farms involve gender-specific socialization into the role of farmer?

To answer this question, I seek to find out if the interviewees that wish to inherit the farm have been selected as a successor and if they have gone through gender-specific socialization. Alternatively, for the ones that do not wish to take over, I analyse whether they were omitted from a socialization process that would lead to inheritance.

To understand what is meant by gender-specific socialization, I use the terms of the ‘worker’ and ‘helper’ categorization by Cassidy and McGrath (2015). In my analysis, a childhood that aligns with the worker classification will be associated with socialization of an inheritor.

In this thesis, I classify the interviewees that were either provided with salaries, that referred to their labour as work or that were involved on a consistent basis are classified as workers. Interviewees that had more of a sporadic role on the farm will be categorized as helpers. If interviewees had characteristics associated with both, they will be classified as hybrids.

In the scope of this study, none of the interviewees had completed a family farm transfer. Other than Linus and Viktor who have specific farm transfer dates, most had either only an abstract timeline until it would be relevant for them to take over operations or had no plans to take over yet. However, if the interview is considering taking over, for the purpose of this thesis, they will be considered as the one in line to inherit the farm.

#### 6.1.1 The hybrids: helper/worker

Two individuals have been identified as hybrids: Elinor and Sonja. This is due to a shift in responsibility towards the family farm they experienced. Neither of them considers taking over the farm, and yet they can be classified as workers for a certain period of time. From a gender-specific socialization perspective, their time

as workers was not tied to parental intentions of socializing a child into the role of farmer. Their shift in role is explained below.

Elinor classified her work on the farm during childhood and adolescence a more akin to chores, not seeing a difference between things such as filling one's dishwasher or being out with the sheep. From this point of view, Elinor would fall into the category of a helper. However, something in Elinor's life changed her role on the farm: while as a child she was active on the farm to contribute to household chores and labour, as an adult she became a vital part of the functioning of the farm. Following Elinor's father's passing, Elinor describes putting a stop to her university education and returning home to provide support to her mother regarding the farm work. Elinor suddenly takes on a role similar to the one her father had, as her mother had never driven a tractor before, it was Elinor who took over that part of the operations. This shift of event represented a transition for the role of Elinor, from a helper, who contributes in smaller, more chore-like ways, to a pillar for the well-functioning of the farm operations. Partially, this can be looked at through the gender lens in this case, as her shift from helper to worker happened in result of the death of her father, hence Elinor inheriting tasks that are more generally associated with masculinity, for example driving of the tractor. In this case, the shift from helper to worker was not a predictor of succession, rather a temporary role switch to contribute with labour in time of crisis.

Sonja has a similar story to Elinor, as she explained that her siblings and her used to sit on the tractor with their father while they were little and eventually being expected to work and being remunerated for contributing to the work on the farm in the form of a weekly allowance. Sonja helping on the farm extended throughout her life, as she headed home during weekends to help her father. With the fact that she received a salary for her work, it becomes clear that she falls into the worker category. This categorization didn't last throughout her life, as the health of her father pushed the operations to transform and the workload to slowly diminish throughout the years, making it so that Sonja eventually became more of a helper than a worker. Although Sonja was a worker, her father never considered his daughters as interested enough for succession, which facilitated his decision to scale down operations. Sonja, although she was quite involved on the farm through many years, admits to never really considered taking over, meaning that her time as a worker, like Elinor, was not a predictor of succession.

### 6.1.2 The workers

The identified workers are Jessica, Linus, Linnea and Malin. What becomes clear in this section is that many workers have the intention to take over the farm and parents that are open to the idea, for the exception of Malin. This strengthens the idea that workers are inheritors, but somewhat also shows that it might not be

because of being chosen by parents as an inheritor. Each interviewees classification is explained below.

For Jessica, the labour she performed on her parent's farm was clearly classified as work. Jessica frames it as 'always' having worked on the farm, in comparison to her sister who actively distanced herself from tasks related to the production. Jessica's story would fall into the classification of worker, as she puts repeatedly emphasis on the duty associated with her tasks but also her interest and involvement, and how it contributes to her current work ethic, putting even more emphasis on it being work rather than help. Additionally, she does state a higher level of expectations being put on her than her sister. As she wants to take over the farm, her worker classification aligns with a farm inheritance.

Linus father was very passionate about the farm work and all the children were expected to contribute in some way at home. It was him and his brother who were the most involved in the farm work, as his sister openly took distance from farm work. Linus described how he learned how to drive the tractor at the age of twelve, while his brother focused more on repairs around the farm. This correlates to the 'worker' classification, as a pattern of a mentorship was established between the father and his sons.

As for Linnea, after her uncle passed away, Linnea describes a strong feeling of duty regarding her helping on the farm. It became, according to Linnea, more of a necessity, and hourly pay was provided if her or her sisters were out working. As for her sisters, following the death, Linnea explained that her and one of her sisters were more helping on the farm and the others two were more helping in the home.

As the family children consists only of girls, it is hard to say that gender played a role in this instance regarding who became a helper and who became a worker. One could say that the children who helped more in the home fall in the category of helpers, while Linnea falls into the worker category. She continued to hold the role of worker all through her life, even during her time at university. As she wants to take over, her worker classification is aligned with succession.

For Malin, it is clear that her contribution to her family farm was considered work. Malin describes herself during childhood as being more interested and more included in the farm activities than her brothers. She attributes it to her animal interest and credits her time on the farm as foundational to the relationship she has with her parents. According to her experience, Malin would fall into the categorization of worker: she performed labour in exchange for salary and had a workload she engaged in daily. She eventually also returned to the farm and provided full time labour following her mother's injury. As Malin had siblings of the other gender, and yet is the one who is still classified as a worker on the farm, it is possible to conclude that her gender didn't inhibit her from this classification. Malin, as a worker, wishes to take over the operation, to which her parent doesn't agree, thus not allowing her worker classification to be a predictor of succession.

### 6.1.3 The helpers

In this section, two helpers are identified: Viktor and Jon. Both had more of a sporadic role on the farm. Going against the findings of Cassidy and McGrath (2015), only male interviewees are classified as helpers. The two helpers have intentions towards taking over the farming operations, which also goes against the assumptions that only workers, ones that undergo socialization, are inheritors. The classification of both helpers is explained below.

Viktor describes starting work on the farm at the age of five, but for him, there was a detachment from the family when it came to his work on the farm at a young age: instead of receiving supervision and care from his parents, it was the farmhand that cared for Viktor and his brother on the farm. His brother and him were not desired to hang with his father on the tractor. In that sense, the lack of engagement from his parents drives Viktor away from a ‘apprenticeship’ set up and more as a peripheral helper on the farm. Although the workload was big enough to require employees, it seems like the requirement for Viktor and his brother to provide labour was more abstract. This puts Viktor in the helper category. This doesn’t seem to be gender based, as the two children of the family are male. Despite this categorization, Viktor has expressed that he wishes to take over the operations.

For Jon, the situation was similar. As he grew up on a farm that was leased out, he describes being expected to contribute, but mainly during high season, but recalls no obligation to help. In that sense, Jon would fall into the category of helper, as the tasks were sporadic and not enforced on a regular basis. This, however, might have less to do with the gender of Jon, but rather the situation in which the farm managed at the time. As the farm was leased out, a degree of separation between the work and the home was more prominent for Jon in comparison to other interviewees. Without a family context, and with leasing out of the farm, there is very little room for a more intensive, routinized, apprenticeship-like experience on the farm. Despite the lack of such experience, Jon does want to take over, meaning that his helper classification is not aligned with his intent for succession.

## 6.2 Are workers the inheritors?

Looking at the division of everyone within the three categories, most individuals that wishes to inherit the farming operations and work as a farmer fall into the category of worker, with the exception of Viktor and Jon. Elinor and Sonja, the other two hybrids, were both shifting between workers and helpers and are not expressing desires to take over now but are not entirely closed off to the idea and neither are their parents. Jon and Viktor, the two helpers, happen to be two male children, which stands in contrast to the findings of Cassidy and McGrath (2015)

regarding helpers being mainly female. In this thesis, all female interviewees were involved in the farm work to quite a high extent, sometimes surpassing the involvement of the male interviewees. All the female interviewees, at one point or another, held the role of worker. If we assume that workers go through socialization for inheritance, then we can see that in the Swedish context girl children are included in said socialization pattern.

All interviewees, regardless of gender, that expressed wanting to take over the operations to their parents were met with acceptance, apart from Malin. In her case, gender might play a role in this decision, but it is impossible to conclude without obtaining explanation from her parents. Malin is also the only female worker that had male siblings, but none of her male siblings have expressed wanting to take over. It is also important to underline that both Jessica and Linnea only have female siblings, which means that no male child was competing for a potential inheritor role.

What seems to be a reoccurrence in all interviewees story is how the children of the families were provided with an opportunity, and expected to, contribute on the farm, but that not all children decided to do so. What is apparent is the contrast between all interviewees and their siblings. As mentioned before, all interviewees have decided to undertake studies related to agronomy, which entails a certain interest on their part towards the agrarian world. Many interviewees also report having siblings who are completely uninterested in the farming operations and who actively distanced themselves and were not expected to be involved to the same degree during their upbringing. In that sense, despite workers being in majority inheritors, the categorization of worker or helper is not ascribed meaning by the family members regarding what it could entail for the future of the family farm. A high involvement on the farm for certain children over others is more of a natural division based on interest coming from the child itself. Thus, being a worker and having a high level of involvement on the farm might be a predictor of succession but is not equal to being a chosen successor by parents.

### 6.3 Child-led socialization

A ‘chosen successor’ in the context of this thesis was described a child that goes through a gender-specific socialization process to eventually initiate a farm transfer. The chosen successor should receive knowledge and intangible assets to set them up for a successful transition. As explored earlier, all the interviewees did contribute on the farm during their childhood, and they all reference it as a common possibility for all the children of the family, even if not all children contribute to the same degree. There doesn’t seem to be a ‘chosen successor’ in the same way there is in the research done by Grubbström & Sooväli-Sepping (2012) as the parent do not set bigger expectations on a particular child over others. What seems to be apparent



in the stories provided in this thesis is that the successor socialization is mainly child-led. Child-led socialization in this context is when the child itself decides to be involved on the farm at a high level and eventually considers succession. This consideration seems to happen as a self-reflection on the part of the child, and is not clearly tied to parental expectations. Thus, the concept of chosen successor is not relevant for this thesis. Child-led socialization would be better framed as successors being self-appointed. Examples of child-led socialization are presented below.

Child-led socialization is clearly illustrated in Linnea's story, as she recollects a natural order falling into place following the death of her uncle. Similarly, Jessica and Viktor report having siblings that are completely uninterested in farming operations, as they recognize their own interest as the main motivator for their status of potential successor. Linus and his brother both received farming knowledge as they accompanied their father on the farm, although Linus brother was not necessarily as interested as Linus. For Malin, her strong animal interest drove her to be more active and involved on the farm than her brothers, who didn't have as many farming responsibilities as Malin due to their perceived lack of interest and discipline. In these stories, the most involved and interested child gains the knowledge necessary for farm succession. These stories illustrate how the children themselves decides how involved they are in the operations. However, this interest-based succession is very much in line with the finding of Grubbström et al. (2014) which indicated that, in the Swedish context, interest was a more important indicative factor for the choice of a successor.

However, a particular factor has been identified in each life story interview that provides an explanation for why children are not selected by their parents as successors and why the child-led farming succession is more prominent. This factor is related to parental pressure, or lack thereof.

## 6.4 The silent pressure

In the research paper of Grubbström et al. (2014), the interviewed students expressed a split feeling as to whether succession was their choice or due to parental expectation and pressure. Hajdu et al. (2020) also highlights stories of Swedish farmers who have children and who wishes not to put pressure on their offspring to take over the operations. In this thesis, all interviewees reported how their parents were intentionally trying not to put pressure or influence their child towards the path of succession. Many also report how this pressure goes unacknowledged. The interviewees feel like they must take it upon themselves to initiate and mediate the emotionally charged discussion. One could frame this as 'silent pressure': when the desire to not put pressure, and adopting a no-generational shift talk policy, ends up creating an extra layer to the pressure. In some way, the pressure is almost innate,

as one is born within a family with a long string of family farm succession. Not discussing it, and wanting to stay away from a 'successor socialization' does not change the reality in which the children find themselves in. On the contrary, according to the interviews, it makes the children feel responsible to initiate discussions, increasing emotional stress.

. This type of story, of parents not wanting to influence their child which sometimes accidentally contributes to the burden being put on the child is illustrated in Linnea's story. Linnea recalls her parents being very open about not wanting to put pressure on their children to take over, so much so that they moved the barn further from the home to lessen the feeling of responsibility on the children to continue with the operations. Linnea, however, did feel the pressure, nonetheless, and she eventually took contact with a therapist who specialized in generational shift to discuss her feelings towards the succession and initiate succession talks at home with her family. In her story, Linnea is the instigator for the succession talk, as a result of her parents not wanting to put pressure on their children and 'assuming what the others are thinking'. This strategy seems to be prevalent. Like Linnea, Viktor has felt a sense of pressure on his shoulder with the idea of a generational shift, although his parents expressed wanting their children to choose exactly what they wish to do, going so far as not overly involve them in farm work during childhood. Now, Viktor suffers from a high level of stress related to the lack of communication within his family and he perceives it as his responsibility to instruct himself and his parents on 'emotional intelligence' and on how to move forward with the uncomfortable conversations. This lack of open dialogue also appears in Malin's story, where she brings up succession talk only to be shut down by her parents without any explanation. Most parents seem to associate silence as a tool for reducing parental pressure, which produces the contrary effect.

There are also some exceptions experienced by some interviewees, in particular in the case of Linus and Jessica. Jessica reports having a constant open dialogue in her family regarding farming succession, and reports very low levels of anxiety regarding the process. Her succession is also not set to happen in the near future, as she explains that it is not a relevant question for the next ten years at least. This could be an indicator that open discussion, initiated by the parents, could contribute to a reduction of stress load on the children, and increase the positive feelings associated with generational shift. In a similar vein, Linus explained that his parents put no pressure on the children regarding taking over the operation, but that they were clear that the land and the farm should stay in the family, no matter what the children's career are. Both Linus and Jessica wish to have employment outside of the farm as well, which could be an indicator that the possibility of farm work not being the sole career makes the idea of generational shift less daunting and more of a positive experience for the children of farmers.

Tying this together with the concept of ‘socialized successor’, all interviewees experience some aspect of such socialization by the mere fact that they contributed to the farm work during their childhood. However, as the choice of successor tends to be interest based in the current Swedish context, the socialization of a successor is not representative of the current dynamic between parent (farmer) and child (potential successor). As explained, in most cases, the parents assume that the successor will make it known that they wish to assume this specific role, hence removing the need for the parent to choose. The chosen successor then becomes the self-appointed successor.

## 6.5 The power of the machine and the work-love balance

In this section, I aim to establish a link between the research of Saugeres (2002) on machinery as a symbol of male dominance in the agrarian world and the research of Grubbström et al. (2014) that led to the creation of the concept of work-love balance. This will aid in the answering of the research question regarding how the gender of the children impacted their perception of their ability to take over the family operations.

Machines continue to hold a strong symbolic power in the identity of farmers and is perceived differently by the male and female interviewees in this thesis. Additionally, work-love balance continues to be relevant for female interviewees but is not as present in the male interviewee’s stories.

### 6.5.1 Machinery: power and partnership

In some ways, farm work that includes machinery being mainly associated with male head of the family as explored in Saugeres (2002) still rung true in the interviews I conducted for this thesis. Many interviewees reported the farm being inherited through their father’s side of the family, and when the mother worked on the farm, it was mentioned by many that the primary tasks were in the barn with the animals. For Elinor, whose mother had never driven the tractor before Elinor’s fathers passing, this lack of technical knowledge elicited a strong response. For Elinor, she sees the knowledge surrounding operating and repairing machinery as a great advantage when it comes to being a farmer. As she reports, she moved home following her father’s death to provide assistance to her mother, mirroring the story of a women moving home to help her mother on the farm following her father’s passing reported by Saugeres (2002). This has raised the question as to whether she could imagine herself owning a farm herself, to which she reports not feeling like it would be a sustainable choice as a sole owner. To her, sharing the responsibility

over the operations, and the repairs needed, is somewhat of a must. Hence why she states that her sister taking over the farm is made possible by the fact that her sister is married to a mechanic. Elinor also reported feeling like she might have been more interested in taking over had her father been alive, as she would then see it as a project on which they both work on. This idea of having a partner to share the workload is also in Jessica story, as she reports wanting to share ownership of the family farm with her partner due to her not being very interested in operating machinery. It seems, however, that for Jessica, this is a question of interest. For her, the farm work is equally important whether it is animal care or machine operations, she describes simply not enjoying the machine work and wanting to delegate. Many female interviewees share the sentiment of wanting a partner, romantic or a family member, to take over the operations with. Sonja reported having, for a long time, felt like she did not want to take over the farm on her own. Mainly, she attributed it to the heavy workload and the loneliness associated with the work. She also reports being insecure with the driving of the tractor and has only recently started to consider maybe being able to take over the farming operations by herself. As for Malin, she is clear with her parents that she wants to take over, although internally she does reflect on if she wants to take over the operations alone. This idea, of having a partner to share the workload with, mirrors the finding by Grubbström et al. (2014) who saw a work-love balance illustrated by their interviewees who cited having a partner as a positive thing as they would get to share the work burden with someone. This need for a work-love balance was obvious in many stories and was linked, for many, to the concept of machinery as a symbol of male dominance in agriculture.

In Saugeres (2002), machinery is used as a way for male dominance in the agrarian world, relaying women as not needed in the field and confining them to housework instead. In the stories of the interviewees here, the machine is a similar symbol of power but has an added layer to it. Machine skills, in a way, become the threshold as to what makes an individual feel empowered. For Elinor, this was illustrated by how she helped her mother by operating farm machinery so that the farm could continue to function after her father's passing. Sonja mentions how her father would have maybe considered that his daughters would have wanted to take over had they been out in the barn more or even driven the tractor. In this instance, the tractor is a symbol of interest and intent towards farming. Daughters are brought into the tractor, as explained in Hajdu et al. (2020), but their confidence and enjoyment regarding operating and caring for it is quite low.

For the three men interviewed, machinery and partnership represented different things. This stigma around the operation of machinery on farms is present in Viktor story and he, as a man, still suffers from the glorification of the tractor as a vehicle for masculinity and power as described by Saugeres (2002). He was not allowed to join his father in the tractor and only developed machine related skills when away

from the farm and away from the watching eyes of his father. For Viktor, as well, partnership is needed in his plans for the future of the farm. However, this is not a romantic partnership necessarily and isn't directly related to machinery: he wishes to collaborate with individual or institutions to transform the farm into a diversified landscape. He mentions friends, neighbours and even SLU as potential future collaborator. For Linus, driving the tractor came naturally and he found himself enjoying these tasks. Linus has not expressed any doubt or waning confidence in his ability to run a farm, especially not regarding the operation of the machinery. On the other hand, Linus does wish to find a partner with an animal interest in the hopes that his future partner could contribute with animal care, a female gender-specific role in farming traditions. Linus also expects that his father would continue to help him with the farm tasks when he one day takes over and mentions wanting to own a second income to pay for work on the farm he doesn't wish to do himself, such as carpentry. Jon, on the other hand, doesn't mention much regarding machinery or operating machinery in his story. However, he makes it very clear that he does not see farming operations as something one can do alone and goes so far as to say that collaboration is the future of farming.

Taking ground in the analysis performed by Saugeres (2002), we see that the farming gender norms are still somewhat prevalent in this Swedish context but with some nuances. The tractor is still a symbol of power and needs to be conquered for many interviewees to feel confident in being able to oversee farming operations. On the other hand, the younger generation is not necessarily kept away from machinery the way Saugeres (2002) describes women being pushed out of farming. Daughters are brought into the tractor from a young age and interact with machinery through their life, like as explained by Hajdu et al. (2020). Elinor, Sonja, Linnea and Jessica all learned to operate machinery, even if they feel a varying level of confidence operating it. It is to be noted, however, that Sonja, Linnea, and Jessica don't have any male siblings, thus hard to conclude if the situation would have been different otherwise. However, Elinor and Malin both have male siblings who have shown no interest in farming operations, meaning that interest might drive the trust acquisition from one's parent. Viktor, a man, was more kept away from the tractor than many of the female interviewees.

Saugeres (2002) frames the machine as the reason why men can operate the farm on their own. This advancement in technology that happened in the beginning of the millennium might have eased the workload on farming families at the time, but the situation has changed since. This is very clearly illustrated through the stories of all interviewees, as they report contributing to farm work from a very young age. This work is not a mere way of entertaining children, as almost all interviewee report continuing to provide help on the farm even after they move away from home. Owning a farm and running it also is not perceived by the interviewees as

being a one human, one tractor operation either. As mentioned earlier, almost all interviewees report wanting to have a partner to be able to take over the operation.

The concept of work-love balance in Grubbström et al (2014) is a common thread through the interviewee's stories in this thesis. A gendered division is apparent with the work-love balance, with most women framing a potential partner as a romantic partner to share the workload with, meanwhile men describe things such as collaboration with friends, institutions or even paid experts, such as carpenters, to share the workload and fulfil their vision. The collaboration aspect is also similar to findings by Grubbström et al. (2014) as the Swedish student in the study reported seeing collaboration as a big part of their farming future and cite neighbour collaboration as specifically important. This is in line with the views expressed by Viktor, Linus and Jon. Thus, Grubbström et al (2014) concept of work-love balance is applicable in this case, but the concept of partner is characterised differently, and is greatly influenced by gender. While women looked into the family unit and romantic partnership, men looked for partners with no emotional ties, such as institutions.

## 7. Conclusion

In this thesis, I sought to understand if children of farmers were selected to be socialized to become farmers themselves, and if their gender impacted their perception of their abilities as future farmer.

Farming as an industry has been tightly linked to family dynamics, gender norms and ideals. This is still the case. What we can witness, on the other hand, is a shift amongst older generation. In this thesis, we have explored how parents, that once might have experienced parental pressure themselves, have decided to take a stance and actively tried to break the cycle for the sake of their children. This has not necessarily created the result intended. This cycle of farm succession is embedded in long standing family history and values and will, in a way, always be hard to break. It is a lot of responsibility for a child to put an end to the relationship to the land that spans multiple generations and ignoring this fact doesn't make it easier.

From a gender perspective, the role of women on farmland is still of high importance and is not as easily diminished or brushed away as it once was. There doesn't seem to be an interest from parents to disregard their daughters farming interest and only focus on sons for succession. In actuality, parents do not seem to choose a successor at all. The desire to not put pressure on their children results in a more broad approach where all the children are welcome to contribute on the farm if they wish to do so. From this point, it is usually the child with the highest level of interest or sense of duty that will be the most involve and eventually bring up the topic of succession to their parents.

Despite being equally welcome on the farm, young women do not always feel empowered to interact with tools that are historically associated with male interests, thus limiting their self-confidence regarding succession. This could have a negative impact on their perception of their abilities related to farming.

Despite the research at the turn of the millennium which pointed to a future where farming would grow in efficiency due to mechanization and that one could handle a farm by oneself, the reality is that the need for labour from family members is still prominent. This is illustrated by the level of labour all interviewees provided during childhood. This need for help on the farm has greatly influence the way children of farmers thinks of their farming future. Collaboration is on the mind of many aspiring young farmers, and an isolated life on the farm is not something they aspire to. As for the interviewee's perception of their abilities to take over their family farm, neither man nor women feel confident taking over the operations on their own. Collaboration is key when they describe their future plans, but for women it is more relationship-based collaboration while young men see non-family entities as being key collaborators

In an ideal world, children of farmers could follow the path they wish to follow without experiencing pressure or high level of stress, but the reality is still far from it. For further research, it would be interesting to understand exactly what leads to such prominence of silence within Swedish farming families and whether such conditions benefit the generational shift process.



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