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WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE FAMILY FARM

RICHARD W. RATHGE

Our recognition of women's involvement in Great Plains agriculture is frequently linked to stereotyped images and a romanticized perspective on farmers. These notions have been cultivated over time in the absence of careful research or historical documents that realistically detail women's work on the family farm. Except for collections of oral histories, letters, and diaries, we have relatively few written records of rural women's agricultural heritage in the Great Plains. Traditional images of women and girls on farms show them as helpmates whose labor is only indirectly related to agriculture.¹ Their activities center predominantly on family and domestic chores. In contrast, men and to some extent boys confine their efforts to farm tasks.

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This culturally based portrait of farm activity has numerous flaws. First, it contradicts historical accounts of farm labor, as recorded in poems, letters, diaries, and oral histories, as well as time studies and farm surveys. Both the historical and more recent evidence indicates that women and children are actively involved in many aspects of farming.² Second, it deemphasizes the interdependence of farm and family activities. As an economic organization, the family farm is a collection of household members who labor together to insure the operation's survival. The tasks performed by household members are intertwined and cannot be easily separated without distorting the true nature of farm labor. Tasks such as field work, barn chores, and livestock management are no more essential to farming than are maintenance activities (recordkeeping, running errands), domestic tasks (housework, meal preparations), and childcare on the farm. Yet, only those activities which are most visible (field work, barn chores, and livestock management) are recognized by policy makers as farm labor.

Governmental agencies have legitimized traditional images of farm work by adhering to a very narrow definition of farmer or farm laborer. For example, the U. S. Census Bureau defines

“farmer” as the “person” in charge of the farm. Since most individuals and organizations assume that men control the family, few surveys consider both spouses as farmers, regardless of their contributions to decision making or work activity. Farm women themselves tend to accept such definitions. A recent national survey of 2,059 randomly selected farm women revealed that only 3 percent reported themselves as farmers, even though 55 percent considered themselves to be main operators.³

An accurate understanding of the contributions of Great Plains women to farming must begin with a reevaluation of the assumptions underlying the definition of *work*. From an orthodox economic perspective, *work* is activity that produces a good or service for exchange in the marketplace. This definition of *work* also defines *workforce*, but its conceptual vagueness permits policy makers to ignore or arbitrarily mislabel many tasks, especially those performed by women. As a result, women’s agricultural activities in the Great Plains remain invisible. And, tragically, this oversight victimizes farm women through discriminatory inheritance tax laws; undercompensation in divorce settlements, wrongful death and personal injury lawsuits; and lack of recognition by creditors, social security adjusters, and loan officers, mainly because women’s work is not formally documented.

This article focuses on the contributions of North Dakota women, and hence, I believe, Great Plains women in general to the family farm economy. It advances our understanding of farm women’s labor by reevaluating the definition of *work* and by empirically examining women’s efforts in respect to the farm as a whole. I have traced the evolution of the definition of *work* in agriculture, noting the various biases and flaws that have been incorporated over time. I have proposed an alternative definition of *work*, which I use in exploring women’s contributions to family farms. Finally, I have discussed the policy implications of this alternative concept of work.

DEFINING AGRICULTURAL WORK

Industrialization changed the definition of *work*. In the early nineteenth century, many goods-producing activities (including agriculture) shifted from home-based to market-based enterprises, changing men’s and women’s roles. Men’s activities, which were largely conducted outside the home, took on more economic importance while women’s roles declined in value. The term *traditional housewife* came to represent the bifurcation in family labor; the wife’s role was child care and housekeeping, while the husband’s role centered on market production.⁴ As a result, the market became the benchmark for determining both what constituted work and the value of work. Family and household maintenance activities, which had been viewed as important functions, simply disappeared from the definition of work. In agriculture, however, production remained largely home based and family members remained involved, obscuring the distinction between economic work and other activity. Since the definition of work was exclusively linked to the marketplace and work was confined solely to activities that directly produced goods or services for exchange, farm maintenance and homemaking tasks were excluded from the definition unless they involved direct monetary payment.

The marketplace definition of work has numerous drawbacks when it is applied to agriculture. The most obvious and pertinent to the present discussion is how one differentiates between activities that produce a good or service for exchange from those that do not. For example, in farming does fieldwork, or barn chores, or maintenance functions such as machinery repair, household upkeep, and food preparation independently produce a good? Most farmers would agree that all three in concert generate the product. As Polly A. Fassinger and Harry Schwarzweller suggest, a farm is a multifaceted economic organization that involves both traditional production chores and hidden factors of production such as maintenance activities.

A market-based definition, however, views only the wage earner or "unpaid farm worker" as economically active.⁵ Household chores, food preparation, child rearing, and other important maintenance functions are excluded from the category of economic activity. Since women and children most often perform this type of labor, their unpaid efforts are largely unrecognized.

Ironically, in the business community maintenance functions are implicitly recognized and compensated. For example, tax deductions or reimbursements for food and lodging while on work-related travel show that subsistence is an integral component of work and quantify its value.

Louredes Beneria suggests that the exclusion of noncommodity production distorts both the analysis of economic activity and labor force participation by undervaluing women's work. Her position is that all activity that contributes to the household economy should be included in the definition of work, which would then reflect how people *make* a living rather than merely how people *earn* a living. *Earning* refers only to the income of households, but *making* includes all aspects of work.⁶ The broader definition of work offers researchers a more realistic tool for exploring the contributions members make to their household's economic well-being. It also exposes misconceptions about women's work by eliminating definitions that distort women's labor in comparison to men's. Doing away with the built-in discrimination allows one to make a responsible evaluation of women's efforts.

WOMEN'S FARM LABOR IN NORTH DAKOTA

To investigate women's farm labor empirically, I employed a random survey of farm households in the eastern half of North Dakota, a region that had not been influenced by the rapid energy development of the western half of the state that began during the mid-1970s. I identified farm households from a government agency list that included more than 95 percent

of all farmsteads. Questionnaires to be filled out by the wife were mailed to farm households in the spring of 1983, followed by a telephone survey to assess the characteristics of those who did not return the questionnaire. Nonrespondents were primarily single males, widowers, and the elderly. I analyzed the total usable sample of eighty-eight farm couples.

Measuring Farm Women's Labor Contribution. I explored several measures of women's farm labor in this study. First I contrasted women's perceptions of the total amount of farm work they performed as elicited by a single question with that derived from summing up a detailed itemization of the individual tasks conducted by members of the household. Both lines of questioning included farm and household tasks. The single question asked for the overall number of hours wives spent on farm and on household activities. Women reported their estimates by season to control for adjustments in work patterns. The itemized question listed the following twenty-nine farm tasks and twenty-one household tasks.

FARM TASKS

- (1) Plan Cropping Schedule
- (2) Prepare Fields for Planting
- (3) Plant Small Grains
- (4) Plant Row Crops
- (5) Apply Fertilizer
- (6) Apply Chemicals
- (7) Cultivate Row Crops
- (8) Work Summer Fallow
- (9) Combine Small Grains
- (10) Haul Small Grains
- (11) Combine Row Crops
- (12) Haul Row Crops
- (13) Cut, Put Up Hay
- (14) Check Market Prices
- (15) Haul Grain to Elevator
- (16) Buy, Get Machine Parts
- (17) Buy Farm Equipment
- (18) Minor Machine Repairs
- (19) Major Machinery Overhaul

- (20) Fix Fence
- (21) Pay Farm Bills
- (22) Do Farm Bookkeeping
- (23) Feed Livestock
- (24) Do the Milking
- (25) Clean Milking Parlor
- (26) Clean Barns, Feeders
- (27) Care for Young Stock
- (28) Care of Poultry
- (29) Other Farm Tasks

HOUSEHOLD TASKS

- (1) Fix Breakfast
- (2) Cook Dinner
- (3) Cook Supper
- (4) Set Table
- (5) Wash Dishes
- (6) Grocery Shopping
- (7) Baking
- (8) Canning and Freezing
- (9) Clothing Care
- (10) Child Care
- (11) Child Transportation
- (12) Dust Furniture
- (13) Vacuuming, Floor Care
- (14) Wash Windows
- (15) Repair Small Appliances
- (16) Plumbing Work
- (17) Carpentry Repairs
- (18) Tend Vegetable Garden
- (19) Yard Work
- (20) Pay Household Bills
- (21) Other Household Tasks

Respondents identified family members who “normally” did each task or “helped” perform that task.

I assumed that unpaid farm and household work is undervalued, in part, because it is unrecognized or taken for granted. Women on farms, who internalize the invisible character of their work, will exclude many tasks they actually perform from their general assessment of their contribution to the family farm. The degree to which farm women undervalue their

work should then be reflected in the magnitude of discrepancy between their perceived work effort and the presumably more accurate estimate reached by adding up the time spent on specified tasks.

My second approach to women’s farm work involved a comparison of each wife’s activities with those of her husband. I asked respondents what percentage of farm and household tasks, respectively, each spouse performed, and used their responses to indicate women’s perceptions of the work each spouse was contributing to the operation. Since only wives filled out the questionnaires, the answers, of course, represent only the women’s perspectives. I then calculated a relative measure of the total labor of each spouse based on the activities they performed or helped conduct. The techniques used in the calculations are briefly described below.

Respondents indicated “who does” and “who normally helps do” each of twenty-nine farm and twenty-one household tasks. I awarded two points to the doer of each task and one point to the helper. I calculated a separate composite index for each spouse’s farm and household labor involvement by summing the individual weighted scores for the twenty-nine farm and twenty-one household tasks. I then divided the scores by the respective number of tasks performed times two (for the two weight categories). Finally I multiplied by a constant (100) to obtain a relative measure of the total labor input each spouse contributed to the farm (Farm Task Participation Score or FTP) and household (Household Task Participation Score or HTP). A score of 100 indicates that a person normally performs all of the tasks, while a score of 50 represents half that amount of work.⁷

FARM TYPES

Variations in farm size and type generate variations in demand on household members. In order to control for these differentials, I classified farms accordingly. I defined large farms as those with more than 2,000 acres (N = 16). Medium-sized farms were those with at least one

TABLE 1.
AVERAGE OVERALL AND ACCUMULATED NUMBER OF HOURS REPORTED AS SPENT BY FARM
WOMEN ON FARM AND HOUSEHOLD TASKS BY SIZE OF FARM AND SEASON.

Season	Size of Farm							
	Total		Small (N = 30)		Medium (N = 42)		Large (N = 16)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
-----total from single overall question*-----								
<i>Farm Tasks:</i>								
Spring	26.2	26.2	28.4	31.4	23.5	20.8	29.3	31.5
Summer	22.4	23.6	22.0	25.8	20.9	20.0	27.7	30.6
Fall	34.8	25.9	31.4	27.0	34.6	23.6	41.2	30.8
Winter	9.8	16.9	12.3	21.5	7.0	9.8	13.7	23.4
<i>Household Tasks:</i>								
Spring	41.5	24.5	36.9	24.6	42.3	22.6	46.9	30.2
Summer	43.3	25.9	38.0	25.8	43.7	23.8	50.8	32.0
Fall	41.7	24.5	37.7	25.1	41.3	21.0	49.5	32.6
Winter	37.8	21.5	34.0	23.3	40.2	19.9	36.4	23.6
<i>Combined Farm and Household Tasks:</i>								
Spring	64.0	35.9	62.8	37.1	66.6	23.8	76.4	57.8
Summer	62.1	36.1	57.8	35.0	65.4	26.7	77.8	58.1
Fall	73.1	37.5	69.2	35.8	76.6	27.0	90.6	54.3
Winter	45.1	29.4	46.1	35.4	47.0	21.8	50.2	44.5
-----accumulated item specific total**-----								
Farm Tasks	72.9	87.7	60.9	62.9	88.9	101.8	39.9	62.1
Household Tasks	85.7	55.6	88.2	53.4	83.7	61.8	86.7	48.2
Combined Farm & Household Tasks	166.8	109.7	166.6	102.7	177.2	119.6	133.5	89.6

NOTE: Combined farm and household task averages do not equal the sum of the independent farm and household task averages due to incomplete responses.

*The overall number of hours spent on farm and household tasks was based on a question which asked respondents to indicate how many hours they spend on farm/ranch tasks during an average week.

**The accumulated number of hours spent on farm and household tasks was based on the total sum of hours reported for each 29 farm and 21 household tasks.

section of land (640 acres) but less than 2,001 acres (N = 42) and included the average North Dakota farm in 1982 of 1,104 acres. Finally, small farms were those with less than one section of land (N = 30).

I also separated livestock (N = 41) from non-livestock (N = 47) operations. A livestock operation contained at least one of the following: more than twenty head of beef, more than eighty head of hogs, more than sixty dairy cows, more than fifty poultry, or more than twenty head of other livestock such as horses or sheep. I defined all other farms as nonlivestock operations.

FINDINGS

Variations in Labor Involvement. The amount of farm work women performed varied greatly depending on season. The total number of hours they reported spending on farm tasks in an average week ranged from ten in the winter to thirty-five in the fall. (See Table 1.) In general, farm women spent two to three times as many hours on farm tasks in spring, summer, and fall as they did during the winter. Nonetheless, for three-quarters of the year, farm women reported working more than twenty hours per week on farm tasks alone. This exceeds the Census Bureau's fifteen hour per week minimum requirement for classification as a farm laborer, paid or not.

Farm women's household labor, in contrast, was not subject to large seasonal variations. Women indicated they worked an average of forty hours a week on household tasks, regardless of season. This effort alone is equivalent to full-time employment. If one includes her additional labor on farm tasks, the farm wife's economic contribution to the family farm is unmistakable.

Farm size also influences women's work load. Except in the busy fall season, women on medium-sized farms, in general, spent fewer hours on farm tasks than women on large or small farms.

Interestingly, farm size influenced women's household work loads more than their farm task responsibilities. As seen in Table 1, the larger

the farm size, the more time farm women spent on household tasks on the average. This is particularly notable since the amount of time farm women dedicated to household tasks fluctuated little seasonally.

The differential in women's time commitments to farm and household tasks was influenced more by the type of farm operation than its size. Women on livestock farms invested much more time on farm tasks, on the average, than did women on nonlivestock farms. (See Table 2.) In contrast, women on nonlivestock farms tended to spend slightly more time on household tasks on the average than did women on livestock farms. In addition, seasonal shifts affected nonlivestock farm women's household work load more markedly compared to livestock farm women. Nonlivestock farm women spent noticeably more time on household tasks during summer months compared with winter months than did women on livestock farms.

Perceived and Actual Labor Input. As mentioned earlier, farm women's self-image is frequently tainted by cultural definitions of work. Studies indicate that farm women are likely to underestimate their involvement in farm tasks.⁸ In order to explore this bias more fully, I contrasted the responses derived from the single question and summarized in Tables 1 and 2 with a second measure based on accumulated number of hours from the list of specific tasks. I summed the hours women spent on each of the twenty-nine farm and twenty-one household tasks separately and used this as a second measure of labor. The sums represented nearly twice the time indicated by the single question measure, regardless of season. (See Table 1.) The exception was on large farms, where the accumulated measure was slightly lower than the single question indicator for fall.

The average time spent on household activities also was consistently higher when using accumulated tasks as opposed to a single question. It is difficult to determine which portrays a more accurate picture of work involvement, but the discrepancy in these two indicators suggests that farm women respond to a much narrower definition of farm labor when reporting

TABLE 2.
AVERAGE OVERALL AND ACCUMULATED NUMBER OF HOURS REPORTED AS SPENT BY FARM
WOMEN ON FARM AND HOUSEHOLD TASKS BY TYPE OF FARM AND SEASON.

Season	Livestock Farm (N = 41)		Non Livestock (N = 47)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
-----total from single overall question *-----				
<i>Farm Tasks:</i>				
Spring	32.5	25.7	19.6	25.3
Summer	25.8	22.3	18.8	24.7
Fall	41.1	26.2	28.6	24.3
Winter	13.9	17.1	5.2	15.8
<i>Household Tasks:</i>				
Spring	39.0	25.4	44.1	23.6
Summer	39.5	26.5	47.2	25.2
Fall	39.8	25.9	43.6	23.1
Winter	37.0	23.2	38.6	19.8
<i>Combined Farm and Household Tasks:</i>				
Spring	70.1	39.1	64.3	31.0
Summer	64.6	40.3	66.2	31.7
Fall	81.2	40.6	73.1	30.5
Winter	49.5	32.5	44.9	28.7
-----accumulated item specific total**-----				
Farm Tasks	94.5	91.5	41.0	42.2
Household Tasks	91.3	53.0	80.8	58.3
Combined Farm & Household Tasks	190.1	111.9	134.2	79.4

NOTE: Combined farm and household task averages do not equal the sum of the independent farm and household task averages due to incomplete responses.

*The overall number of hours spent on farm and household tasks was based on a question which asked respondents to indicate how many hours they spend on farm/ranch tasks during an average week.

**The accumulated number of hours spent on farm and household tasks was based on the total sum of hours reported for each 29 farm and 21 household tasks.

their overall involvement in their farm than they do when reporting specific contributions. The total number of hours of work per week obtained from summing the tasks is obviously an impossibility but the discrepancy between the two measures does show how subjective the respondents' understanding of their work is and how easily it may be distorted by social definitions of work. The extreme difference between the general measure of time commitment and the task-specific accumulation of effort is apparent regardless of size or type of operation. (See Tables 1 and 2.)

Comparative Labor Input. A second approach to understanding women's involvement in farm work was to examine how each compared her

overall efforts to those of her husband. The survey asked farm women to indicate what proportion of total labor each spouse contributed to farm and to household tasks. As expected, the respondents perceived men as carrying out the larger proportion of farm duties regardless of the size or type of the farming operation. (See Table 3.) The husband's perceived contribution declined significantly, however, as the size of the operation increased. In fact, wives reported that their husbands contributed less than half the total farm labor on the largest farms compared to 71 percent on the smallest farms.

The pattern of women's contributions to farm tasks was similar but not as dramatic. Wives reported that they performed nearly 16 percent

TABLE 3.
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FARM TASK LABOR CONTRIBUTED BY SPOUSES BY SIZE AND TYPE OF FARM OPERATION.

	Spouse	Farm		Household	
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
<i>Size of Farm:</i>					
Small (N = 30)	Wife	15.6	17.9	90.2	7.7
	Husband	71.0	18.6	7.7	7.1
Medium (N = 42)	Wife	16.0	16.2	84.9	13.9
	Husband	63.9	26.6	10.3	11.2
Large (N = 16)	Wife	10.5	14.1	92.6	6.5
	Husband	47.6	23.7	5.8	5.9
<i>Type of Farm:</i>					
Livestock (N = 41)	Wife	18.4	14.9	86.5	10.1
	Husband	67.0	19.6	9.9	8.8
Nonlivestock (N = 47)	Wife	11.6	17.0	89.1	12.7
	Husband	59.1	28.9	7.5	9.8

TABLE 4.
AVERAGE NUMBER OF TASKS REPORTED, PERFORMED BY FARM WIFE, AND FARM WIFE'S FARM TASK PARTICIPATION (FTP) AND HOUSEHOLD TASK PARTICIPATION (HTP) SCORE BY SIZE AND TYPE OF FARM OPERATION.

Type and Size of Farm Operation	Tasks Reported		Task Performed By Farm Wife		Participation Score	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
FARM TASK					----- (FTP) -----	
Size:						
Small (N = 30)	27.3	3.9	15.8	11.8	38.2	26.8
Medium (N = 42)	27.8	2.5	16.3	10.9	38.7	24.2
Large (N = 16)	27.9	2.5	13.3	12.5	34.9	35.5
Type:						
Livestock (N = 41)	27.9	2.4	19.1	11.9	45.5	29.1
Nonlivestock (N = 45)	27.4	3.5	12.4	10.1	30.7	23.6
HOUSEHOLD TASK					----- (HTP) -----	
Size:						
Small (N = 30)	19.1	1.9	16.2	5.1	80.5	14.7
Medium (N = 42)	19.6	1.3	17.0	3.9	83.7	10.0
Large (N = 16)	19.5	2.3	17.4	3.3	85.4	10.0
Type:						
Livestock (N = 41)	27.9	2.4	17.6	11.9	84.1	11.5
Nonlivestock (N = 45)	27.4	3.5	12.4	10.1	81.8	12.0

of the farm tasks on small operations compared to only 10 percent on the largest farms. (See Table 3.) More than one woman in four said that she did not contribute any farm task labor, although, ironically, half of these women mentioned performing at least two of the twenty-nine farm tasks listed. This indicates that farm women define farm work more narrowly than do contemporary social scientists.

The type of farm also affected women's on-farm labor. More than 18 percent of the farm tasks on livestock operations were conducted by women compared to slightly less than 12 percent on nonlivestock farms. Nearly 20 percent of women on nonlivestock operations said that they did not do farm chores while only 14 percent of women on livestock farms made that claim.

Wives performed the vast bulk of household labor. In general, women performed more than 85 percent of the household tasks, and little variation existed in the amount of housework, regardless of size or type of operation.

The final dimension of work involvement I explored was a comparison between the amount of farm labor women perceived themselves doing on the whole and the number of individual tasks they reported doing. I assumed farm women underestimated the proportion of farm labor that they performed because they received limited recognition for the integral part they typically play in the farming enterprise. To test this assumption, I calculated task participation scores for women's farm (FTP) and household (HTP) work. These scores offer a comparative measure of a farm woman's labor by dividing the number of tasks she performed, after adjusting for her effort in conducting these tasks (i.e., two points for doing the task and one point for helping), by the total number of tasks she reported being conducted either on the farm or in the household.

As seen in Table 4, an average of 27 of the 29 listed tasks were typically conducted on farms in North Dakota, regardless of size. The average farm woman participated in slightly more than half the farm tasks conducted on her farm. On the average, women on medium-sized farms did slightly more farm tasks (around 16) while those on larger farms performed fewer tasks (13). The FTP scores indicate that farm women, on the average, participated in more than one-third of the farm chores regardless of farm size. As Table 3 shows, women's ratings of their contributions to farm work as a whole were less than half that indicated by the task by task score shown in Table 4; mean contribution scores of 10.5 percent for large farms to 16.0 percent for medium-sized farms compared to task scores of 34.9 for large farms to 38.7 for medium-sized farms. Once again, it is difficult to determine which measure is a more accurate indicator. The discrepancy, however, does underscore the complex nature of assessing farm women's economic contribution to the farm and reinforces the potential

significant underestimation of women's farm labor even among farm women themselves.

Most wives also reported that most of the household tasks listed in the survey were performed on their farms. (See Table 4.) In contrast to farm tasks, however, the survey showed little variation in the number of household tasks by size or type of farm operation. More than 16 of the 21 tasks were conducted by farm wives, on the average. Women on small farms and nonlivestock farms reported performing slightly fewer household tasks, on the average, than did their counterparts on medium and large farms or livestock farms.

It is noteworthy that the two measures of farm women's household labor involvement resulted in parallel findings. Unlike the divergent results for women's farm labor input, task scores reported in Table 4 closely matched wives' overall household labor involvement as shown in Table 3. This suggests that farm women have a much clearer definition of housework than of farm work and are thus more likely to recognize their contributions to the home than to the farmstead.

CONCLUSIONS

This article addresses the contribution of women to the work on family farms in North Dakota. I have included nonincome earning tasks as a vital component in the economic well-being of the family farm because many women do not earn a wage either on or off the farm, yet they serve an important economic role. In North Dakota, fewer than one in three farm women surveyed held off-farm jobs and the vast majority did not receive a farm wage, but they participated in more than half of the farm tasks performed on their own operations and contributed at least one-third of the labor, more than twenty hours a week on the average, devoted to specific farm tasks. In addition their household chores consumed twice that amount of time, on the average, and farm women, unassisted by their husbands, carried out more than 80 percent of the household chores.

These findings raise numerous questions and highlight those areas for further investigation. For example, although experts often think of women as a homogeneous group, the large variation in average work loads of farm women (as indicated by the large standard deviations) even on farms of the same size and type challenges this assumption. Women's participation in agriculture varies markedly, but, unfortunately, few researchers have attempted to articulate the abstract dimensions of women's involvement in farming. Jessica Pearson, Dora Lodwick, and Polly Fassinger are among the few who have developed portraits of different types of female farmers. Their findings indicate that women's activities can be viewed on a continuum from the independent producer, the primary operator, to the farm homemaker who facilitates the work of others.⁹ Future studies need to address these variations in roles. Researchers must also ask what influence various demographic and life cycle dimensions have on women's farm labor and how children are integrated into farm work patterns.

Finally, I must note the limitations in my data. First, the data do not capture the quality of work but simply mirror who does or assists in performing a task. In addition the data on specific tasks are obviously distorted, indicating that some women worked more than twenty-four hours a day. Third, because my data are restricted to married farm women, they do not address the influence of marital status. Fourth, the data are biased from the wife's perspective. Future research should explore the magnitude and quality of this bias by interviewing both spouses. Finally, future research should examine the influence of class, race, ethnicity, and geographic location.

Excluding from consideration farm women's economic contributions to their farms not only paints an unrealistic picture of how family farms operate, but it also results in inappropriate legislation and regulations concerning inheritance taxes, credit ratings, divorce settlements, wrongful death benefits, and social security. Tying labor statistics directly to the market

stereotypes and victimizes farm women. Non-market activity is a substantial component of farming. If we, as a society, are to assess accurately the activity of the labor force and to compensate justly those involved in labor, we must broaden our definition of work. The incorporation of household and maintenance activities into that definition is a positive first step.

NOTES

1. Joan M. Jensen, *With These Hands* (Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1981); Cornelia B. Flora and Sue Johnson, "Discarding the Distaff: New Roles for Rural Women," in Thomas R. Ford, ed., *Rural U.S.A.: Persistence and Change* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1978), pp. 168-81.

2. The time studies of the 1920s investigated homemakers' use of time in order to promote efficient management and to increase leisure. They typically requested the homemaker to record her activities in an hour by hour log for the period of a week. See Ina Z. Crawford, *The Use of Time by Farm Women*, Bulletin No. 146 (Moscow: University of Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station, 1927); Maud Wilson, *Use of Time by Oregon Farm Homemakers*, Bulletin No. 256 (Corvallis: Oregon State Agricultural College Agricultural Experiment Station, 1929). For examples of farm surveys, see Murray A. Straus, "The Role of the Wife in the Settlement of the Columbia Basin Project," *Marriage and Family Living* 20 (February 1958): 59-64; Eugene Wilkening and E. Lakshmi Bharadwaj, "Dimensions of Aspiration: Work Roles and Decision-Making of Farm Husbands and Wives in Wisconsin," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 29 (November 1967): 703-11; Polly A. Fassinger and Harry Schwarzweiler, "The Work of Farm Women: A Midwestern Study," in Harry Schwarzweiler, ed., *Research in Rural Sociology and Development*, vol. 1 (Greenwich, Connecticut: Jai Press, 1984) p. 37-60; Calvin Jones and Rachel A. Rosenfeld, *American Farm Women: Findings from a National Survey*, NORC Report No. 130 (Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, 1981).

3. Jones and Rosenfeld, *American Farm Women*.

4. Bengt Ankarloo, "Agriculture and Women's Work: Directions of Change in the West, 1700-1900," *Journal of Family History* 4 (1979): 111-20; Carl Degler, *At Odds: Women & the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

5. Fassinger and Schwarzweiler, "Work of Farm

Women." In 1910, the Departments of Commerce and Labor redefined farm labor, including people regularly working outdoors on a farm (note the restriction to *outdoors*) as unpaid farm labor. The new definition produced a 144 percent increase in the number of female farm laborers reported to the Census Bureau between 1900 and 1910. Distrusting a measurement that showed one in four farm laborers were women, the Department of Commerce then distinguished between working on and off their own farms. This distinction, combined with a January rather than an April enumeration, reduced the proportion of female farm laborers reported to the Census Bureau by 45 percent between 1910 and 1920, but nearly one in three farm laborers on home farms were women, and nearly one in five overall. See Joseph A. Hill, *Women in Gainful Occupations: 1870-1920*, Census Monograph 9 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1929) and Leon E. Truesdell, *Farm Population of the United States*, Census Monograph 6 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1926).

6. Louredes Beneria, "Conceptualizing the Labor Force: The Underestimation of Women's Economic Activities," *Journal of Development Studies* 17 (1981): 10-28.

7. The techniques I used in the calculations are similar to those used by Fassinger and Schwarzeweller, "Work of Farm Women," and Jones and Rosenfeld, *American Farm Women*. The general formula for each score was:

$$\text{FTP} = \frac{\text{sum of 29 weighted responses}}{(\# \text{ items done on farm}) \times (\# \text{ of weights} = 2)} \times 100$$

$$\text{HTP} = \frac{\text{sum of 21 weighted responses}}{(\# \text{ items done on farm}) \times (\# \text{ of weights} = 2)} \times 100$$

8. Jones and Rosenfeld, *American Farm Women*.

9. Jessica Pearson, "Notes on Female Farmers," *Rural Sociology* 44 (1979): 189-200; Dora Lodwick and Polly Fassinger, "Variations in Agricultural Production Activities of Women on Family Farms." Paper presented to the Rural Sociological Society, Burlington, Vermont, 1979.