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**FROM COW BELLES TO WAGNS:**

**FACTORS THAT HAVE INFLUENCED THE CREATION OF WOMEN  
INITIATED AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES**

A Thesis in

Rural Sociology

by

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## ABSTRACT

The first women-initiated agriculture organization (WIAO) in the United States appeared in 1938. Since then, more than 65 WIAOs and their affiliates have been created. These organizations have varied in formation, purpose, and actions. However there has been very little research on these social organizations and particularly those formed in the US. This research project is attempting to fill that void by examining the factors which have affected the formation of women-initiated agriculture organizations in the US. WIAOs were identified through a combination of literature searches, prior knowledge and Boolean structured internet searches. A survey of WIAO contacts was used to gather data about formation, goals, and activities of WIAOs. The data is arranged into four epochs, which are based on the women's movement throughout the history of the US. For each epoch I outline the historical background and key characteristics of the US, agriculture, and women and then situate the WIAOs in this context. This research revealed four types of WIAOs: 1.) commodity/industry groups, 2.) professional/collegiate groups, 3.) political/activist groups, and 4.) women as farmer/networking groups. These organizations are largely shaped by the social, political, and economic opportunities available to women in each epoch. This research aims to add to the research by beginning to tell the story of women-initiated agriculture organizations, and set the stage for further research of these overlooked social phenomena.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	vi
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ix
Chapter 1 Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2 Literature Review .....	4
Women in Agriculture .....	5
The Patriarchal Nature of Agriculture .....	7
Gendered Division of Labor .....	10
Women and Agriculture Organizations .....	13
Social Movement Theories .....	15
Research Question and Expectations .....	19
Chapter 3 Methodology .....	21
Research Expectations and Objectives .....	21
Research Design: .....	22
Definition of Key Concepts: .....	23
Identifying WIAOs .....	26
Survey Development, Data Collection and Management: .....	27
Summary:.....	34
Chapter 4 Research and Analysis .....	35
The First Wave of Feminism: 1890-1920.....	36
State of the Union.....	36
State of Agriculture .....	36
State of Women .....	39
The Organizations .....	41
The Regression of Feminism: 1920-1960.....	43
State of the Union.....	43
State of Agriculture .....	45
State of Women .....	49
The Organizations .....	52
The Second Wave of Feminism: 1960-1990 .....	58
State of the Union.....	58

State of Agriculture .....	59
State of Women .....	61
The Organizations .....	63
The Third Wave of Feminism: 1990-Present .....	70
State of the Union .....	70
State of Agriculture .....	71
State of Women .....	72
The Organizations .....	74
Summary .....	78
Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusions .....	81
Research Expectations Discussion .....	81
Benefits and Limitations .....	88
Implications, and Further Research .....	89
References: .....	92
Appendix A Figure 1. Historical Timeline of Events for United States, Agriculture, Women and Women Initiated Agriculture Organizations .....	98
Appendix B Email Recruitment Letter .....	100
Appendix C Email Recruitment Letter 2 .....	102
Appendix D Email Recruitment Letter 3 .....	103
Appendix E Email Survey .....	105
Appendix F: Email Thank you .....	106

**LIST OF FIGURES**

- 1. Historical Timeline of Events for United States, Agriculture, Women and Women Initiated Agriculture Organizations .....p. 97**

**LIST OF TABLES**

**Table 1. Organizations Contacted for Participation, Their Formation Dates, and Use of Web Material .....p. 32**

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AWC	Ag Women's Cooperative
AAA	Agricultural Adjustment Administration
AAM	American Agriculture Movement
AAW	American Agri-Women
AHA	American Hereford Auxiliary
ANC	American National Cow Belles
ARWIA	Arkansas Women in Agriculture, Inc.
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
ERA	Equal Rights Amendment
FSA	Farm Security Administration
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FCA	Florida Cow Belles Association
GFWC	General Federation of Women's Club
IWA	Iowa Women in Agriculture
JFK	John F. Kennedy
NAWSA	National American Women's Suffrage Association
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletics Association
NAFTA	North American Federal Trade Agreement
OWA	Oregon Women for Agriculture
PA-WAgN	Pennsylvania Women Agricultural Network
RA	Resettlement Administration
UFWK	United Farm Wives of Kansas
WSDW	Washington State Dairy Women
WAgN	Women Agricultural Network
WCTU	Women Christian Temperance Union
WIAO	Women Initiated Agriculture Organizations
WIFE	Women Involved in Farm Economics
WFAN	Women, Food and Agricultural Network
	Women's Auxiliary of the Texas Sheep & Goat Raisers
WATSGR	
WLA	Women's Land Army

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I am indebted to all the women who have come before me and not stood still and complacent. Women have used the tools that society has provided to carve out their space. And then they carve some more. Sometimes those accomplishments were loud and shattering, but most were quiet and wearing. And so this paper is not a critique of women in the past, it is a celebration, a commemoration of all women who have come before.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The first women-initiated agriculture organization (WIAO) appeared in 1938, eighteen years after women obtained the right to vote, sixty-five years after the establishment of the first major women's organization, and seventy-one years after the founding of the first major agriculture organization. Since 1938, over the last 70 years, more than 65 Winos have been created. These organizations have varied in formation, purpose, and actions. Some have been focused on specific industries. Some have been professional while others were more political. And still others have been motivated by the changes in agriculture for women.

Women in agriculture traditionally have been treated as an invisible population. Only recently has there been an increase in the literature focusing specifically on this population. Within this field, there have been an even less focus on women and their agriculture organizations. The aim of this project is to begin to uncover the story of WIAOs, by using a social movement framework based in a historical context, an internet survey instrument, and document analysis to uncover the factors that affected their formation. This is an under-examined agricultural population with a rich history seeped in both tradition and progress.

In Chapter Two, I provide the theoretical background for this study. There are four sections to this chapter. The first, women in agriculture, is broken into two major themes: the patriarchal nature of agriculture and the gendered division of labor. Within

these themes I explore how the agrarian ideology, issue of farm ownership, and the identity of farmwife are reinforced. The second section continues these gendered themes for women within the context of agriculture organizations. In the third section I present the evolution of social movement theories and establish the framework on which this research is built. Finally I state my overarching research question as well as my research expectations.

In Chapter Three, I present my research methodology and design. In this chapter I restate my research question and expectations and present the objectives that are specific to the formation of women initiated agriculture organizations. I explain the basis for my research design and how and why I made the choices that drove this research design by defining the key concepts including my organizing scheme, and women initiated agriculture organizations. I then illustrate the methods I used to find the organizations involved in this study. Finally I outline the implementation of the internet survey instrument and how I collected and managed the responses. I also describe how I used secondary internet documents to supplement the survey data.

Chapter Four covers my research and analysis. It is divided into four epochs or historically significant periods. The epochs are chronological and based upon significant time periods of the women's movement. Each epoch is divided into four sections. The first three sections, state of the union, state of agriculture, and state of women, summarize the important events and key elements which shaped the political, economic, and social structures of that time period. In the fourth segment I report my findings from the women initiated agriculture organizations which developed during that time. I also present my analysis of how these organizations and the historical elements affect each

other. Finally I offer a summation based on reoccurring themes which reflect the ideas from the literature review and how they have appeared and changed across the epochs.

In Chapter Five I interpret the results in more detail. First I revisit my research expectations and provide an analysis of what I found versus what I expected to find. I then expound on my findings and offer other observations and ideas that presented themselves through the course of this research. I then discuss the benefits and limitations of this research and revisit my methodological choices. I provide a short discussion on how this research could be improved if duplicated. Finally I present an overview of what I learned, the implications of this research, as well as the possible future research directions.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

In this chapter I review the literature on women in agriculture, women and agriculture organizations, and social movement and network theories and explain how I use these concepts to develop my research questions and expectations. Each of these literature areas is wide and varied in their scope, so I only offer points of each that are pertinent to my research.

In presenting the literature on women in agriculture, I focus on two main areas: the patriarchal nature of agriculture and the gendered division of labor. Within these themes, I explore the theoretical backgrounds which establish the position of women in agriculture. Central to these themes are the agrarian ideology, land rights and ownership, and the identity of women as farmwives. Then I use these ideas and extend them to exploring women and agriculture organizations.

Next, I offer a summary of social movement theories. First I explain how the limitations of classic collective action theories paved the way for social movement theories. However, classical theories of social movements were also limited. They did not recognize the importance that social political structures had on organizing movements and treated them all the same. The resource mobilization aspect of social movements emphasizes the central concept of stability and organizational structure. Thus we can explore the idea that some social and political organizations result from social

movements. And more explicitly, we can explore theories on what leads to the formation of organizations. This is used to provide the basic framework on which this research paper is built. Finally, I present the overarching research question driving this research and the three research expectations I have embarking on this project.

### **Women in Agriculture**

The 1980 Farm Women Survey was the first widespread attempt to specifically research women in agriculture and was recently repeated in 2002. Researchers realized that this segment of the population was grossly overlooked (Rosenfeld, 1985; Haney and Knowles, 1988). Previous attempts at studying farm women were insufficient since most were small scale surveys focused in particular states or even small regions within states. These results, while useful in their region, provided little insight to farm women across the nation (Fassinger and Schwarzweller, 1982; Rosenfeld, 1985).

Large scale surveys such as the US Census also proved inadequate in providing details on farm women for several reasons. The primary difficulty these surveys encountered had to do with the definitions of employment (Rosenfeld, 1985; Sachs, 1996). People were considered employed if they: 1. had a job for pay during census week, 2. operated their own business, or 3. put in at least 15 hours as an unpaid family worker in a family operated business. The Census of Agriculture, a separate entity of the larger Census, intended to gather information on US farms and not farm people, did not prove to be better for women (Rosenfeld, 1985). First, the Census of Agriculture is typically offered in the early spring- a low activity time for farms. Therefore, women's

work on the farm is most likely drastically underreported since at that point of the year it is viewed as domestic or housework (Rosenfeld, 1985; Sachs, 1996).

The second main problem with the census was that it only allowed for reporting of one operator on a farm. Rosenfeld (1985) asserts that men are most likely to be the primary owners of the family business and fill out survey and therefore report themselves as the operator. This changed with the 2002 Census of Agriculture, when more than one operator was allowed (Trauger, 2005). Not surprisingly the number of reported women farmers increased substantially. According to results of the 2002 US census, over a quarter of farm operators, 27% are women ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov); Trauger, 2005). In Pennsylvania, despite the overall loss of farms between 1997 and 2002, there was an increase in the number of farms operated by women (ERS 2004 as quoted in Trauger, 2005).

Since the advent of the farm, there have been women in agriculture. However, the neglect to recognize women as farm operators and/or workers for so long has been both a product of and a determinant of how women in agriculture are situated.

Next, I will present the theories of women in agriculture which focus on the agrarian ideology and the patriarchal nature of agriculture. These theories explain the historically deep-rooted male dominance of agriculture and why as described by Sachs (1983), women are the “invisible farmers.” Then, I will discuss theories of the gendered division of labor in agriculture and how this division exemplifies the patriarchal nature and increased the invisibility of women in agriculture.

## **The Patriarchal Nature of Agriculture**

Modern agriculture in the US is polarized into two major forms: very large operations and family farms (Rosenfeld, 1985; Sachs, 1996). In the past thirty years much of agricultural research has focused on the rise of large farming operations; specifically, the consolidation, mechanization, and ultimately the corporatization of farming (Fitchen, 1991; Rosenfeld, 1985; Whatmore, 1991a; Galston and Baehler, 1995; Sachs, 1996; Pfeffer, Francis and Ross, 2006). Despite the dominant rise of corporate farming, the family farm has endured and also remains an important social unit (Rosenfeld, 1985; Whatmore, 1991a; Sachs, 1996). However, regardless of size, corporate or family, the modern farming system has proven to be less favorable towards women (Whatmore, 1991a). While both are argued to perpetuate the patriarchal nature of agriculture, the focus of the literature presented here is on the family farm for three reasons: 1.) it perpetuated agrarian ideology, 2.) it maintained the issue of land rights and, 3.) it propagated the ideology of the farm wife (Brandth, 2002; Whatmore, 1991a; Whatmore, 1991b; Sachs, 1996).

Before we examine these three elements, it is first important to define how I use patriarchy. Patriarchy has been the subject of numerous papers attempting to develop a clear definition as an analytical tool. Sylvia Wally (1989) theorized the different approaches to conceptualizing patriarchy, addressed the criticisms attached to each, and developed a new model based on six different patriarchal structures. For this paper I use her basic working definition of, “patriarchy as a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (p. 214). Those social structures

which reinforce the patriarchy of agriculture are the agrarian ideology, land rights, and the ideology of the farm wife.

American agriculture is rooted historically in an agrarian ideology which believes that rural life is superior to that of urban life, and that farmers are the “moral backbone of society” (Sachs, 1996). Thomas Jefferson, who was one of the first promoters of this philosophy wrote, “Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue” (1781). Jefferson believed that an agrarian life embodied the ideals of capitalism. The independent farmer would be the key to independence, ordinary men could “escape the tyranny of their social superiors” (as quoted in Appleby, 1982).

Jefferson also believed that rural life was morally and spiritually superior to urban life. The family farm, being the original unit of agriculture, is the ultimate symbol of the agrarian ideology and democracy (Rack, 2002). This view also defined ideal gender roles; the farmer was depicted as a self-sufficient producer with the opportunity to participate in a free market, and the farmwife as a faithful supporter of the farm and her husband the farmer (Appleby, 1982; Sachs, 1996). The Agrarian myth painted a picture of country life that was not entirely accurate, and often allowed policy makers to ignore the harsh realities of rural life (Appleby, 1982; Rack, 2002).

The second patriarchal characteristic the family farm perpetuated was the issue of land rights. “Women produce the majority of the worlds food, but they share limited control over, ownership of, and access to land” (Sachs, 1996 p.45). Land ownership is the foremost factor in control, and private ownership is one of the cornerstones of a capital economy (Jensen, 1991; Sachs, 1996). Privatization of land has limited women’s

access to it by putting more land in the hands of fewer men (Jensen, 1991; Sachs, 1996; Alston and Wilkinson, 1998). Consequently, privatization is a mechanism by which the patriarchal nature of agriculture occurs. Men own the land, and pass the land on to other men. Even when couples jointly own land, farmwives do not consider the farm theirs, and fully expect the land to be passed on to the next male heir (Sachs, 1996). Thus, men are associated with the land and/or farm, and women are not.

The consequences from lack of landownership are not just psychological for women; there are other very concrete repercussions. Land is a major source of collateral without which women are blocked from receiving credit they need to buy equipment, animals, and more land needed to compete in today's modern farming system (Rosenfeld 1985; Whatmore, 1991a; Sachs, 1996). As previously stated, women's lack of land ownership is tied to her role on the farm as a farmwife, the third major characteristic of the patriarchal nature of agriculture.

Traditional patriarchal views of family farming have romanticized and perpetuated the role of the supportive farm wife (Sachs, 1996). As Brandth (2002) states, "Men's masculine identity is also defined by their position as head of the family workforce and farm business. The position of farm women's position is tied to their marital contract..." (p.184). The identity of the farmers' wives is grounded in her relation to her husband and or the industry of the farm (Brandth, 2002; Sachs 1996; Whatmore, 1991). This is evident even in the work women do off the farm; this work was not considered emancipating for women, but rather another way they could contribute to the family farm (Bennett, 2004). In these ways, as well as the desire to

maintain the ideal set forth by the agrarian myth, women also perpetuate the patriarchal nature of agriculture (Bennett, 2004; Brandth, 2002; Sachs, 1996).

Labor on the family farm was traditionally organized around the 'conjugal' household (Desiring and Simpkins 1991; Sachs, 1996; Whatmore, 1991b). This division of labor socially differentiated women from men by regulating women to a domestic role. Despite a high women's level of employment outside of the home, they still took the major responsibility for the household chores and rearing children (Deseran and Simpkins, 1991; Whatmore, 1991b; Brandth, 2002). The family farm is based on a division of labor which are fundamentally gendered (Brandth, 2002), as we shall discuss in further detail in the next section.

### **Gendered Division of Labor**

Historically women's participation in the agricultural economy has been marginalized, more passive and less productive, and less valued than men's (Sachs, 1996). They have not been seen as serious or legitimate farmers. Those that managed to be taken seriously had a difficult time with maintaining their femininity (Brandth, 1994; Pini, 2005). They align themselves with male farmers and try to distance themselves from other females (Brandth, 1994; Pini, 2005). "The gender system rests on the accentuation of differences between masculinity and femininity and the subordination of femininity to masculinity." (Pini, 2005 p.2). Patriarchal culture and stratification in gender roles dictated that men and women do different work, men's work was more

important, and men did not do women's work (Deseran and Simpkins, 1991; Whatmore, 1991b; Sachs, 1983; Brandth, 2002).

The farm is a workplace, and thus women's roles as employee reflect their role as in the larger workforce of the U.S. (Rosenfeld, 1985; Brandth, 2002; Pini, 2005). In order to be competitive, family farms have changed mechanically. Mechanization has had several different implications. First, the move from a horticultural based farming to an agrarian system was more geared towards men since "plowing takes greater strength than hoeing" (Rosenfeld, 1985, p.22). Even with advances in machinery for agriculture, most farm equipment is designed with men in mind (Rosenfeld, 1985; Brandth, 1995; Pini, 2005). This is especially apparent for women with children since no equipment has been developed that would allow them to farm and have their children with them (Rosenfeld, 1985).

Second, mechanization and the advancement of technology had profound effects on the roles of women in farming. In a 1991 study, Fink examined the changing roles of three generations of farm women in eastern Ohio. Technology was the predominant factor of change for all three groups. Systematically, the introduction of electricity, tractors, and labor saving appliances changed the roles of women on the family farm. Instead of working on the farm, they took helper roles of book-keepers and gofers (Fink, 1991; Sachs, 1996; Whatmore, 1991b; Brandth, 2002), running to town or bringing meals out to the fields. The commercialization of food products typically associated with women such as eggs, butter and cheese also had overwhelming effects on farm women. Products that once generated cash income for women disappeared (Fink, 1991;

Whatmore, 1991b; Brandth, 2002). Male dominated tasks gained importance, while women's tasks became secondary (Brandth, 2002).

Thirdly, mechanization was costly while at the same time requiring fewer hands, leading to the economic restructuring of the family farm. Women were not as needed on the farm and took off-farm jobs in order to support these new technologies (Rosenfeld, 1985; Fitchen, 1991; Fink 1991; Whatmore, 1991b; Sachs, 1996; Brandth, 2002; Tickamyer and Henderson, 2003). This decreased their role on the farm and in farming decisions (Deseran and Simpkins, 1991; Rosenfeld, 1985). However, even with off-farm jobs, women still worked on the farm but were seen more as fill-in or reserve labor (Rosenfeld, 1985; Whatmore, 1991b).

Changes in technology did little to change the traditional roles of women on the farm. The gendered division of labor was exacerbated by the adoption of new farming technologies designed for men, and the lack of implementation of labor saving devices for women (Jellison, 1993). Although technology improved the actual doing of farming tasks, it did not change the organization of who did what work (Deseran and Simpkins 1991; Brandth, 2002). The changes in social arrangements on the farm lagged behind the changes in technology (Fink 1991; Brandth, 2002). This coupled with the belief that the off-farm work of women was merely a means of supporting the farm, supported the patriarchal nature of agriculture.

## **Women and Agriculture Organizations**

“Farm women are underrepresented in farming organizations and participate less than men in shaping agricultural policy” (Pattersen and Solbakken, 1998 p.318). In the late 1800s and early 1900s women’s integral role in the success of the family farm was being recognized and some organizations formed during these times welcomed women as full members (Haney and Miller, 1991). They were considered effective members because of their knowledge of agriculture, farm finances, and their ability to communicate about these issues (Haney and Miller, 1991). Nevertheless, the recognition of women in these organizations did not change the traditional structure of men being in charge. The entrenched male leadership roles of traditional agricultural organizations favored top-down decision making, which further limited women’s perceived ability to assume leadership roles (Miller and Neth, 1988; Alston and Wilkinson, 1998; Shortall, 2001). As a result, women were rarely found in leadership roles, especially at a regional or national scale (Haney and Miller, 1991; Sachs, 1996). Women were more accepted on a local level. “Women built the social base” (Haney and Miller 1991, p.116) utilizing their skills to communicate issues and create social occasions where issues could be discussed. These social relations reinforce the gendered division of labor in agriculture (Acker, 1991; Shortall, 2001).

The 1980 Farm Women’s Survey found that relatively the same number of men and women (79% vs. 74%) belonged to at least one farm or community organization (Rosenfeld, 1985). However, there was a difference in type of organization by gender (Rosenfeld, 1985). Women were more likely than men to belong to a community

organization (61% vs. 57%) and men were more likely than women to belong to an agricultural based organization (64% vs. 45%) (Rosenfeld, 1985). Of those women who did belong to an agricultural organization, many belonged to the women's auxiliary or gendered-interest groups (Rosenfeld, 1985; Sachs, 1996). They adopted "feminized" names and served mainly as social support for the men's groups, reinforcing the gendered nature of agricultural organizations (Sachs, 1996). Studies of women's participation in farm organizations in Europe have shown that women campaign for the survival of farms and communities rather than for their own empowerment or liberation (Brandth and Haugen, 1997; Grace and Lonnie, 1998).

The first agricultural organizations tended to focus on economic matters rather than overall quality of farm-life issues (Knowles, 1988). Not to say that economic matters are inherently male, and farm-life issues are inherently female, but Pringle and Watson (1990) argue that agricultural organizations did not so much favor men's issues over women's interests, as they only focused on men's interests. Therefore the gendered nature of agricultural organizations is reinforced "through the discourses created to ensure the dominance of male interests" (Alston and Wilkinson, 1998 p.397). Women are marginalized because their voices are not acknowledged within the dominant discourse (Alston and Wilkinson, 1998; Shortall, 2001). This behavior has existed over time and has become routine and therefore difficult to change (Shortall, 2001).

Situating women in agriculture organizations has not been an easy task especially with the emergence of women-only groups (Shortall, 1994). Before 1980, very few women belonged to any women-centered political or economical focused organization (Rosenfeld, 1985). With the advent of the farm crisis, feminist movements, and the

realization of power relations, women began creating their own organizations- their own public space (Haney and Miller, 1991, Pattersen and Solbakken, 1998; Wells, 1998; Shortall, 2001). An important distinction here is that women in women- centered agricultural organizations identify with both being a women and being involved with agriculture, and thus are distinct from other women or farm organizations (Shortall, 1994). Women-driven organizations allow women to create their own space, have their interests heard, develop a shared identity, and generate an overall feeling of empowerment (Alston and Wilkinson, 1998; Pettersen and Solbakken, 1998; Wells, 1998 Shortall, 2001). These organizations empowered women by not only opening up decision making, but allowing women to, “perceive themselves as able to occupy that decision-making space” (Pettersen and Solbakken, 1998 p.320). Women-centered organizations, across time have given women a voice and sense of power in a gendered arena. Therefore, we need to understand the emergence of organizations within agriculture (a patriarchal arena) that are specifically initiated by women and focused on women.

In the next section, I present social movement and networking theories. First I offer an overview of how social movement theories developed from classic collective action theories to the resource mobilization theory. Then, I expound on the links between resource mobilization theory, social movement frameworks, and the women’s movement.

### **Social Movement Theories**

The rise of modern social movement theories stems from a discontent with classic collective action theories (Buechler, 2002). Classic collective action theories treated all

forms of collective behavior the same. They reduced collective behavior to being merely a result of social stress, strain, or as a result of a breakdown of society, and the resulting individual discontent or anxiety (Blumer, 1951; Davies, 1962; Buechler, 2002; Turner and Killian, 1957, 1972, 1987). This approach depicts collective action as reactionary, and not rooted in institutional forms of action, but rather rash or extreme forms of actions (Blumer, 1951; Buechler 2002, McAdams, 1982). Invoking psychological and non-institutional denies the purposeful and directed nature of some collective behavior (Buechler, 2002; McAdams, 1982).

These core assumptions group all forms of collective behavior, from panics and crazes to social movements and organizations, together (Buechler, 2002). According to McAdams (1982) these theories assumed a linear relationship and ignored the larger political context in which movements arose. The tendency to generalize ignored the differences of social movements and the possibility that they differed across different social structures and historical periods (Buechler, 2002; McAdams, 1982; Melucci, 1996).

The rise of social movement theories began with the dissolution of the idea that all forms of collective behavior were a unitary concept, and began to look at social movements with a different theoretical lens (Melucci, 1996; Buechler, 2002). Typically, single case studies have resulted in broad social movement theories which have then been uniformly applied to social movements across all times and places (Schwartz, 1976; Buechler, 2002). Buechler (2002) recognized there was an historical specificity to the study of movements that acknowledged their deep roots to particular times and places.

The classical theories of social movements all point to sudden increases in grievances created by the structural strains of rapid social change (Jenkins, 1983). Mass society theory, relative deprivation, and collective behavior theories are based on the assumption that participation in social movements was rare, and that their central characters were discontented, transitory, and irrational (Jenkins, 1983). The emergence of the politically charged social movements of the 1960s created a significant change in social movement theories. New perspectives emphasized the actions of the movement actors as rational and adaptable to the changing times (Jenkins, 1983; McAdams and Snow, 1997; Buechler, 2002). They also highlight that the basic goals of social movements were not defined by compounded discontent, but rather the result of institutionalized power relations (Oberschall, 1973; McCarthy and Zald, 1973, 1977; Tilly, 1978; Jenkins, 1983). This new paradigm developed into what is known as resource mobilization theory.

Resource mobilization theory contends that it is not a culmination of stressors or discontent, but rather an opening in the social structure that allowed social movements to emerge (Oberschall, 1973; McCarthy and Zald, 1973, 1977; Jenkins and Perrow, 1977; Tilly, 1978; Jenkins, 1983; Buechler, 2002). Specifically, there is an increase in social resources available, politically and organizationally, to previously unorganized and aggravated groups (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977; Jenkins and Perrow, 1977; Buechler, 2002). In contrast to collective action theories, “resource mobilization theory views social movements as normal, rational, institutionally rooted, political challenges by aggrieved groups” (Buechler, 2002 p. 11). While collective action theories were criticized for approaching collective behavior at a micro-level using single case studies,

resource mobilization theory has been criticized for ignoring the larger issues of social structure and historical change and smaller issues of individual motivation and social interaction (Buechler, 1993, 2002). However, resource mobilization theory was an important step forward and paved the way for other approaches to conceptualizing social movements.

In their chapter, Gender Movements in *The Handbook of the Sociology of Gender*, Pleak, Taylor, and Whittier (1999) explore the relationship of social movement theories to feminist theories and gender movements. They contend that a social movement perspective is necessary to recognize “that the emergence of feminist movements depends on the political opportunities for women to organize on their own behalf, the resources available to them...and [to] recognize that there are some basic structural preconditions underlying the emergence of women’s collective mobilization” (p. 150). The structural preconditions Pleak, Taylor and Whittier (1999) refer to are primarily the disruptions to the traditional social arrangements which then allow for new social arrangements to materialize. Significant changes for women include the increases of formal and higher education, shifts in women’s fertility rates and reproductive roles, and expanding public responsibilities. These changes predominantly affect middle-class women, who then experience social status conflict which creates the greater political consciousness needed for action. Women’s movements, specifically the three waves of feminism are then a combination of the collective grievances women have experienced, changes to the social structure, and increased consciousness of situation which leads to political action. Pleak, Taylor, and Whittier (1999) also point out that the structural

preconditions which motivate feminist movement vary with historical and geographical context.

It is precisely this framework developed from the interface of social movement and feminist theories and applied to the unique context of rural life that lies as the basis for the research question and expectations of this project.

### **Research Question and Expectations**

The previously reviewed literature presents the background to the key elements of this research project. Women's role in agriculture has been dictated by the patriarchal nature of agriculture, specifically, the historical acceptance of the agrarian ideology, the perpetuate issue of land ownership, and the idolized role of the farmwife. The gendered division of labor on and off the farm also reinforces the roles of women in agriculture, and in agriculture organizations. Using social movement theories, we have established that agriculture organizations, like other forms of collective action, have often formed as a result of change, instability, and the need for collective action. Although women were often included, they found themselves marginalized and silenced. Eventually, this inferior position as well as structural preconditions in the greater society led farm women to create women's agriculture organizations. As those structural preconditions changed due to agricultural changes and the development of feminism, the spaces for women changed resulting in changing WIAOs.

It is precisely these ideas which lead to the development of the primary research question for this study. Specifically I ask - **What are the factors that have influenced the formation of women initiated agriculture organizations (WIAOs)?**

Based on research examining characteristics of organizational formation, the changing roles of women in agriculture, as well as the changing roles of women in the United States, I expect several distinct trends to emerge as a result of this research, which are presented in the following research expectations.

**E1: The formation of WIAOs cluster around specific time periods, and in turn these time periods reflect major eras of change in the United States.**

**E2: Those WIAOs that form within certain time periods share similar characteristics including: means of formation, missions or goals, and activities.**

**E3: The characteristics (purposes, goals and activities) of WIAOs reflect women in the greater social, political and economic context of women not only in agriculture, but in society as a whole as well as during that time period.**

In the next chapter I will outline how I operationalized this research in order to explore these expectations and my primary research question.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

In this chapter, I pose my research expectations and objectives that are specific to the formation of women initiated agriculture organizations. Next, I present my research design, describe the key concepts which steered the development of the survey and research collection, and explain the methods I used to identify the organizations used in this study. Finally, I provide an outline of the data collection and management methods utilized in this study.

#### **Research Expectations and Objectives**

The primary research question for this study concerns identifying the factors that have influenced the formation of women initiated agriculture organizations (WIAOs). I expect to find that the formation of WIAOs cluster around time periods, and in turn these time periods reflect major eras of change for women and agriculture in the United States. I also expect to find that the WIAOs that formed within certain time periods share similar characteristics, and these characteristics reflect the greater political, economic, and social context of women, agriculture, and the greater society during the specific time period.

There are five main objectives of this research that will help me address these research questions. First, I am attempting to identify all of the WIAOs that have formed in the United States since 1880. Secondly, I aim to develop a time line to identify when

these organizations formed. Next, I intend to identify the goals and purposes of these organizations at the point of their formation. My fourth objective is to determine if there are patterns to the types of organizations and their goals and purposes. And finally, my fifth objective is to ascertain if the function of the WIAOs reflect women's status in the greater society during the time frame of their formation.

### **Research Design:**

This research design was organized according to epochs, or time-periods, relevant to the women's movement. The social movement framework presented by Pleak, Taylor, and Whittier (1999), states that there are structural preconditions that are underlying the formation of women movements. I use that same logic to assert that the structural preconditions of a time period are essential to the formation of WIAOs. In each epoch I have attempted to highlight the critical political events, economic conditions, and social structures or occurrences that have defined that time period. It is by no means a complete history of all the occurrences which have shaped that time period, but an attempt to offer a condensed view of the time period. For each epoch the information is arranged by: the state of the Union, the state of agriculture and the state of women during these time periods.

I first defined and then identified all possible WIAOs. I then collected detailed information on the identified organizations through a combination of internet searches, web site and document analysis, and by a simple questionnaire administered via email.

In order to situate the study in a greater historical context, basic historical research of women, agriculture, and the greater US was also conducted.

### **Definition of Key Concepts:**

The first concept I needed to define was that of a WIAO and set the parameters on which organizations are included in this definition and which are not. The main elements of this definition are membership, and the classification of the organization. First, as the name indicates, the organization must be “women initiated”. Membership does not have to be limited to women; however, the environment of the WIAO must be specifically for women. There are many agriculture organizations, such as the Farm Bureau, and The Grange, which have divisions that are specific to or dominated by women; however, the organization overall is not gender-specific. Auxiliaries are included under the WIAOs, if they form independently from the men’s organization. This does not exclude auxiliaries whose formation is contingent upon the existence of a men’s organization. Secondly, the organization must be focused on agriculture. This includes general agriculture and commodity based groups, but excludes garden or horticulture clubs.

The second concept that needed to define was formation. This concept includes two elements: when and why. The formation of an organization depends on varying conditions and stages. For example, Buechler (2002) states that the formation of new social movements depends on the aggregation of social resources and at the same time the aggregation of social resources requires some minimal form of organization. Thus, in answering the question of when, which one is it- the first congregation of people with

ideas, or once they mobilize and gather additional resources? Or is the official start of an organization when they create documentation, such as a mission statement, of their existence? I argue that it could be anyone of these and leave that distinction to the organization. Because organizations go through many changes which may lead up to their official “point of formation” or “birth-date”, it is beyond my role as a researcher to define this for the organization, but rather to trust and use their self-identified birth-date. For this study, I will use the self-identified original date of organization. Some organizations later changed their names, merged with other organizations, became affiliated with a national organization, etc. These second dates will not be used, unless the resulting organization is an entirely new and distinct group. Using the point of formation allows for a consistent reference point for comparison.

Why an organization formed is important in understanding the nature of that organization. This concept is easier to define, since most organizations identify with an event or person which sparks their creation. Knowing the conditions and catalysts that lead to the organization’s formation is as essential as knowing when it formed since this also defines which outside factors influenced the creation of that organization.

The third concept is the self-proclaimed goals and purposes of the organization. Different terminology was used regarding the presentation of an organization’s goals and purposes with mission statements being the most popular. However, purpose statements, organizational goals, and vision statements were also found to represent this same concept. For the remainder of this paper I will refer to all these as mission statements for simplification purposes.

Mission statements are the public declaration of the organization's goals and purposes and a popular management tool. Although there is limited research on the impact of mission statements, their growing popularity and requirement for legal establishment for an organization suggests a belief in their value (Weiss and Piderit, 1999). Mission statements serve several purposes including defining and motivating the work of members of an organization (Weiss, 1996) and communicating the values of the organization to members as well as the public (Weiss and Piderit, 1999). The language of a mission statement can also be an important tool for engaging members, and appealing to specific sects of society (Eccles and Nohria, 1992).

It is important to note that mission statements are not static but rather dynamic, and depending on their adaptability, open to change if the time warrants. Several of the organizations in this study have changed their mission statements, just like their names, over time to reflect the changes and new directions of the organization. I only used mission statements created at the formation of an organization, since they would reflect the values of the organization and society at that time. By-laws and constitutions were not included since these reflect the organizing structure of the organization and not the goals or purposes.

Next I defined "activities of the group" simply as the original activities the organization engaged in. The activities are a more tangible representation of the organizations' purposes, as well as what they are able to do within their organizational and cultural contexts. This is especially important for those organizations that did not have a defined mission statement in the beginning. Although in the survey I ask respondents to identify activities "at the time of formation", I do not give a specific time

frame (first year, first five years, etc.) in which these may fall. I left this up to the judgment of the respondent. Many offered their range of activities; however when compiling the information, I only used the original activities.

Finally, the last concept is the time periods or epochs used to organize this paper. These four epochs are based on the major time periods of the women's movement; also known as waves, in the United States (Banner, 1984). The first epoch is from 1890 to 1920 and is also known as the first wave of feminism. The second epoch is from 1920 to 1960 and is considered a regressive wave for feminists. The third epoch is from 1960 to 1990 and is considered the second wave of feminism, and the fourth epoch presented, from 1990 through the present, represents the third wave of feminism. Since this research is ultimately about women, it seems justifiable to use time periods which reflect the women's movement and women's status throughout U.S. history.

### **Identifying WIAOs**

Internet searches were used in order to identify a comprehensive listing of WIAOs. Initially I used known WIAO websites. From these websites I followed the resources/links connections to identify other possible WIAOs. At each subsequent site, additional links were followed. Saturation was satisfactorily achieved when all possible links were exhausted.

The second approach I used for identifying WIAOs was the Boolean method of combining specific key words to target the intended organizations. The keywords I employed for the first round of searches were: women, agriculture, networks, groups,

organizations, and all possible combinations. The use of operators, such as “AND”, “IN”, “OR”, etc. were not used since search engines are designed to ignore these words and include all possible relationships of the keywords. For any new organizations identified I then used the resource/link saturation technique.

The final attempt I made to identify WIAOs was a more specific Boolean search. For this attempt I searched state by state using the previous keywords as well as included specific commodity keywords. In order to determine which specific commodities to search, I used those that are identified on the 2002 US Census of Agriculture ([nass.usda.gov](http://nass.usda.gov)). Again all resource leads and links were followed until all possibilities were exhausted and saturation was achieved.

### **Survey Development, Data Collection and Management:**

The survey consists of six questions (see Appendix A). The questions correspond to the key concepts of formation, mission statements, activities, and in addition ask for the original name<sup>1</sup> of the organization as well as leave room for the respondent to share any additional information.

Since the survey was being administered to women involved in all facets of agriculture across the United States, the timing of the survey in regards to crop planting, harvest, etc. was not a top consideration. However, the timeline of the survey did take

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<sup>1</sup> I asked for the original name in order to create a proper frame of reference. It is not in the scope of this paper to offer an analysis of organization names.

place over the late winter months coinciding with a relatively slower time for most agriculture, to hopefully avoid scheduling conflicts.

It was determined that the email contacts should be as streamlined as possible, therefore the first mailing included the purpose of the study, the informed consent information, and the survey which was added as an attachment<sup>2</sup>. Each letter was personalized if possible with the name of the expected respondent and name of organization. The letters were sent out separately to insure privacy. In order to identify that this was a research oriented email, the subject line read “women in agriculture research.” The first round of surveys was sent out on March 18, 2008.

Unfortunately due to technical difficulties with the email system at Penn State respondents were unable to reply to the email in order to submit their survey. As soon as this problem was detected, a letter was sent out on March 25, 2008 explaining the technical difficulties and when the problem should be expected to be fixed. This email was titled, “women in agriculture research technical difficulties.” This letter was generic and not personalized. In this instance a mass emailing was sent utilizing the blind copy (bcc) feature to again assure privacy.

Using the classifying techniques described earlier, I identified sixty-nine possible organizations that fit the criteria of WIAOs<sup>3</sup>. Of these sixty-nine organizations, contact information, an email address, was found for only thirty-nine of these organizations. One

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<sup>2</sup> Exemption status was granted by Penn State IRB # 27835

<sup>3</sup> During the search for WIAO I identified the Women in Timber Associations. These are four independent grassroots organizations which “have been actively fighting for their way of life in the Forest Products Community since 1976” ([www.womenintimber.org](http://www.womenintimber.org)). After much thought and consideration these organizations were not included in this study. I relied on definitions of agriculture commodities from the United States Department of Agriculture. However, these are important organizations working hard to preserve their way of life and merit mentioning here.

of these organizations, The Nebraska Feeders Auxiliary, although originally founded as an independent organization combined with the Nebraska Cow Belles in 1986 to form the Nebraska Cattle Women. This reduced the sample to thirty-eight. See Table 1 for a complete listing of all organizations contacted and results.

All thirty-eight organizations were contacted in the first round of emails. Of those contacted, five were returned for expired or incorrect email addresses leaving thirty-three possible responses. Thirteen were completed and returned via email, six others gave a variety of responses, and thirteen were unresponsive. One respondent returned the survey by postal mail. The total completed surveys was fourteen in the first round. Of the six varied responses, one response was an automatic reply on how to join the group; one gave an “out of office” reply; one woman responded that she was collecting the information from other members and would get back in touch, and three notified me that they had sent on the survey to others in the organization who were more qualified to answer the questions.

The second set of surveys were sent out approximately two weeks later on April 14, 2008 to all respondents who had not yet returned a survey. This contact was similar to the first in that the letter consisted of a quick introduction, the informed consent information and the survey was attached. Each letter was personalized when possible, and sent separately with a subject title of “women agriculture organizations research”. The introduction section of letter asked non-respondents to please complete the survey and thanked those that already had. Only those who had not returned a survey were contacted. For those who had returned surveys, a pre-written, personalized thank-you

letter as soon as their survey was received. This happened throughout the course of the research process.

For the second round of surveys, emails were sent to all respondents who had not sent back a completed survey. In all twenty-two surveys were sent out on the second round. Thirteen surveys went to those who were marked un-responsive on the first round. Six were sent to those who had indicated they had sent the survey to others. And for this round, new attempts were made to find correct contact information for those respondents and/or organizations whose emails were returned. Three new addresses were found, bringing the total of possible responses up to thirty-six. Of these twenty-two surveys sent out, three were returned completed, and one respondent (of the new addresses) indicated that they would forward it on to the proper person, and eighteen were counted as un-responsive.

The third and final contact was sent out on April 26, 2008. This contact again consisted of an introduction asking for their assistance, stating why their participation was important, thanking those that had already sent back the survey and finally stating that this would be the final contact. The letter also stated a survey cut-off date of May 10, 2008. Again each letter was personalized when possible and the survey was added as an attachment. Each respondent was contacted individually and this mailing was titled, "Women agriculture organizations research – final attempt."

The final round of surveys were sent to the nineteen organizations that had not yet completed survey. In this round only two surveys were sent back completed and one was sent back with a note explaining that they did not feel they fit into the scope of the survey. The final valid response rate was 55% (20 of 36). This low response rate may be

due to several factors. First the initial technical difficulties could have been off-putting and even created a sense of distrust. Secondly, there were several people who passed on the survey to others because they did not feel they could adequately answer the questions. I had no way to follow up with the new recipients, so reminders were sent to the original source. A third explanation is the possible lack of pervasiveness of technology in rural areas. This is evident by the low number of web sites, many of which were outdated, and the lack of email addresses and web contacts. This leads me to believe that even when there was an email address available perhaps they are used more for known correspondence. Using email as a method of surveying is still a new technique and with junk email, spam, and the threat of computer viruses opening email from unknown sources can be harmful. There does not seem to be a clear pattern as to who returned or did not return a survey.

Information from websites of non-responsive organizations was then used to supplement the survey information when possible. This was only done in the cases where a formation date could be identified. For organizations whose formation date could not be identified, web site information was not used because I could not determine without a doubt where the organization placed in my analysis. For example, one organization, the Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture, was not included in the study because an email contact could not be established and a time of formation also could not be determined by their website.

**Table 1.** Organizations Contacted for Participation, Their Formation Dates, Survey Results and Use of Web Material

<b>Name of Organization</b>	<b>Formation Date</b>	<b>Sent a Survey</b>	<b>Survey Completed</b>	<b>Used Web Material</b>
Women's Auxiliary of the Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers' Association	1938	X	X	Yes
Wyoming Cow Belles	1940	X		Yes
Kansas Cow Belles	1950	X		Yes
American Cow Belles	1952	X	X	Yes
California Cow Belles	1952	X	X	No
Oregon Cow Belles	1953	X		No
Florida Cow Belles	1961	X	X	No
Oregon Women for Ag	1969	X	X	Yes
American Hereford Auxiliary	1969	X	X	No
United Farm Wives of America	1973	X	X	Yes
Ag Women's Cooperative	1973	X	X	Yes
Illinois Women for Agriculture	1974	X	X	Yes
American Agri-Women	1974	X	X	Yes
WIFE- Montana	1976	X	X	Yes
Sigma Alpha Sorority	1978	X	X	Yes
Ohio-Agri- Women	1980	X	X	Yes
Women in Ag, Nebraska	1985	X		Yes
Women, Food and Agriculture Network	1995	X	X	Yes
Vermont- WAgN	1995	X	X	Yes

Maine WAgN	1997	X	X	Yes
Pennsylvania WAgN	2003	X	X	Yes
Iowa Women in Agriculture	2005	X	X	Yes
Arkansas Women in Agriculture	2006	X	X	Yes
WIFE- affiliate?	??	X		Yes
California Women for Agriculture	??	X		No
Minnesota Agri-Women	??	X		No
Montana Agri-Women	??	X		No
Colorado Cattlewomen	??	X		No
Louisiana Cattlewomen	??	X		No
Missouri Cattlewomen	??	X		No
Texas Cattlewomen	??	X		No
Georgia Cotton Women	??	X		No
Ohio Cattlewomen	??	X		No
San Luis-Obispo County Cattlewomen	??	X		No
Women in Agriculture	??	X	X <sup>4</sup>	No
Kentucky Women in Agriculture	??	X		No
Washington Women in Ag	??	X		No
Washington State Dairy Women	??	X		No
American Angus Auxiliary	??	X		No

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<sup>4</sup> Although survey was returned, it was not completed. Organization did not feel that they meet the requirements of WIAO.

Data were managed in accordance to the terms determined in the Institutional Review Board application. All data were kept in a single secured database. A chart was used to track organization information, mailing times, survey responses and information from web sites.

### **Summary:**

In this chapter I outlined my research design by defining my key concepts, explaining how these drove the development of my survey, presenting an overview of the methods utilized in gathering and collecting the research, and stating how I plan to organize the research. The goals of this study are to identify all of the WIAOs in the United States and then use the logic of a social network framework to identify the structural preconditions or factors which have influenced their formation. To explore the research question and expectations, I use a historical synopsis of the defined epochs along with the information obtained via survey and internet document analysis.

## Chapter 4

### Research and Analysis

In this chapter, I outline the historical background and key characteristics of each epoch<sup>5</sup>. Each time-period is divided into three segments: the state of the union, the state of agriculture, and the state of women. For each segment I attempt to present the major events which shaped the political, economic, and social structures of that time period. These sections are intended to present the major conditions, and do not provide a comprehensive history of each time period. Following these three historical overviews for each epoch, I then present my findings for WIAOs. I first present the different organizations which emerged during this time and then discuss the conditions which surround their formation. I then compare their mission statements and the activities of these organizations to each other as well as to the contexts of each epoch. I then end the chapter with a discussion of two major themes which were first presented in the literature review and have recurred through out each epoch.

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<sup>5</sup> Historical information was retrieved from a variety of sources, including general online resources such as Wikipedia.com, agclassroom.org, and other sources for general knowledge. These sources were only used for obtaining and verifying general knowledge, and not as credited sources for scholarly material.

## **The First Wave of Feminism: 1890-1920**

### **State of the Union**

The time period of 1890 – 1920, which is commonly referred to as the progressive era, was a period of great reform activity in all areas of life: political, economic, and social. The progressive activists pushed for social justice, general equality, and public safety. More specifically, during this time there were efforts (and successes) to outlaw the production and sale of alcohol (16<sup>th</sup> amendment); regulate child labor and sweatshops, and improve working conditions (17<sup>th</sup> amendment); eliminate corruption in government and give the public more control in direct election of Senators (18<sup>th</sup> amendment); and efforts to address and improve health hazards such as pure and clean water and sanitized milk. Pasteurization was one such result to these issues. However, even with all the changes, there were many contradictions within this movement, especially regarding race. Much of the reform activity that characterized this era stemmed from the white middle class, and thus reflected the values of this class. All in all, this era brought about many lasting changes, including four constitutional amendments. Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were at the political helm, and this epoch culminated in the US involvement in the First World War.

### **State of Agriculture**

The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought about change for rural America. However the rate of change was not on the same pace as the

rest of the US. The great expansion westward of the previous era had brought with it unforeseen hardships. Farming life on the Great Plains was difficult and lonely. In the east, lands were lush and neighbors were often visible; in the west lands were dry and farms were isolated from each other.

Farm life in the South also changed dramatically after the Civil War. With the emancipation of slaves, plantation owners had to find new approaches to get the crops harvested. Two programs, the convict-lease system and sharecropping, were utilized to re-employ former slaves. The convict-lease system, the worst of the two, was a penal labor program which leased out convicts through private companies during the day mostly in railroad, mining, farming and logging operations. Sharecropping was a system where farmers could lease out parcels of land often through contracts promising a certain percentage of the final crop. Sharecroppers were usually poor ex-slaves or poor white men, who would also have to borrow the seeds, tools, and animals needed to farm-increasing their debt. By the end of the season most sharecroppers were lucky to break even. Also given the fact that most farmers were uneducated, illiterate, and of low social standing, made them vulnerable to greedy and powerful merchants. The Agriculture Adjustment Act of 1933 as well as other New Deal programs put an end to sharecropping by having the federal government step in a pay the farmers to not farm.

On the farm, advances in machinery from the nineteenth century continued to revolutionize farm work. Probably the greatest innovation of twentieth century farming happened in this era, the introduction of the combustion engine tractor. As farmers got better at their work with more efficient farming methods and equipment, they drastically increased the supply of goods they were producing. Faster transportation on both land

and sea increased the amount of imports. In addition, the economics of a hard gold standard and corrupt business arrangement led to the collapse of prices for agricultural goods.

Faced with these economic hardships and fueled with the social isolation farming in the west had fostered, farmers realized they needed to band together and promote their own interests. What resulted was first the “Patrons of Husbandry” or as more commonly known, the Granger Movement. This initially secret organization began in the second half of the 1800s as a social organization; however, it quickly turned political. Joined by other groups faced with similar economic problems, these diverse groups eventually formed the political Populist Party. Although the Populist Party never succeeded in electing a president under its ticket, it did draw important attention to the plight of the American farmer and inspire many political changes. An important note about the Populist Party, it was the first political party to allow women. One of the more prominent women of the Populist Party was Mary Elizabeth Lease of Kansas who famously demanded that farmers “raise less corn and more hell.”

During this era, the Department of Agriculture, which was originally created in 1862 by Abraham Lincoln, was finally given full cabinet status giving farmers a true voice in the affairs of the United States. The Land Grant University system, which was also founded in 1862, was expanded with the passing of the Hatch Act in 1887 which provided federal funds to establish agriculture experiment stations. In 1908, Roosevelt created the Country Life Commission as an effort to ascertain the condition of rural life and establish methods for improvement. As Liberty Hyde Bailey, chair of the Commission, stated, they were “working out of the desire to make rural civilization as

effective and satisfying as other civilization”. Although it has been criticized for being misguided, romantic, and a prime example of the progressive era’s “technocratic social engineering” to change rural areas to benefit urban areas (Peters and Morgan, 2004), several new developments resulted from this work. The commission presented three recommendations: 1.) a nationalized extension service, which in turn led to the Smith-Lever Act and the creation of the cooperative extension service; 2.) continuing survey research which lead to the development of agricultural economics and rural sociology disciplines; and 3.) a campaign for rural progress which resulted in the founding of the American Country Life Association.

### **State of Women**

While it is known as the progressive era for the general population of the United States, this epoch is known as the first wave of feminism the women of this time. First wave feminism concentrated on working for the reform of women’s social and legal inequalities. First wave feminists concentrated on the specific injustices they had experienced themselves. However like most of the social reforms of this time the suffragettes and first wave feminists were predominately concerned with the issues of white middle class women.

The progressive era marked the beginning of many changes for women. She entered the work force, went to college, and participated in sports. She even found a political voice that was louder then her moral one. Banner (1984) said, although history books focus on the male figures of the times (such as Theodore Roosevelt and Upton

Sinclair); women were the driving force behind the progressive reforms. Although the most predominant achievement of the time is the suffrage movement and the resulting 19<sup>th</sup> amendment, women were involved in almost every major change through the epoch. However, these changes were new and on the whole, women remained in the home, unheard, and unseen.

Leading into 1900 was the Temperance Movement. This movement was characterized by the opposition to alcohol. More specifically, it was the abuse of alcohol by men and the violence that ensued which spurred women to unite and take action. The first major women's organization, the Women Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was the first of its kind, created by women specifically for women. The WCTU established themselves publicly by taking a moral approach, but as they gained support they were able to employ political, educational, and social tactics to achieve their goals: alcohol control and ultimately prohibition with the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment in 1919. Over time this movement lost steam, which was evident by the passing of the 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment in 1933 repealing prohibition.

Alcohol was not the only focus of women's political unrest at this time. This epoch was characterized by maturing social and governmental efforts to reform society, and these efforts were rooted in the burgeoning women's suffrage movement. Although the suffrage movement began in the mid-1800s, it did not come to fruition until 1920, the end of the progressive era. In addition to opposition from men, not all women supported suffrage, and those that did were fractured. It wasn't until women began to realize that in order to achieve reform in other areas they needed to win the right to vote.

World War I had a large impact on women during this epoch. The formation of the Army and Navy Nurse Corps in the beginning of the century opened the door for women in the military. Over 30,000 women served in various branches of the military, before they had earned the right to vote. It was women's service to their country which finally won President Wilson over to the suffragist's side. World War I also saw women entering the workforce in efforts to support the war. Women had already had a greater presence in the work place, but the war efforts required them to enter into non-traditional sectors such as munitions factories.

Employment outside of the home was an important change for women. While on the whole, middle-class white married women still did not work outside the home, many women, especially young and single, did work. Jobs were predominantly in factories, department stores, or in clerical professions. However, even though many women were graduating from college and entering into more white-collar professions, once a woman was married she was expected to stay in the home. If a woman wanted to pursue a professional career she often was forced to remain single.

### **The Organizations**

Although no women initiated agriculture organizations emerged during this time, the organizations which did form, paved the way for the later WIAOs.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the first major women's organization, formed in 1873 as reaction to alcohol abuse by men and the violence and disorder that ensued. The General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), officially

formed in 1890, can trace its roots back to 1868 when a woman journalist was denied admittance to a dinner at an all-male press club honoring Charles Dickens (Breckinridge, 1972). Also in 1890 the National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) emerged from the joining of the two major suffrage organizations to create one united front.

These first women's organizations emerged at the end of the nineteenth century for several reasons including: a.) an increase in education for women, b.) an increase in leisure time due to technological advances, and c.) a rigid gender-role differentiation (Banner, 1984). "Their activism was a logical outgrowth of a central theme of nineteenth-century women's lives- their intense involvement with other women." (Banner, 1984 p. 41). The central belief that men and women had intrinsically different natures and therefore belonged to different social spheres- men in the public sphere and women in the private world of the home- drove this separation of men and women (Banner, 1984). Ironically it was the touted morally superiority of women, reinforced by organizations like the WCTU, that allowed them to move from the private sphere to the public sphere. Since, as it was argued, women were morally superior, they should then be allowed to reshape society. This was an argument that even the most conservative found difficult to contest.

Although there were no WIAOs formed during this epoch, the women organizations that did form provided a valuable precursor to understanding the formation of the WIAOs. One of the most important characteristics to note is that this was the first time women had bonded together specifically because of their difference from men. The violence inflicted on women because of men's abuse of alcohol, being excluded from a

congregation of your colleagues, and being treated as a second-class citizens because of gender, are all examples of this disparity. The formation of the organizations of this time demonstrates the change that was occurring in women's position in society. They had found their voice, and the strength to speak out for what they believed in, and this strength was grounded in each other.

### **The Regression of Feminism: 1920-1960**

#### **State of the Union**

The events and changes experienced in this forty year time span had profound effect in shaping the developmental course of the United States, agriculture, and women. This epoch begins with the end of World War I, and the "roaring 20s" a time of great economic boom and excessiveness. Ironically, alcohol was prohibited for the first thirteen years of this epoch, but its secret production and underground distribution aided the abounding defiant attitude associated with the early 20s. The good times did not last long and the prosperity of the twenties faded into the Great Depression after the stock market crash of 1929.

The Depression spared no one, man, woman or child, urban or rural, and was world wide, hitting industrial countries the hardest. In the US not only did industry start to fail, but a severe drought in the summer of 1930 devastated the American heartland. Conditions worsened as unemployment climbed to over 25%, and almost all construction ceased. Bank failures increased exponentially as more and more people defaulted on

loans which in turn caused banks to decrease or cease lending. Roosevelt blamed the excesses of big business for creating an unstable economy, and developed the New Deal programs as a remedy. The New Deal and Second New Deal programs were intended to empower labor unions and farmers by a redistribution of power and resources as well as create work and relief through government spending. Although these series of programs did offer some relief and lower the unemployment rate, it was World War II which truly brought the US out of depression.

While the US did not militarily enter World War II until the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, industry was involved beginning in 1939. Under the lend-lease program, the US supplied the allied countries with large amounts of war material. This material was not only a stimulus for the American economy, but was an essential element to the Allied war effort. The three major developments from World War II were 1.)the emergence of the US and USSR as superpowers and the subsequent cold war; 2.)the end of US isolation and the true beginning of globalization; and 3.)the use of nuclear warfare.

After World War II, the United States settled back into a time of prosperity and growth. The late 40s and the 50s brought mass suburban developments, nuclear family values, and consumerism ideals. The fears of post-war recession were soon quelled simply because it did not come, and the repressed need to spend took over. New products like pre-packaged foods, new cars, and time saving appliances became the “must haves” and symbols of prosperity.

Contrary to this idyllic picture of domesticity, this time was also characterized by the growing cold war and anti-communist sentiment. Under the “Red Scare” and McCarthyism, thousands of Americans were accused of being communists or communist

sympathizers. The government and other private-industry committees, and “loyalty review boards” aggressively investigated and questioned citizens, primarily those involved in government, entertainment, and industry. One of the most famous examples of this is the Hollywood Blacklist. J. Edgar Hoover’s support of anti-communism led to the FBI abuse of power in gathering information against US citizens, and the creation of the House Un-American Activities Committee. These assaults on the American public by the American government did not last through the decade thanks to intervention from the US Supreme Court; however, it could be suggested that the political unrest which personified the next epoch was set up by the political divisions McCarthyism created.

### **State of Agriculture**

According to Durost and Bailey (1970), American agriculture has gone through three full revolutions: mechanical, scientific, and business management. These revolutions all see their beginnings in this epoch, but like most movements have their flows and ebbs and progress at different paces. The first revolution, the modern mechanical revolution, truly began with the advent of the general purpose, internal combustion engine tractor. While forms of the tractor had first emerged in the late 1800s, it was not widely used, available, or practical until now. War greatly encouraged the use of a powered tractor. The labor shortages and food demands caused by World War II forced farmers to change their traditional methods of farming. In 1930 there were over 19 million farm horses and mules and less than 1 million tractors. In 1954, tractors first

out-numbered labor animals on the farm, and by 1959 the agriculture census had stopped counting horses and mules used for labor (Durost and Bailey, 1970).

The scientific revolution began to surface with the development of hybrid seed technology. Until now, crop improvements were based on plant and seed selection (Durost and Bailey, 1970). Advances also occurred in the realm of husbandry, with studies and improvements in feed-conversion, or how much grain is consumed per pound of live weight gain. Thus as improvements in feed grain were made, production of meat increased, making meat more affordable for average consumers (this is especially true for the poultry industry) (Durost and Bailey, 1970).

Scientific advances were not only being made in food commodities, but also in “other” products and even waste products. The 1920s and 30s saw the first real emergence of the chemurgy movement, a scientific approach concerned with creating industrial or non-food products from agriculture raw materials (Drache, 1996). One of the foremost supporters of this movement was Henry Ford, who first used soybeans in car parts such as gearshift knobs and horn buttons. More importantly, Ford and others encouraged research in finding gasoline alternatives, especially in the form of alcohol and ethanol production. This grew strong opposition from the petroleum industry and also was perceived as a political threat by the Roosevelt administration. However, eventually Roosevelt dedicated four labs (Wundmoor, Pennsylvania; New Orleans, Louisiana; Peoria, Illinois; and Albany, California) to finding new uses for farm crops. The first

major breakthrough came in the early 1920s, when a use for furfural<sup>6</sup>, a left over part in the production of oat hulls for oatmeal, was found. The second break through was in 1935 when flax straw was used successfully to make cigarette papers, and the third was in the 1940s with the development of cornstarch.

The mechanical and scientific revolutions continued on throughout this epoch, their booms and busts affected by the turbulence of the rest of the United States and the World. In fact these revolutions continued on into the next epoch, and could arguably be said to last into today. The important aspect here are the changes they started to bring, especially in production, in direct contradistinction with the state of rural life.

While the rest of the country was experiencing a period of economic boom in the 1920s, agriculture was in a state of decline with little relief insight. President Coolidge had refused to sign any economic agriculture relief bills and even denied a project proposing generating electricity from the Tennessee River. He believed that modernization of agriculture, and not price manipulation, was the key to creating profits. Unfortunately the economic situation only worsened with the Great Depression, and agriculture hit rock bottom in 1932. In the first hundred days of his Presidency and as part of his New Deal program, Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) to regulate food production and manage subsidies. In almost an antithesis to the mechanical and scientific developments which were finding new ways to increase production, the AAA issued production limits, going as far as destroying crops and livestock to maintain prices. Although the Supreme Court later deemed the AAA

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<sup>6</sup> Furfural is an industrial chemical derived from agricultural byproducts. It is often used as a solvent in petrochemical refining, as well as with other alcohols to make solid resins such as fiberglass.

unconstitutional, it was the first program to deal with agriculture economy and set the foundation for subsequent federal farm bills (Drache, 1996).

Along with price regulation, Roosevelt also introduced programs for improving life in rural areas. Reminiscent of the recommendations of the Country Life Commission, programs such as the Rural Electrification Act, the Resettlement Administration, Farm Security Administration, and Tennessee Valley Authority were all attempts to alleviate the extreme poverty of rural areas through federal transfer of wealth. These programs focused on education, family needs, and visibility. Most of the famous depression photographs came from RA and FSA supported photographers.

After the Great Depression, agriculture took a sharp turn for the better. Wartime strengthened the American agriculture economy in two distinct ways. The needs for rations and fibers built up the export demand, and the increased employment on the home-front increased the domestic demand as well. The wartime boom greatly improved rural life, but many farmers were concerned about the possibility of a postwar slump. This did not happen. In fact, except for a dip in 1949, farm prices continued to rise hitting their peak in 1951 after which they began a long downward slide (Cochrane, 1979).

Grocery stores emerged as the predominant food source, and the commercialism of the 1950s continued to advocate pre-packaged and processed foods. Over this time there was a dramatic decrease in the number of farms and farmers. Even with new government programs, it was too costly to support all those who might wish to remain on the land, and many migrated to urban areas. Mechanical and scientific advances also supported this migration, making it possible to produce more food on less land and with

less labor. These advances on the farm were costly and often meant that it was necessary for family members to work off the farm, thus continuing to change the face of American farming.

The nature of farming had first changed after the civil war when farmers initially found themselves in competition with each other. The mechanical and technological revolutions increased this competition by increasing production. The third revolution suggested by Durost and Bailey (1970), the cycle of business methods and financial management, is one which continues today. The increased size of urban areas, increased competition, and increased reliance on processed foods by the public all contribute to the economic pressure of farmers. Where once farms produced largely for their home and community, most of this now began to go to production plants for further processing.

### **State of Women**

For women this epoch is predominantly one of regression. The women who banded together in the fight for suffrage won their war and thus lost their common ground. Fresh with victory of the vote, most of these women turned their attention back to more local and personal pursuits. Some of the original suffragists continued to fight for increased women's rights, namely with the original introduction of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The ERA stated "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex," and had been introduced into every session of Congress since its introduction in 1923. However, many of the younger generations rejected the social activism and protesting of the older

generation, and simply wanted to have fun. “This generation of young women often did not know what to do with the freedom achieved. Its rebellion was typically adolescent, and once played out, its adherents fell back on the standards of their parents and their culture—marriage and motherhood,” (Banner, 1984, pg.159-160). The advances of women in the First World War gave way to new social freedoms; however, there was still an underlying traditional current dictating that home, husband, and the attainment of beauty were a woman’s primary goals. (Banner, 1984).

While these attitudes prevailed through the 1930s and 1940s, the Depression and World War created some counter-activity. Although on the whole, feminist issues were not a central focus, women’s organizations did have a revived focus on the perils of society and their role in it (Banner, 1984). Women of this time also had one of their greatest assets, Eleanor Roosevelt. Although a traditional feminist believing that women provided the antithesis to men and occupied a separate social sphere, she also believed that the world needed the contrasting mind-sets of women and argued they needed to take part in public affairs to preserve the home. Because of her influence and involvement in many women’s organizations, many women were able to give counsel to President Roosevelt, and some were even appointed to important government offices. While this was a great stride for women the fraction of women publically involved in politics was minute (Banner, 1984).

The Second World War once again called women to action and back into the workforce. Images like Rosie the Riveter invoked strength and fortitude, an icon for women taking the industrial jobs left by men going off to war. But women also contributed to the void left by men in agriculture. The US Crop Corps and specifically

the Women's Land Army (WLA) were fashioned after programs of the same name that were created in Europe during World War I and appeared again during World War II. These programs were created as a part of the Emergency Farm Labor Program, and placed volunteers in areas where farmers needed assistance due to labor shortages and the increased demand created by the war. Many traditional farmers initially opposed women working on the land, but eventually gave in to desperation and accepted any help they could get. Those that did not suffered great financial losses. The Women's Land Army was influential in changing agriculture. Women of all types entered agriculture, and many did not leave even after the WLA disbanded in 1945 (Carpenter, 2003).

During the war women were applauded for their efforts. After the war women were expected to return to the home. In contradistinction to women's celebrated entrance to the work force during the war, the post war period emphasized the importance of marriage, motherhood, and women's place in the home. Working women became the target of blame for society's ills. By going to work, they had destroyed the American family. Fueled by the popularity of Freudian psychology, antifeminism took hold of the country through the 1950s (Banner, 1984). This emphasis on domesticity was evident everywhere, especially in popular culture. The fifties housewife became the dominant symbol. The strides that Georgia O'Keefe, Amelia Earhart and Elizabeth Arden had made in the 1920s and the images that Rosie the Riveter had evoked were erased by the domination of June Cleaver and Good Housekeeping.

## The Organizations

Up until the 1920s, the largest fraction of organized women was around suffrage. Suffrage had provided a symbol of solidarity and a common goal to work towards. With this won the women's movement disbanded. "After we got the vote, the crusade was over. It was peacetime and we all went back to a hundred different causes and tasks that we'd been putting off all those years. We just demobilized." (as quoted in Banner, 1984, p.142). Not only did the large organizations separate, the organizations that remained active changed their focus from social-welfare activism to just social (Banner, 1984). However, there was in general a boom of women's organizations in this epoch.

Women had made great strides in gaining a public voice during their pursuit of the right to vote. They had gained a legitimized public voice, and this in turn created a space for women to act publically. They had also established organizations, which created a foundation for other organizations to form. However as also presented, their momentum in obtaining further equal rights was stopped by a number of factors including a loss of interest by women themselves and then severe economic hardships. On the contrary, it was precisely the economic hardships coupled with the isolation of agriculture and the women within agriculture that also provided a motivation for women in agriculture to organize.

Women initiated agriculture organizations did not begin to truly emerge until this time period<sup>7</sup>. In all, I identified ten WIAOs which were formed during this time. Five

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<sup>7</sup> All of the organizations identified were predominantly white. While this raises some interesting questions, it was not in the scope of this paper to explore this aspect deeper.

were Cow Belle organizations located in Arizona, Wyoming, Nebraska, Kansas, California, and finally the national organization was created. I also found records of The Kansas Wheathearts, The Women's Auxiliary of the Texas Sheep & Goat Raisers, The Washington State Dairy Women, and the Kern County Wool Growers Auxiliary, i.e. the Bo-Peeps.

The Woman's Auxiliary of the Texas Sheep & Goat Raisers' Association (WATSGR) first organized in 1938 at the annual convention of the Texas Sheep and Goat Raiser's Association. Although there were only a few women present at the convention, 15 of them got together to hear J. Bryan Wilson, secretary of the Wyoming Wool Growers Association tell about the activities and benefits of an auxiliary association. The association formed during that convention, and a month later officials were elected and the constitution and by-laws were written and approved. Interestingly, at this first official meeting, the guest speaker, a Fred Marshall of Salt Lake City, Utah gave a talk about the various problems associated with having a women's auxiliary. The group adjourned until the following morning so the members could have the night to consider their options. At the end of the second day, there were 75 paid members. (History of the Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers Association, [date unknown]).

The Kansas Wheathearts started much like the WATSGR, in that the wives of the newly organized Kansas Association of Wheat Growers convened during the Wheat Growers first annual meeting. During that gathering, the wives decided to form an auxiliary and called themselves the Kansas Wheathearts, and elected their first officials.

The other predominant WIAO, or group of WIAOs, to emerge and personify this time period was the Cow Belles Organizations. The first Cow Belle organizations

formed independently from the end of the 1930s through the formation of the national organization in 1952. One state organization, the California Cow Belles, began in the early 1950s. As one member describes their creation,

“The organization was formed after the California Cattlemen’s Association was formed. Actually, a local unit of California Cow Belles could not be formed, originally, until a men’s unit for the same county had been formed. The wives of my local group had a Xmas party, poured the holiday cheer, and talked their husbands into forming the Cattlemen’s group at that party. Then they were able to form their Cow Belles unit.”

The American National Cow Belles (ANC) were officially,

“formed in 1952, after many states had organized such organizations. The need for a national organization that did much the same work was thought to be needed”.

When WIAOs began to form at the end of the Great Depression, they reflected a juxtaposition of conditions. The precedence for organizing was there, as well as the basis for public action; however, women were not entirely free to act without the sanction of men. As we have seen, the state Cow Belle organizations could not form without a men’s organization being established first, likewise the WATSGR and the Wheathearts also came together as a result of their respective men’s organizations. It is unclear if the ANC needed a national men’s organization first or if they were able to form independently by 1952.

To further understand how these organizations reflect the larger position of women in society I next looked at the mission statements of the different organizations. The mission statements of these organizations present to both their members and to outsiders their intent as an organization. The original purpose statement of the California Cow Belles was,

"to enable and assist the women of California who are interested in the cattle industry to coordinate, on a statewide basis, their efforts to promote the welfare of the cattle industry and those engaged therein, to cooperate with the California Cattlemen's Association, the California Beef Council, and other organizations dedicated to improvement in breeding, raising, and marketing cattle and fostering and safeguarding the welfare of those engaged therein, and to encourage the young people of California to appreciate and enjoy cattle raising as a satisfying and rewarding way of life."

The original mission statement of the ANC was simply, "to help promote the welfare of the livestock industry." The Kansas Wheathearts' mission was,

"to promote awareness and usage of wheat and wheat products, and to encourage farm safety and other educational programs which enhance the quality of rural life."

And the Washington State Dairy Women (WSDW) promised to remind consumers of the goodness of dairy through sales promotions, public relations, educational programs. All of these statements demonstrate the organizations' devotion to promoting the industry on which their families' livelihoods depended.

Examining the mission statements of each of the WIAOs gives further claim to the idea that the organizations were intended as support mechanisms. The use of the phrase, "to support the industry" and/or the assertion to promote products of the industry in each of the mission statements demonstrated that the women in these organizations were focused on the industry and the beneficiaries of the industry. This altruistic approach reflected what society demanded of women at the time. There was a predominant idea that the welfare of society and the home were the responsibility of women, and these organizations reflected that ideal. For example even though the California Cow Belles were the only organization to specifically mention women, it still played upon their role as care givers. Using statements such as, "fostering and

safeguarding the welfare of those engaged therein,” gives the notion that the women of the organization were not “within” the industry, but rather are the guardians of those that are.

Exploring the initial activities of an organization is the final piece in creating a picture of the organization at that time. While mission statements, constitutions and by-laws may present the ultimate goals and ideals of the organization, activities- what they are able to actually do and how they reach these goals- gives a clearer picture of their abilities and limitations. They also represent the available resources that the particular organization has. For example, the WATSGR’s initial activities focused on promoting wool and mohair and increasing the consumption of mutton, lamb, and chevron.

Common activities, especially with commodity oriented organizations, were to promote use of the product, especially in cooking. The WATSGR created a cookbook of recipes featuring lamb and chevron. The ANC promoted beef cookery, eventually creating the National Beef Cook-off, and the promotion of beef for Father’s Day. The Bo-Peeps promoted lamb and wool in California through activities at local fairs, sponsoring a Make It Yourself With Wool competition, and a 4-H Fashion Review. The WATSGR supported the wool industry by supporting a new textile mill in Eldorado, Texas. They sent wool blankets made in the mill to important women leaders including the first lady, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, and the wife of the Texas governor, Mrs. W. Lee O’Daniel.

Pageantry and rewards for showmanship were also a popular tool organizations used in achieving their goals of promoting their industry. The WATSGR claims their greatest accomplishment of that time was the creation of the “Miss Wool of Texas”

contest in 1952, which later evolved into the Miss Wool of America Pageant. The Wheathearts sponsored a wheat queen contest, and the WSDW created the Dairy/Ambassador program which enlists a female from each county to give educational presentations and attend local events culminating in competing for the “State Ambassador” title at the end of her one-year reign. The California Cowbells rewarded excellence in beef showmanship and animal husbandry at local, regional, and state fairs. These sorts of contests not only promoted the industry and product but provided the organization a method of supporting education and giving scholarships to the youth of their industry.

The activities of these organizations give further proof of women’s station during this epoch. The majority of activities revolved around home economics such as cooking, sewing, and pageantry. Given the times, especially the attitudes of the 1950s when the majority of these organizations began, these activities reflected the mainstream middle class ideals of the 1950s housewife and perfect suburban home. They were a method in which the women of agriculture could create and influence their industry without being controversial. They were also a method by which rural women themselves could connect to the suburban ideal housewife. Farm and ranch work is hard and dirty, however the endorsed images of women in the 1950s were petite and clean. The use of cute names, the focus on men and children, and the engagement of appropriate activities situated rural women within the acceptable light created by their suburban counterparts.

What is truly notable is the mere act of organizing was political. In addition, some of these groups pushed the boundaries of the “acceptable” activities to make stronger political statements. For example the WATSGR sent wool blanket to Eleanor

Roosevelt, and the WSDW incorporated state-wide promotions and a required appearance before the House of Representatives and Senate during the annual Dairy Day for their elected “State Ambassador.” It was here, in these addendum actions that these rural women quietly pushed the envelope and created change. While the overarching actions of the WIAOs may have a traditional vibe, some groups used them as pathways to be heard.

### **The Second Wave of Feminism: 1960-1990**

#### **State of the Union**

This epoch begins with the epitome and then the shattering of the American dream with the election then subsequent assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Politically, the assassination of JFK was only the first of many unsettling occurrences of this time. The 1960s and 1970s were known for social revolution, which appeared as a counter-culture rebelling against the conservative norms and consumerism which had dominated mainstream society in the 1950s. The US involvement in the Vietnam War, the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, the resignation of President Nixon, the building of the Berlin wall, and the dominance of the cold war all bolstered the rampant anti-political sentiments. These and other incidences led to the predominance of new social movements, including the civil rights movement, the environmental movement, and the new women’s movement. This epoch also witnessed the beginning of

the sexual revolution, which took flight with the widespread availability of contraceptive pills to all women.

The 1980s began with a counterattack to the excess and liberalism of the previous two decades. The “New Right”, a more conservative sect supported the family values platform of Ronald Reagan and helped to get him elected. The New Right vigorously attacked everything from feminism, reproductive rights, same-sex marriage, drug legalization and affirmative action. Whereas excess may have been the trend of the 70s, safety campaigns became the social trend of the 80s, as evident in the creation of seatbelt laws, child safety seats, bike helmets, and of course the larger national war on drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. There was also a backlash to the sexual revolution with the discovery of the AIDS epidemic.

### **State of Agriculture**

The advances that had begun in the previous epoch continued to compound, in both their advancement and creation of problems for agriculture. While the general public enjoyed the growing availability and quality of products, the increased production of such goods continued to plague American agriculture. Additionally, the mechanization and scientific revolutions continue to be a doubled edge sword for farmers and a bonus for consumers. The involvement of politics, social revolutions, and national and international economic strategies were all disadvantageous to the American farmer.

The environmental movement emerged in 1960 with the publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, and the first Earth Day followed suit in 1970. This added to

farmers' difficulties. The rise of the environmental movement targeted farmers as anti-environment and even narrow-minded in their pursuits of production. Technological advancements are historically only beneficial to the early adaptors. However, in order to compete, other farmers need to adopt the same technologies (Drache, 1996), creating a wide-spread use of various new technologies- such as the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers. The vicious cycle of needing to produce more to stay alive, and the drop in profits due to increased production coupled with the increased costs of implementing such technologies cornered many farmers in a no win situation.

Ironically even with the rise of the environmental movement, this epoch also saw the end of the chemurgy movement with the official closing of the Chemurgy Council in 1977. Many good products came from this movement, mostly in times of war. As the uses of agriculture raw materials advanced, so did the development of and uses for petrochemical non-renewable material based products.

The decline of agriculture prices is a predominate issue through this epoch. Sometimes compared to the Great Depression, the 1980s farm crisis brought about one of the lowest times for farmers. Unlike the Great Depression, which seemingly had identifiable beginning and ending events, there are many contributing factors to the farm crisis. Despite a short time of prosperity in the 70s, increasingly over time American farmers had found themselves caught between the corporate controls of food production on both sides, the companies that buy crops and the firms that sell them inputs like seeds and fertilizers (Greider, 2000). Politics and trade barriers, many specifically related to the cold war, and federal price supports, all hurt farmers' international markets (which had become an important component to their survival) (Drache, 1996).

Small farmers organized the American Agriculture Movement in 1977, hoping to force the government to recognize the plight of the farmers. The farmers of this movement tried to organize strikes where farmers would not buy or sell anything; however this was a very radical stand, and did not receive the support it needed to be successful (Drache, 1996). The AAM also organized tractor rallies, even invading Washington D.C. creating significant traffic problems. As luck would have it, a blizzard hit while they were there, and the tractors were the only vehicle which could travel through the snow.

This epoch found the American farmer, and American agriculture in a constant state of paradox. Public demand for affordable food and our national inclination toward technological advancement pushed farmers to change their farming practices. They were then ostracized, and even called old fashioned or greedy, for using these technologies. Social scrutiny changed again when the plight of the American farmer was brought into a different light with the Farm-Aid concerts organized by Willie Nelson, John Mellencamp and Neil Young. Farmers then testified before Congress about the state of family farming. Soon after, Congress passed the Agriculture Credit Act to help save family farms from foreclosure.

### **State of Women**

By the 1960s, the number of women in the US had surpassed the number of men, however they were still not treated as equals in most realms. This epoch, the 1960s to the 1990s, is often referred to as the second wave of feminism. This time, the feminist

movement focused on economic and lifestyle issues specific to women. Phrases like, “civil rights”, “glass ceiling”, and “sexism” emerged and became the hot political platforms. Reproductive rights again returned to the foreground. Feminists in the first wave of feminism concerned themselves with challenging laws restricting women. The second wave was more concerned with challenging laws that were created in effort to compensate women for social discrimination (Banner, 1984). The most blatant example of this was the creation of the National Organization for Women and their pledge to fight for the state ratification of the ERA, which was still being introduced every session, and had still not passed. In 1972 this changed, and the ERA passed both the House and the Senate and was sent to the states for ratification, with a seven year time limit attached. Opponents of the ERA, many of which were women, feared that its ratification would deny a woman’s right to be supported by her husband, and women would be sent into combat among other things. ERA became the new symbol of the radical women’s movement, much as suffrage had been the century before.

Women made strides in the political arena during this epoch, beginning with the Kennedy years; however the outcomes were not always progressive. Kennedy appointed a commission to study the position of women in the US. However, even with the increased exposure, little was actually done to change the position of women. In fact, “The commission report supported the nuclear family and recommended that women be specifically trained for marriage and motherhood,” (Banner, 1984, pg.250). Additionally the Equal Rights Amendment had failed to be ratified, by three votes, and saw its final demise. Although this epoch did see many improvements being made in providing equal job opportunities and equal pay for women, many of the women’s organizations in

existence during this time refused to take a strong leadership role in order to not be labeled feminist or to be considered too radical (Banner, 1984).

Women were making progress in other areas as well. The 70s are colloquially referred to as the “era of liberation”. The wide spread availability of the contraceptive pill sparked the sexual revolution and brought reproductive rights once again to the forefront. Also during this decade, more women attended colleges, and in 1979 women surpassed men in enrollment (<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/statement/s2.asp>). In 1973, Billie Jean King defeated Bobby Riggs in the “Battle of the Sexes” tennis match; in 1978 the Women’s Army Corps was dismantled and women were integrated into the US Army; and in 1983 there was the first women in space as well as the first women to be nominated by a major political party for vice president of the United States.

### **The Organizations**

I identified thirteen WIAOs which formed during this epoch. These organizations fell into three categories. The first, which appeared in the early 1960s were commodity/industry organizations. The second, which appeared in the 1970s, had a professional/collegiate focus. And the third which also predominately appeared in the 1970s had a decisively political and activist nature.

The first category of organizations to appear were those formed as auxiliaries to specific commodity/industry groups, such as the Florida Cow Belles Association (FCA). The FCA was formed in 1961 as a result of one of the founders attending a women’s meeting at the National Cattlemen’s Convention. The Iowa “Pocketed” formed in 1964

as an auxiliary to the Iowa Pork and Swine Producers, eventually becoming one group in 1991. The American Hereford Auxiliary (AHA) started in 1969 as a social group, “giving the wives of the Hereford breeders an opportunity to get together as the men were at meetings.”

These organizations, which all appeared in the 1960s, resembled those of the last epoch with the men and the industry being the focus. For instance, their circumstances of formation are the same, forming only after the men’s organization. Again the mission statements support the idea that the specific function of these WIAOs is to support their commodity or purpose. For example the FCA stated their original purpose as, “to help the men’s organization in any way possible, and to promote Beef.”

The activities of these WIAOs not only were geared towards specifically promoting their commodity but also reflected the roles of women and the state of agriculture. The decline in prices and struggles of agriculture prompted women to do something, to find a way in which to help get public support for their source of revenue. The FCA reported their original activities as “baby beef promotions and booths at fairs.” The AHA expanded this view by not only working for their commodity, Hereford beef, but also focused on getting recognition for women in the beef industry. They worked to get women hired as judges for national shows, as well as recognized “women who have proven themselves in the industry.” This was a switch from only focusing outward and rewarding the showmanship of others.

What is important to observe about all of the commodity/industry WIAOs, in this epoch and the last, is the lack of importance they place on women. While obviously women are the primary members of the organizations, their formation, goals, and

activities are focused outwardly on the ‘industry’, and those in the industry. Most of these WIAOs do not mention women as beneficiaries of the organizations’ activities, but rather suggest the women are merely the conduits by which the benefits are produced. On the contrary, the act of organizing is a political and empowering action and some do make specific strides to bolster the roles that women play within those industries; however these are usually secondary or tertiary roles after ‘supporting industry’ and even ‘supporting youth’. Women are not entirely an afterthought, but they are clearly not the primary motivation.

The second category of WIAOs during this epoch, the professional/colligate organizations, arose because women wanted to create a place to gather for other women who were interested in agriculture and career development, as well as craved a social outlet equivalent to their colligate peers. While any organization undoubtedly provides a social sphere, these WIAOs are distinct because they officially state friendship and camaraderie as well as an interest in agriculture as reasons for their formation. The Ag Women’s Cooperative (AWC) formed in 1973 by ten women at University of Wisconsin-Madison as a resource for women who,

“wanted a way to better prepare for a career in agriculture and encourage personal development. They also wanted the camaraderie that the men’s agricultural living units had on campus.”

The Sigma Alpha Sorority, established in 1978 at Ohio State University wanted,

“an organization that would provide them with opportunity to enhance their chosen careers in agriculture; however they also wanted an organization that would allow them established lifelong friendships with women pursuing similar goals and careers.”

The mission and purpose statements of these WIAOs also iterated the need for a place where they could come together with the intention of bonding with other women who have the same interests. The AWC declared its purpose was,

“[helping] its members prepare for a career in agriculture and agriculture-related fields, to aid women in agriculture in achieving their goals, to improve communication among women in agriculture and for the general betterment of agriculture,”

and Sigma Alpha stated,

“The purpose of Sigma Alpha is to promote its members in all facets of agriculture, and to strengthen the bonds of friendship among them. Sigma Alpha encourages its members to strive for achievement in scholarship, leadership, and service, and to further the development of excellence in women pursuing careers in agriculture.”

For both the AWC and Sigma Alpha, the activities resembled those typical of the Greek organizations found on a college campus. There were “rushes”, “Spring Flings”, blood drives, living together, and other “sisterhood” activities. However along with the typical social activities of a campus group, they also focused specifically on agriculture and tried to revolve their activities around benefitting agriculture, specifically theirs and other women’s growth in the industry. Being recognized as an official campus group lends clout to attending and participating in conferences and career fairs.

These mission statements and activities reflect the lack of female space in agriculture, and lack of space on college campuses, or in other words, the public sphere for women interested in agriculture. The declared concepts of career preparation, communication, goal achievement, and scholarship differed from the previous WIAOs. Here the women were the recipients of the organization’s goals. These groups were based on the ideas that women had a personal interest in agriculture, and that women

wanted to enter into agriculture on their own, not simply marry into it. But these mission statements and activities also are in compliance with the social norms. Again while the mere action of forming is political, political action was not the focus. Feminism was not a touted ideal. So while these WIAOs reflect the advancement of women in higher education, and as having career interests in agriculture, they do not disrupt the social norms.

The third category of WIAOs were highly political, activist oriented, and more focused on agriculture as a whole. These organizations were primarily concerned with the larger political, economic, and social events which were influencing agriculture. They were also affected by the feminist and other social movements which encouraged women to speak up and fight for their beliefs. The first, the Oregon Women for Agriculture (OWA), began in 1969 as a result of unfavorable legislation that attempted to ban grass seed field burning- a specific management tool utilized by farmers to rid their fields of unwanted straw after the harvest. Next came two of the largest and most influential WIAOs in the United States, Women Involved in Farm Economic (WIFE) and American Agri-women (AAW). WIFE was founded in 1976 in Nebraska as a result of,

“the sad state of agriculture and how their children had to leave the life they loved to make a living. [The women] thought something needed to be done and their husbands had no time to tell their stories. Working the land was all [the husbands] had time for, so the women would take the time.”

WIFE began as and remains, an organization dedicated to all forms of agriculture and any major industry based on natural resources, including timber, mining and oil. They focus on the family farm as the best unit of production, and as farmers as the best source of knowledge to guarantee a domestic and world wide food supply.

Like WIFE, AAW was concerned with agriculture in its entirety, and not just a specific commodity or practice. In 1973, the first Agri-Women group was formed under the original name, United Farm Wives of Kansas (UFWK),

“Twenty-five women met at the Extension Office in Effingham, Kansas on April 4, 1973 to discuss the threatened meat boycott and to fight a bill before Congress which would have rolled back farm prices to the January 10, 1973 level. Twenty-five women volunteered to fly to Washington, D.C. to lobby against the bill. Their two-day effort resulted in the defeat of the bill. Seventy people attended a follow-up meeting on April 17 at which time United Farm Wives of America was organized.”

Likewise a group of women in Illinois also created a women’s organization which later became an affiliate of the American Agri-Women. The Illinois Women for Agriculture was created in 1974 because,

“Illinois women in agriculture wanted to do more to preserve the family farm and promote agriculture and not be just an auxiliary group of a men’s group. Instead of pouring coffee for the men’s ag organization these ladies actual wanted to make a difference.”

The national group, American Agri-Women (AAW) officially formed in 1974. Sparked by the actions of OWA, the UFWK, and others, in 1969 a group of women from Michigan realized the “problems of agriculture were national in scope and required a national organization to respond effectively.” In 1974, they traveled to Washington DC, spoke to the Secretary of Agriculture and to the Chevron Chemical Company and requested a national network of women for agriculture be formed. The first national Farm Women’s Forum was held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1974.

“A telegram from President Gerald Ford greeted the ladies at that meeting. Six women’s organizations came together to form what is now American Agri-Women. Those groups were: Women for the Survival of Agriculture in Michigan; Wisconsin Women for Agriculture; Oregon Women for Agriculture; Washington Women for the Survival of Agriculture; the United Farm Wives of Kansas; and Illinois Women for Agriculture.”

There are now nineteen AAW state affiliations and they work with thirty-one other national and commodity affiliates, most of which are represented in this paper.

Following suit, the mission statements issued by these WIAOs focused on agriculture as an entity, their dedication to the political issues, and they added how they planned to achieve these goals. The prime examples are the mission statements of WIFE,

“Dedicated to improving profitability in production agriculture through education, legislative, communicative, and cooperative efforts. WIFE will continue to work as a catalyst to bring about cooperation between farm organizations,”

and AAW,

“We are a force for truth; a reasoned, nonpartisan voice for the agricultural community to the public. Our purpose is: We, as women’s agricultural organizations and individuals, unite together, to communicate with one another and with other consumers to promote agriculture for the benefit of the American people and the world.”

The activities of these WIAOs are decidedly different from the actions of the previously explored organizations. These actions do not fit into the previously home economic type actions of other groups. For example, the OWA launched a media campaign writing letters to the editor and news stories for TV, as well as creating brochures and hand-outs for fairs and conferences. They spoke with legislators and helped to support a Summer Agriculture Institute, an educational workshop for teachers every summer. These actions were efforts to educate the general public about the importance and mechanics behind grass seed field burning and other agricultural practices.

Both AAW and WIFE took their activities primarily to Washington. However they did differ in their approaches. AAW sought the endorsement of President Ford,

spoke to legislatures about the 1977 Farm Bill, and were witness to the signing of the Food and Agriculture Act of 1977. WIFE's initial activities focused on the renewability of farm resources. In 1977, 42 people drove to Washington D.C. on ethanol to prove they could be "more energy independent and use farm crops." They repeated this drive in 1981, two thousand miles each way, and, "served goodies to the House of Representatives- proving America could have food and fuel at the same time."

Analytically, we can see that these groups were influenced by the changing times in which they emerged. There were many changes for women in this epoch, and only makes sense that several types of WIAOs resulted from those changes. However there is still a conservative nature to the WIAOs, reflecting the conservatism of agriculture and the continued unequal position of women.

### **The Third Wave of Feminism: 1990-Present**

#### **State of the Union**

The main characteristics of this last and more recent epoch are globalization and technology. These forces transverse political, economic, and social realms and affect all walks of life. This epoch witnessed the fall of the Berlin wall signifying the end of the cold war. This was followed in 1991 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. However, new enemies appeared, most notably with the attacks in New York and Washington D.C. on September 11, 2001.

Technology and the global economy pervade this epoch. Globalization and technology found their junction with the prevalence of the personal computer and the creation of the World Wide Web. As technology has exponentially increased, communication is no longer bound by time, space, or even language. There has been a literal explosion of networking tools including cell phones, digital cameras, and PDAs. Not only has the ability to communicate increased, but with the development of Global Positioning Systems, the mystery of space and distance has been captured as well. Advances in technology have changed the nature of business.

### **State of Agriculture**

Bifurcation and the unremitting increase of science in agriculture are the main themes of agriculture in the 1990s and 2000s. Bifurcation in agriculture refers to the growing disparity in farm size. According to the 2005 Family Farm Report, small family farms made up 91.2% of the total farms, but only accounted for 27.1% of the value of production. Where as large scale-family farms and non-family farms made up the other 8.8% of farms and 72.9% of value of production

(<http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/EIB12/EIB12c.pdf>). The market domination of large corporate farming has other implications as well. For example, in 2006, bags of contaminated spinach which infected around 200 people and killing at least three, were found in 26 states. They all hailed from one farm.

The growing prevalence of large scale family farms and non-family farms have made serious impacts on the markets of small family farms. Many are looking for new

ways to be competitive in the changing market. One method is the return to organic or high-value farming. Organic farming practices and systems have been in development for decades, however in the 1990s state and private institutions began to set organic farming standards and provide certified labels (Greene, 2001). Legislation outlining national standards were also developed and passed in this decade. Organic farming became an attractive alternative to the failing agriculture economy, requiring less input costs, accepted by environmental activists because it conserves non-renewable resources, and increasing income by capturing high-value markets.

In 1994 the North American Free Trade Agreement was passed and has had controversial implications for North American agriculture. Unlike other areas of the NAFTA treaty, agriculture was not treated trilaterally (equally between Canada, America, and Mexico), but rather three individual agreements with different restrictions and/or tariffs were created. The treaty is an important milestone in the growing globalization of agriculture markets.

### **State of Women**

Beginning in the 1990s, is the third wave of feminism. This wave feminism and its generation benefits from the achievements and opportunities created by the previous two waves. These feminists recognize that the equality the second wave feminists strove for has not been achieved and therefore a struggle still exists. However there is also a new consciousness within this wave challenging the limitations of defining gender. Characteristics of this wave is a reclaiming of derogatory terms, spelling changes

(womyn), and a self-assertive even aggressive mode of action. One of the most notable changes is the overt creation of women-only spaces. Where as equality with men and entrance into their establishments was a primary focus of the past waves (and is still is important), there is has been an increase in a “take charge” attitude and women are creating their own front stage.

Although the debate of the ERA is still not dead, other important strides for equality and empowerment for women were made. By this decade women made up almost half of the work force (46%). Although the number of women in the workforce is noted, so is their lack of representation in upper management positions. In 1991, the Glass Ceiling Commission was created to study how artificial barriers prevent qualified individuals, namely women and minorities, from advancement. The commission which studied this phenomenon lasted five years and produced numerous documents describing the gender and race segregation that has dominated the upper management in corporations.

During the 1990s many achievements were gained by women. In 1992 the number of women in congress doubled, in 1993 “take your daughter to work day” was established, and 1997 gave us the first woman Secretary of State, the first three-star general, and the establishment of the Women’s National Basketball Association. In observation of Women’s History month in 2001, the US Census Bureau released a special report of profiles of women in the year 2000. Women outnumbered men in every age group, the percentage of women between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-nine who had completed college exceeded men of the same cohort, and younger women had a higher high school completion rate. For all those receiving bachelor degrees in 1997,

49% in business and 54% of biological and life sciences went to women. Four in ten NCAA athletes were women and there were more NCAA sanctioned women's teams than men's teams 61% of women over the age of sixteen made up the civilian labor force. 70% of women had computer access at home, while the rate for men was 62%, this was a great improvement over the 20% gap in 1984. Also more women used a computer at work than men did- by 13% (<http://usgovinfo.about.com/library/weekly/aa031601a.htm>).

This epoch ends with the largest milestone of all, for the first time in US history a woman made a legitimate run for the presidency. This comes twenty-four years after the last woman made it on to a national party ticket. While women have come a long way, there is still a long way to go.

### **The Organizations**

The WIAOs of this time reflect an even greater change in the lives of women and agriculture. Farmers' wives had made great strides in bringing recognition to women in agriculture, but women farmers are still relatively unknown. In this epoch there is a notable change for women involved in agriculture, the number of women farmers increased by 13% to make up almost 27% of the farming population. Whether the change is sparked by the recognition by the Department of Agriculture of more than one operator per farm (2002 census), or there really are more women entering farming as an occupation, this finding has generated much discussion.

Beginning in the mid 1990s, a new type of WIAO appeared. Women's Agricultural Networks (WAgNs) are geared toward women farmers. The first of these

network organizations formed in Vermont in 1995. They were the original WAgN, but once other groups started using the same label, they clarify that they are the Women's Agricultural Network- Vermont. The work and vision of WAgN- Vermont inspired women from other states to follow the same model and create their own WAgNs. The Maine WAgN began in 1997 and Pennsylvania WAgN in 2003.

“Maine WAgN began when a small group of women from Maine attended a presentation by Mary Peabody, a founder of the Vermont WAgN, early fall of 1997. These women combined their energies to form Maine WAgN. The original grandmothers of Maine WAgN came from diverse backgrounds and the majority of them wore dual hats...farmers who also worked for a number of ag or ag related agencies, i.e., Coop Extension; USDA FSA, NRCS or RC&D; Heifer Project; Western Mountains Alliance; A US Representative staff person; ME Organic Farmers & Gardeners Assoc.”

Women, Food and Agricultural Network (WFAN) formed in 1997, after a working group was formed in 1994 to participate in the United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. Although the organization was originally formed as a working group for an international conference, once back in the States members brought the idea to the women of Iowa,

“This organization was formed to give women a voice in the agriculture sector. Historically women have played a major role but rarely were recognized as an economic contributor. Many women have been involved with sustainable ag but again the face of agriculture is male. Women wanted a safe gathering place to share, support and learn from each other.”

Another organization created in Iowa was the Iowa Women in Agriculture (IWA) in 2005. These women came together originally as a task force composed of women from extension, farm bureau, Farm Service Agency, and National Resources Conservation Service, as well as women involved in production agriculture, including

corn and soybean growers, and pork and beef producers. This task force, and ultimately the organization was “formed because statistics from [the] USDA showed more women are becoming involved in the finances and marketing on the farm.”

The Arkansas Women in Agriculture, Inc (ARWIA) is another WIAO which found its origins from a conference, or several as this case may be. The organization formed after the originator of the Arkansas Women in Agriculture conferences was no longer able to conduct these meetings. Consequently the other women involved in the conferences decided it was time to form a non-profit organization, with the conferences being a major active focus.

Simply by observing why these organizations formed we can establish how they are different from the WIAOs that have come before them. The idea of creating a safe space for women to learn and share with each other gives the distinct impression that the focus of these organizations was primarily on the women within the organization. The membership of these organizations reflects women who are involved professionally in agriculture and/or agriculture agencies. And not one mentioned a man’s organization being the impetus for their formation. In their creation, these WIAOs have a distinctively different sense of purpose than the WIAOs of the previous time periods. Again this is reflected in the mission statements of the organizations and the activities they embark on.

The language of the mission statements reflects the women’s active roles within agriculture and as farmers themselves. Also particularly apparent is the recurring idea of forming networks for women. For example, the mission statement for ARWIA states,

“to provide educational programming and a network of support for women involved in agriculture in Arkansas,”

PA-WAgN declares their mission to be:

“to support women in agriculture by providing a positive learning environment, networking, and empowerment,”

IWA established mission says,

“Our purpose is to help educate women in agriculture and give women a networking opportunity,”

and WFAN affirms it is their mission to,

“Linking and empowering women to build food systems and communities that are healthy, just, sustainable, and that promote environmental integrity.”

The idea of creating educational arenas, outside of the colligate sphere, and networks for women in agriculture suggests that these spaces still do not adequately exist. If organizations arise in order to fill a void in society, the sheer fact that a number of organizations with these intentions formed, is a clear indication that women in agriculture are not having these needs meet elsewhere. This is further substantiated when we consider the previous WIAOs focused on industry promotion, political lobbying, and/or educating others.

Like the change in missions and purpose from the WIAOs of the previous epochs, the activities of the WIAOs of this time-period are also decidedly different. WAgN – Vermont activities revolved around education and technical assistance for on-farm operations. Likewise, PA-WAgN and WAgN-Maine, IWA, and WFAN also focused on education about ‘how to farm’: workshops, farm-tours, multi-day conferences with classes ranging from tractors to accounting, grant-writing, and web-site development. ARWIA started a program called Annie’s Project which focuses on providing “risk management education workshops designed with the mission to empower farm women to

be better business partners throughout networks and by managing and organizing critical information”. Creation of knowledge materials, resources, making connections with peers were also important foci of their activities.

These activities provide evidence that the women involved are interested in farming, not just the supporting the industry. These activities are focused on the structural activities of farming, especially in the area of business management. What is noticeably absent are cook books, pageants, and youth classroom programs. These groups have dealt with some criticism since other agriculture based organizations offer these same types of programs. But the appearance of these WIAOs suggests that educational programming is not the only need to be filled. If that were the case, the farm bureau and the Grange would be adequate. The emergence of these WIAOs and as suggested by their mission statements is there is still a need for a safe space for women interested in agriculture. And while they have come along way in being recognized in the industry, there is still a ways to go.

### **Summary**

There are two main themes which reflect the ideas presented in the literature review and surfaced across the epochs in the course of this study, each of which I will address here. The first theme is the spaces allowed by the gendered division of labor. In the literature review I presented the idea that one of the patriarchal natures of agriculture is the gendered division of labor. According to the literature, this gendered division is mandated by society and the preconceived notions of femininity, supported by the core

belief that men and women do different work, and further legitimized by the mechanical changes in on-farm work.

Looking across the epochs we can see this reflected in the types of organizations which appeared. For example in the second epoch, even though more women entered into the workforce and participated in on-farm work during the wars, the predominant ideal was the separation of duties with men supporting the family by going to work and women supporting the family emotionally by keeping the home. The organizations reflected this space, legitimizing women forming an organization because it supported an industry. In the third epoch, women had a greater presence in the urban workforce; however this was not an evident change in the agricultural workforce. Thus the organizations were able to capitalize on the fact that women had a more public voice, yet still reflected the fact that women were supporters of industry and farming and not members themselves. In the final epoch we see a significant change in the gendered division of agriculture with the increase in number of women who farm and who see themselves as farmers. The emerging organizations then reflected this change by addressing women in agriculture.

The second theme that was presented in the literature and then surfaced across the epochs was the legitimization of women involved in agriculture. In the literature I presented this idea based on the invisibility of women in agriculture. We see this personified by the initial recognition of women in agriculture through the men. The women's organizations could not or did not exist without first a men's organization being present. But again as women gained a larger public voice, their invisibility diminished. In the third epoch they legitimized themselves in agriculture through personal higher

education, then educational and political campaigns. Finally in the last epoch women emerged in the public eye as legitimate farmers. Recognized and counted by the government, and with organizations of their own, women farmers are becoming less invisible.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

In this final chapter, I address each of my research expectations and discuss how these were met or not by my findings. I also present any additional findings that may have surfaced during the course of my research. This discussion is focused on the second, third and fourth epochs, since WIAOs only emerged during these times. Next I discuss limitations of this study and propose additional improvements and areas for further research. Finally, I consider the implications of this research for women-initiated agriculture organizations and for research on gender in agriculture as a whole.

The scope of the primary research question allows for some exploratory analysis. The research was guided by the expectations, each of which I will address here, but the discussion and conclusions are not limited to these parameters. Several other important themes appeared through the course of this study, each of which I will also address here.

#### **Research Expectations Discussion**

My first research expectation was that the formation of WIAOs would cluster around certain time periods, and in turn those time periods would reflect major eras of change in the United States. Based on the decision to organize this paper according to epochs, I imposed an order to the presentation of WIAOs. Using this imposed structure,

it is not evident if the WIAOs truly did cluster around certain time periods. However, looking at the WIAOs without the limitations of the epochs gives a clearer picture.

The timeline in Appendix A situates all the WIAOs in chronological order, along with most of the major events for the US, agriculture, and women mentioned in Chapter Four. Using the timeline to position the WIAOs in the larger context, it is more apparent that the organizations do not exactly follow the timeline of events in the US. However, with this said, the WIAOs do fall into a regular pattern and do reflect the times of change, but there is a lag between the waves of feminism, their resulting social reforms and WIAO formation. As we saw, the first WIAO appeared in 1938, eighteen years after women obtained the right to vote and sixty-five years after the establishment of the first major women's organization. I will come back this idea of lag between formation of WIAOs and the structural preconditions, as there are several possible explanations based on the literature and the research.

My second research expectation was that those WIAOs that formed within certain time periods share similar characteristics such as purposes, goals, and activities. What emerged from the research is that four different types of organizations formed, and they each formed at different times reflecting the time periods. Each type of organization shared similar characteristics, but across types there was both continuity and disjuncture. The four types of WIAOs that emerged were the commodity/industry groups, the professional/collegiate groups, political/activist groups, and the women as farmer/networking groups. Within these types, the characteristics of the organizations were similar. For example, the commodity/industry groups, which were the only type to emerge in the second epoch and at the beginning of the third epoch, all share similar

stories of formation, mission statements, and types of activities. While there was a variation in commodity (beef, pork, wheat, etc.), formation for each was dependent upon a man's group existing first. The mission statements all focused outwardly on advocating the industry and the activities were centered in the home economic realm. Also the beneficiaries of the group's activities were not the members themselves, but rather the men and children of the industry.

The second type of WIAO, the professional/collegiate groups share similar characteristics with each other, but are a departure from the commodity/industry groups. First, these groups originated on university campuses, a consequence of more women attending college. Secondly, these groups were the first to acknowledge women's interest in entering agriculture as a profession, rather than only by marriage or birth. The social nature and some of the specific activities reflected the organizations' condition of being a collegiate group and not an organization of farmer's wives.

The third type of WIAO to emerge is the political/activist groups. These groups, which first emerged at the end of the 1960s and in the mid 1970s, share similar characteristics with each other as well as with the other types of WIAOS, but also vary among themselves as well as from the other two types. Within type, these groups shared the similarity of being outwardly political on a large scale and with their goals to educate the public. However, the specific actions varied and reflected the particular organization. OWA focused on educating people about specific agricultural practices and utilized multiple media based methods, and AAW and WIFE focused on legislation for agriculture in general. It was the highly public and potentially controversial nature of these organizations which separate them from the other types of WIAOs. They were not

afraid to be controversial and draw attention- in fact that was their goal. With that being said, most of these groups (specifically WIFE and Agri-Women) were based on conservative christian values and did not align themselves with the controversial feminist movement. Their actions were not focused on liberation of farm women, but instead were focused on the plight of agriculture. This outward focus of these political/activist groups- the primary beneficiaries of their actions were the industry- is similar to that of the commodity/industry groups. Also similar, is their self-identification as farmers' wives.

The final type of WIAO to emerge is the women as farmer/networking groups. These did not emerge until the mid 1990s and continue into the present day. These groups share similar characteristics with each other but few similarities across type. In fact the only real similarity with any other groups is the acknowledgement of women's chosen interest in agriculture. For these groups this is one of the primary bases for their existence. Each of these groups focus on women as farmers and address the needs of women farmers, and not primarily the industry or state of agriculture. Of course those are important issues since they affect the economic viability of farms, but only as they pertain to the farms these women are running. These groups conduct similar activities, but tailor them to their specific member's needs. The beneficiaries of these groups are the members themselves.

Finally in terms of my research expectations, I expected that the characteristics and/or WIAOs would reflect women in the greater political, economic, and social context of women not only in agriculture but in society as well. In reflecting on this expectation this is where there is an intersection between the past two observations- that the WIAOs

did follow a time line, however there is a noticeable lag between them and women in the greater society as well as the observation that different types emerged at different times. I will address these observations separately, but they are not mutually exclusive.

Each of the different types of organizations emerged in different times, with the exception of the professional/collegiate and political/activist groups which overlapped in the 1970s but in different arenas. I argue that the emergence of different types of organizations is not an evolutionary process in a Darwinian sense, but rather based both on the changing nature of opportunities for women in the greater society and the changing spaces and/or needs of women in agriculture. First after each wave of feminism the position of women changed. First, they had a greater presence in the work force, then they increased their education levels, next they increased their political presence, and finally there is a greater social control. In each of these cases, women have taken a different command of their public selves and economic status, changing their consciousness.

The first groups to emerge, the commodity/industry groups, were the first to reflect or acknowledge women's involvement in agriculture. Although they projected a suburban housewife type image, they were ultimately the first self-initiated public step for farm women. These organizations reflected the space that farm women could create and arguably needed during that time. Rural electrification and telecommunications had brought some relief to the isolation of rural women, but it also must be remembered that advancements in technology was and still is slower to reach rural areas. The lack of technology is one explanation for the slow emergence of WIAOs, versus urban and suburban organizations. The isolation of farming and ranching by sheer nature of space,

and amplified by the lack of technology, both hindered the forming of WIAOs as well as provided the need for their creation.

The second and third types of WIAOs were made possible both because of the commodity/industry groups and the changes for women in the greater society. The commodity/industry groups gave a public face, albeit limited, to women in agriculture. Coupled with women's increased presence in higher education and their growing political voice due to the new social movements of the 1960s, the space was created which allowed these groups to emerge. Attainment of higher education is particularly important in the creation of both of these groups since it also increases the consciousness of women and their choices of involvement in agriculture.

The final type of WIAO, the women as farmer/ networking groups, is a result of the groups which came before them, and the changing times for women. The recognition of women in agriculture and the subsequent acknowledgement of women who farm, then raised the awareness of the lack of resources for this population. The characteristics of the third wave of feminism, specifically where women have taken greater social control of their situations and instead of waiting for equality in the men's groups, have circumvented this roadblock by establishing their own groups, all contribute to establishment of these WIAOs.

The low response rate of the study may have influenced my findings in terms of the typology and their almost linear emergence. By only using the internet as the means of locating the WIAOs, I may have missed other types of organizations. I originally identified, by name, sixty-nine organizations, were only able to locate web info for thirty-six and had twenty responses. Many of the groups who did not have internet information,

were affiliate organizations, specifically Cow Belles and Agri-women. It is possible that results were biased towards newer and or larger organizations since these are more likely to have the resources to keep a website. With a larger sample size I may have found other catalysts for formation and or even other types of WIAOs.

There are several explanations based on the literature and the research for the lag between changes for women in society and the formation of WIAOs that I have previously mention. The first is the perpetuation of the family farm and the agrarian ideal. There is a romantic notion of what farm life is like and what a good farm wife is. These expectations together with the conservative nature of rural areas hinder farm women from challenging the norms, even if these norms are outdated. Women's issues were threatening to the family oriented nature of agriculture. In fact, the commodity/industry and political/activist WIAOs perpetuated this ideal by identifying themselves as "wives", and intentionally distancing themselves from feminists and feminist issues. Good traditional Christian values are the core of agriculture, and the manifestation of these values is the nuclear family with everyone filling their proper roles.

Secondly, the nature of farm work, both the consumptive nature and gender divisions also contribute to the lag. Farm work is hard and time-consuming. Economic disparity limits resources that contribute to the formation of organizations- namely time and money. Farm women are preoccupied with keeping their families afloat. First, as evident through the literature, there is distinct division of labor and men do not do women's work. Also evident is the fact that with the changing economic stresses it is usually women who take off-farm jobs to supplement the family income. However they

are still responsible for their on-farm duties. This does not leave much idle time to form organizations. Only after the advent of labor-saving devices for women, and the increased numbers of women taking off-farm jobs, did WIAOs really start to emerge.

Through this research several important observations materialized. First was a typology of organizations and the continuity and disjuncture within and across type. Second was the importance of time period and the structural preconditions which affected the creation of WIAOs. Third was the idea of spaces created by the changes in the structural preconditions, how these spaces were filled and then the new spaces that surfaced as a result. Finally, there is the recognition of a lag between women in the greater society and the women in agriculture as evident by the slow creation of WIAOs.

### **Benefits and Limitations**

The major benefit of embarking on a qualitative project like this was the connections made with women across the US in all types of agriculture organizations. The willingness of some to share their stories, and having the privilege of compiling those stories was truly an honor and responsibility. Because there has not been a project which has attempted to do the same, I was not bound by previous work or findings.

However, with this amount of freedom, came the need to impose restraint. And thus this project's biggest limitation is the sheer size of the subject. Having to set parameters to make the data manageable also meant having to limit the information allowed. For example, focusing on formation of WIAOs gave a comparable point of reference, but does not tell the full story of many of the WIAOs.

Other limitations of this research were in the methods. Relying on the internet as the main source of identifying WIAOs and more importantly as the method for contact and/or information limited the study to the organizations which have employed the internet. Rural areas are generally the last to get new technologies, including the internet. While in widespread use in urban areas, the internet is not as widely available especially in remote areas. Since it is a relatively new technology, it is reasonable to assume that there are organizations which do not use it. This would also explain the abundance of organizations where no contact information could be found.

### **Implications and Further Research**

This study has some important implications. It is not only a story of women initiated agriculture organizations, but rather it is also telling the story of women in agriculture, women organizations, and the progress of women in the United States. Most history books are told from a male point of view. The key moments revolve around men and their accomplishments, with only the few most outstanding women making it into the journals. By first organizing the paper according to the time periods of the women's movement, I offered a different lens to look at history. Focusing on women organizations and how they were impacted by the events of the world also gave a new filter by which to examine a social phenomenon.

This study has only slightly scratched the surface on uncovering the full story of women-initiated agriculture organizations. There are several additional directions this study can go. The first and most logical would be a more concentrated look at WIAOs.

One way to do this would be to focus on one organization and see how it has changed over time and then compare these changes to the changes in the United States, agriculture, and women. For example, several of the older WIAOs in this study, specifically the Cow Belle organizations, reported changes in name, mission statement and even activities. Information on websites usually reflected the recent happenings, and thus was one reason why use of website information was limited. Taking a deeper look into one organization would also allow for a better analysis with how an organization dealt with very specific issues and times.

Another approach would be to focus on the WIAOs in one time period, such as one of the epochs outlined in this paper or even a more limited time period such as a decade. A greater in depth study would allow for a larger analysis of the important events for agriculture, women and the greater society. It could also allow for the researcher to explore beyond just the three foci – date of formation, mission statements, and activities – of this paper. Other possibilities would be to explore the internal structure of the organization such as by-laws and decision making processes, a more in depth analysis of member make-up, or even looking at their external connections.

A third possible idea for future research would be to expand the study outside of the US to a global perspective. Studies have been done on WIAOs (although not by that specific term) in Australia and England possible continuation would be to compare WIAOs. There are several approaches that could be taken. For example, a possible study could be a continuation of this study, looking at emergence and structural preconditions and how these compare. Another possibility would be to see if the typology presented in this paper stands true for WIAOs in other countries, and if not, are there other types or

not? A final idea would be to explore the notion of lag in changes for women and the creation of WIAOs. Does this exist, and if so, to what extent, in other countries.

Research on women's agriculture organizations is relatively new and the future possibilities are endless. Hopefully this research will add to the literature, but more importantly open up the questions being asked about this over looked population and inspire future research.

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## Appendix A

**Figure 1. Historical Timeline of Events for United States, Agriculture, Women and Women Initiated Agriculture Organizations**

**18 80**

Hatch Act -  
 Populist Party begins -18 90 - General Federation of Women's Clubs

**19 00**

- Country Life Commission

**19 10**

16th Amendment, 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment- - Smith- Lever Extension Act, World War I

18<sup>th</sup> Amendment -19 20 - American Country Life Association, 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment,  
 tractors become mainstream

ERA introduced to Congress

Stock Market Crash and Great Depression **19 30**

New Deal , 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment, Tennessee Valley Authority, Agricultural Adjustment Act-  
 Resettlement Administration and Farm Security Administration-  
 - Chemurgy movement  
 - Rural Electrification Act

- Women's Auxiliary of the Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers' Association

Cow Belles Arizona -

**19 40** - Wyoming Cow Belles

US enters World War II

Women's Land Army

- Nebraska Cow Belles

- 19 50 - Kansas Wheathearts, Kansas Cow Belles, US involvement in Korean War**  
**-California Cow Belles ,American National Cow Belles**
- Washington State Dairy Women**  
**-Kern County Wool Growers Association “Bo Peeps”**
- 19 60 Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring**
- Iowa Porkettes**
- Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.**
- 70 First Earth Day**
- 19 American Hereford Women, 19 Oregon Women for Agriculture**
- United Farm Wives of Kansas; Agriculture Women’s Association, Battle of the Sexes -**
- American Agri-women, Illinois Women for Agriculture, President Nixon resigns, First National Farm Women’s Forum**
- Women Involved in Farm Economics, Nebraska Feeders Auxiliary**
- Sigma Alpha Sorority, AAM tractor rally in Washington, DC, Women integrated into army**
- 80 Ohio Agri-Women, Farm Crisis begins**
- Geraldine Ferraro runs for VP of US**
- 19 Ronald Reagan elected**
- Sally Ride becomes first women in space**
- Farm AIDE Concert**
- Georgia Cotton Wives**
- Fall of Berlin Wall-19 90**
- Fall of the Soviet Union, Glass Ceiling Commission**
- “Take your daughters to work day” established**
- NAFTA begins**
- Dolly the Sheep is cloned**
- Women’s Agriculture Network- Vermont- Women, Food and Agriculture Network, Women’s Agriculture Network- Maine-**
- 20 00**
- September 11Attacks in US**
- Pennsylvania Women Agriculture Network**
- Iowa Women in Agriculture**
- Arkansas Women in Agriculture**

## Appendix B

### Email Recruitment Letter



Dear (name),

My name is Lindsay Smith and I am a rural sociology graduate student at the Pennsylvania State University. I am currently working on collecting research for my thesis which focuses on agriculture organizations that have been started by women. The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that have lead to and affected the creation of these organizations.

Through my initial efforts, I have identified (name of org) as a women initiated agriculture organization, and through my searches via the internet have found your name as a point of contact.

Participation in this research is simple and your help would be greatly appreciated. First simply read over the consent guidelines listed below, then complete the attached survey and return to me via email. The survey itself is very short and should only take about 10 minutes of your time. All questions are about the organization and not about individual members. Thank you for your help.

- First you must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study.
- Participation is voluntary and you may stop and/or decline to answer any question.
- Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties. The data will be stored and secured in files on a password protected server. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.
- Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. Contact Lindsay Smith 814-769-6442 with questions or my faculty advisor Dr. Kathy Brasier at 814-865-7320. You may also call either number if you have complaints or concerns about this research.
- Completion of the survey implies your consent to participate in this research.
- Please print off this form to keep for your records.

If you do not feel that you are the right person, would you please be willing to recommend someone else, either via email at [las372@psu.edu](mailto:las372@psu.edu), or by telephone at 814-769-6442. Thank you so much for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

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**Appendix C**  
**Email Recruitment Letter 2**



Dear     (name)    ,

My name is Lindsay Smith and I am a rural sociology graduate student at the Pennsylvania State University. About 2 weeks ago I sent you a request for your participation in my research project about women initiated agriculture organizations. According to my records I have not received a response from you. Your response is very important to my research as I have only identified a relatively small number of such organizations, so information on each is crucial to telling a complete story.

Participation in this research is simple and your help would be greatly appreciated. First simply read over the consent guidelines listed below, then complete the attached survey and return to me via email. The survey itself is very short and should only take about 10 minutes of your time. All questions are about the organization and not about individual members. Thank you for your help.

- First you must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study.
- Participation is voluntary and you may stop and/or decline to answer any question.
- Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties. The data will be stored and secured in files on a password protected server. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.
- Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. Contact Lindsay Smith 814-769-6442 with questions or my faculty advisor Dr. Kathy Brasier at 814-865-7320. You may also call either number if you have complaints or concerns about this research.
- Completion of the survey implies your consent to participate in this research.
- Please print off this form to keep for your records.

If you do not feel that you are the right person, would you please be willing to recommend someone else, either via email at [las372@psu.edu](mailto:las372@psu.edu), or by telephone at 814-769-6442. Thank you so much for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

## Appendix D

### Email Recruitment Letter 3



Dear     (name)    ,

My name is Lindsay Smith and I am a rural sociology graduate student at the Pennsylvania State University. About 3 weeks ago I sent you a request for your participation in my research project about women initiated agriculture organizations. According to my records I have not received a response from you. Your response is very important to my research as I have only identified a relatively small number of such organizations, so information on each is crucial to telling a complete story. This is my final request and would greatly appreciate your help. I have set the cut off date for receiving surveys for May 10, 2008

Participation in this research is simple and your help would be greatly appreciated. First simply read over the consent guidelines listed below, then complete the attached survey and return to me via email. The survey itself is very short and should only take about 10 minutes of your time. All questions are about the organization and not about individual members. Thank you for your help.

- First you must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study.
- Participation is voluntary and you may stop and/or decline to answer any question.
- Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties. The data will be stored and secured in files on a password protected server. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.
- Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. Contact Lindsay Smith 814-769-6442 with questions or my faculty advisor Dr. Kathy Brasier at 814-865-7320. You may also call either number if you have complaints or concerns about this research.
- Completion of the survey implies your consent to participate in this research.
- Please print off this form to keep for your records.

If you do not feel that you are the right person, would you please be willing to recommend someone else, either via email at [las372@psu.edu](mailto:las372@psu.edu), or by telephone at 814-769-6442. Thank you so much for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

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## Appendix E

### Email Survey



Thank you so much for agreeing to assist me in my research on women initiated agriculture organizations. Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and email it back to me.

#### Questions:

1. First, just to clarify, what is the official name of the organization? Is this the original name, or has it changed? (if yes) What was the original name?
2. When did this organization first get started? Is there an official date?
3. Please tell me about how your organization was formed. For example, what was/is the original purpose and/or mission of this organization? Does the organization have mission statement? If possible, do you know what that is?
4. What were some of the original activities of this organization?
5. Was this organization independently formed? Or is it a satellite of a larger group?
6. Finally, is there anything else that **you** would like to share about how this organization came about? Major influences? Significant events?

Again, thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Lindsay A Smith  
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[las372@psu.edu](mailto:las372@psu.edu)

**Appendix F:****Email Thank you**

Dear     (name)    ,

Thank you so much for your response and help with my research. I greatly appreciate your contribution. I will use this information to complete my master's thesis as well as to start telling the story of women initiated agriculture organizations and the changes they have experienced through the years.

If you have any questions or further information please feel free to send me an email at [las372@psu.edu](mailto:las372@psu.edu).

Thank you again.

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