Gender as a Social Construct of Quality of Life Within Farm Families

Practicing Sustainable Agriculture

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GENDER AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT IN PERCEPTIONS OF QUALITY OF LIFE WITHIN FARM FAMILIES PRACTICING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

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(ABSTRACT)

Sustainable agriculture constitutes an internationally recognized critique of conventional agricultural practices. The criteria defining sustainable agriculture are diverse and, in some cases, contradictory. However, proponents of sustainable agriculture do not aggressively question such diversity in the movement. This study attempts to highlight the variation in subjective meanings attached to sustainable agriculture, reflected in its goal to improve quality of life. The social construct of gender makes a difference in how these farmers define quality of life. This social construction in turn affects participation in the sustainable agriculture movement. At the root of these gendered differences is that life goals and daily experiences for men farmers within the family have changed significantly as
their involvement in the movement has intensified. Much of what men emphasize in
describing quality of life reflects the values the sustainable agriculture movement itself
espouses; the collective identity of the sustainable agriculture movement resonates with
these male farmers. For their wives, descriptions of quality of life are largely
entwined with their multiple and highly elastic gendered roles and responsibilities on
the farm, in the household, and in paid and unpaid work in the community, and much
less with their involvement in the movement. Women’s life experiences on the farm
and in the community are different from their husbands’ experiences, lending a
distinctively gendered shape to quality of life. They report indicators of quality of life
outside of the movement’s collective identity boundaries. Because women’s unique
contribution to the farm and family are not institutionally recognized and addressed by
the sustainable agriculture movement, the collective identity of the movement is
gender-specific, reflecting a male normative.
Dedication

Jill and Henry Meares have encouraged my educational aspirations in multiple ways -- by starting my personal library at a very young age, supporting me financially, and encouraging my academic talents. My father, an avid reader, and I have a long history of swapping "good reads." And certainly my mother set an important precedent in being the first woman in our extended family to graduate with a master’s degree. I feel fortunate and proud to follow her. They have raised a daughter whose curiosity and passion for inquiry have taken her to places that perhaps they would rather I had not gone; yet, they have never discouraged my need to find out about the world. It is thus fitting that, with tremendous love and gratitude, I dedicate this -- my first piece of original research -- to my parents.
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I. **Statement of the Problem**

In June of 1994 I attended a field day and meeting of a group of graziers belonging to a social movement of sustainable agriculture through the Land Stewardship Project (LSP). These farmers were all practicing non-conventional methods of grazing their cattle on their family farms in an effort to promote sustainable agriculture. This group of approximately ten male farmers (and one female farmer) spent the day with several scientists, consultants and government agents walking the pasture land of a local family-owned dairy farm, noting its agroecological conditions and making plans for research to be carried out in partnership. Scientists and farmers, according to the plan, would together monitor and measure the progress of transforming the farm and its operations to an enterprise that conforms to an ethic of "land stewardship." Land stewardship is defined by the farmers and other participants as the responsibility to ensure the future productivity and health of the land, activities framed by the recognition that it is ultimately the land that sustains human life (LSP pamphlet 1994; Kroese and Flora 1992).

Discussion for most of the day centered on issues especially important to the soil scientists present: how to measure biomass of soil over time and how the presence or absence of insects in a stream gives an indication of its health. As the backyard chickens darted in and out of our circle of lawn chairs and the sun began to set on the barn behind us, discussion turned to quality of life. What is meant by the quality of
life? How do you measure it? How does the transformation of a conventional farm to one based on the land stewardship ethic change the quality of life on the farm? The male farmers readily replied that some sustainable practices were less labor-intensive and allowed them to spend more time with their families. The health of the cattle seemed to be improving. Wild geese were returning to nest on the island in the once-polluted stream that traversed the farm. Fewer pesticides and fertilizers meant fewer input costs and the disappearance of mysterious rashes on farmers’ skin.

However, there was one aspect of their lives and interpersonal relationships which, the majority of the male farmers agreed, was a mystery. Their wives, they said, did not seem to be embracing this new lifestyle and ethic with the same enthusiasm as they were. One farmer stated his wife had not "bought into" the philosophy. Several heads in the circle nodded in concurrence. Women farmers’ perspectives on and their meanings attached to the sustainable practices transforming their farms were indeed absent from the field day and meeting as was their physical presence. Only one farmer had come with his wife, who is considered active in Land Stewardship activities, although she was silent during most of the meeting (most notably during the discussion of quality of life issues).

This group of farmers' in the southeastern part of Minnesota, called the "rotational grazing group" after the type of alternative agriculture they practice, belongs to a larger social movement of sustainable agriculture. They are specifically

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1"Farmers" refers to male and female farmers unless otherwise qualified.
affiliated with one organization, the Land Stewardship Project (LSP), which considers itself a vehicle of the movement; that is, the LSP organizes Minnesota farmers to facilitate the transition from conventional farming to more ecologically-sound practices. The LSP, a private, non-profit and non-governmental organization, sent out its first newsletter in April of 1983 after a year of grassroots organizing and "spreading the word." A decade later the LSP is thriving with a 14-member board of directors, 20 staff persons, a large volunteer network, and an annual budget of $850,000 (LSP pamphlet 1994). Supported by individuals, foundations and churches, the LSP organizes workshops and meetings at the grassroots level and provides a channel for farmers to influence public and corporate policy in issues related to the family farm (LSP pamphlet 1994). According to its mission statement, LSP promotes "sustainable agriculture" based on the belief that "all people ... have a fundamental responsibility to care for the land that sustains us" (LSP pamphlet 1994). LSP defines sustainable agriculture as a system of agriculture that is "environmentally sound, economically profitable, family-farm based and socially just" (LSP pamphlet 1994, emphasis added). LSP attempts to study and protect the family farm holistically, by recognizing the interconnectedness of social, biological and economic components of farm life.

Based on my brief conversations with LSP-affiliated male graziers, the rotational grazing group (an important research wing of the LSP) appears to be struggling with lack of family-wide participation in the movement. Male farmers are
questioning their wives' support of and belief in the LSP movement and express a lack of understanding as to why, and more importantly, how this affects all family members' quality of life on the farm and in the household.

The primary question I will address in this study is: How do women and men farmers in the rotational grazing group of the LSP define quality of life? In other words, is there a gendered difference in the definition of quality of life? Important sub-questions will explore the link between the gendered nature of quality of life and the endurance of the LSP in contributing to the social movement of sustainable agriculture. First, how are these definitions of quality of life motivators for action? That is, are there gendered reasons for why people become involved in the LSP? Second, what is the relationship between the gendered differences of quality of life and the stated or implicit goals of the LSP?

The objectives of the study are three-fold: (1) to respond to a farmer-driven problem/question; that is, one initiated and stated by the farmers in the rotational grazing group themselves; (2) to use participatory action research methods to elicit variation in definitions of quality of life between men and women farmers; that is, research conducted in partnership with farmers, allowing them to analyze social constructs of which they are a part as they share information and work towards a shared understanding of social justice; and (3) to contribute to the literature on and study of gender as a social construct within the sustainable agriculture movement.

Women and men who live and work on the farm and in the household make
up a vital part of family-based farms. Their collective experiences, perspectives and visions are important threads in the social fabric that emerges from the land stewardship ethic and sustains it. This study will contribute to the weaving of that social fabric by aiding farmers (both male and female) in the LSP rotational grazing group to understand the gendered definitions of quality of life and the social constructs which help shape those definitions, enabling them to begin to work towards a shared definition of quality of life that could translate into a greater sense of collective identity and solidarity by all farmers on the family farm and within the broader movement. This study will, thus, enable the LSP to analyze its own hiccups in its struggle to promote ecological and human diversity.

II. Literature Review

Social movement theory

The LSP is part of a larger social movement in that it is made up of networks of interactions (mostly informal) between individuals, families, businesses and organizations, who come to share identities through their struggle on the same side of a political and social conflict (Diani 1992:2). Whereas large-scale, profit-motivated, chemical-intensive farm enterprises have become the norm encouraged by agribusiness and the U.S. Congress (Davidson 1990; Little et al. 1987; Kroese 1989), the LSP

\[\text{\textsuperscript{2}}\text{The concepts of "solidarity" and "collective identity" are defined in the literature review.}\]
organizes support networks and research groups consisting of "family farms" with the
goal of bringing about agroecological and social change. The centerpiece of change
the LSP works toward is sustainable agriculture. Thus the change in practices (i.e.
switching to rotational grazing, fallow systems, minimum chemical additives) becomes
then part of the LSP goal of progress towards "socially just" communities.

Social movement theory provides an important context to understand how
gender constructs, as a subset and determinant of social relations, shape action. It is
rarely disputed in the social sciences that some combination of key social variables
(i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, class, culture, age) makes up the social relations within
which our everyday activities, experiences and ideologies unfold (Amott and Matthaei
1991; Smith 1987a). "[T]he activities of individuals are articulated to and organized
by the social relations that express no intention but, arising out of the multiple
intentions of many, coordinate and determine (in the sense of shaping or giving
determinate form to) people's intentions" (Smith 1987a:133). Such a perspective of
the "everyday world as problematic" (Smith 1987a) does not necessarily emphasize
structural explanations at the expense of individual or group agency (conscious
action). It does, however, insist on contextualizing experiences and action. In other
words, actions, experiences and worldviews are shaped to some degree by our social
location, our place in the constellation of the social characteristics of gender, class,
age, race/ethnicity and culture. We either act within those constructs (structural
explanation) or against them (agency). The existence of agency is also indicative of
the determinate nature of social constructs; for we must have something to push against and that something is structure. Therefore, in seeking to explain what motivates people to act, it is essential to explore individuals’ social locations. LSP members represent a fairly homogeneous social group in terms of class, race and ethnicity; virtually all are Northern European Americans earning a significant portion of their livelihood from the farm. Gender represents the distinguishing characteristic in the social locations of these farmers both within the household and among households.

I focus on the intersection of social psychology and resource mobilization theory as it has emerged in the literature the past decade. Many proponents of resource mobilization theory argue that control over actual and potential resources is the only necessary and sufficient factor in explaining social movements (Buechler 1993). Others, including social psychologists, have been instrumental in introducing such elements as grievances and ideology as relevant explanatory factors (Buechler 1993; Cable 1992; Diani 1992; Gamson 1992; Mueller 1992). It is these theoretical debates that lay the groundwork for situating the Land Stewardship Project in the sustainable agriculture movement and for beginning to understand how gender as a social construct affects the extent to which an individual or social group is inclined to join a larger affinity group. As the male farmers in the rotational grazing group articulated, their wives had not "bought into" the philosophical underpinnings of sustainable agriculture; namely that it transforms not only the natural environment of the family
farm land and surrounding areas, but the social environment as well, resulting in a better quality of life. However, such an approach assumes a normative definition of quality of life. If women are not philosophically on board in the movement and participating in the transition to more sustainable practices, then the social movement has likely failed to recognize the gendered variation in definitions of quality of life.

In general terms, social movements can be distinguished from other kinds of organizational behavior in that they constitute action in response to a social, cultural or political conflict, carried out by a plurality of groups or individuals who share in a collective identity (Diani 1992; Gamson 1992; Taylor and Whittier 1992). Social psychologists have contributed significantly to the dethroning of the rational choice theorists who, since the late 1960's, have largely explained the existence of social movements based on "radical individualism that presupposes a pseudo-universal human actor, without either a personal history or a gender, race, or class position within a societal history" (Ferree quoted in Mueller 1992:7). Social psychologists have rightly sought to centralize the actor and her/his social location in understanding the formation and actions of social movements. The study of gender as a social construct in male and female LSP farmers' definitions of quality of life will potentially provide an example of such an oversight. The enthusiasm of the male farmers involved in the rotational grazing group is high, while, according to the male farmers themselves, it lags in the women's domain. Social psychologists' introduction of varied social locations as a partial explanation of social movement participation provides theoretical
support to my inquiry into the gendered perspectives on quality of life (improvement in quality of life being a central means-end of attracting farmers into the movement).

As a result of the shift away from rational choice theory in social movement theory, certain critical elements of social movements have been identified to help explain the centrality of the participation of the "meaning-constructing actor" in "the interpretation of grievances, resources and opportunities" (Mueller 1992:7). Each of these elements is central to the success of a social movement (success defined as perpetuation of the movement), and can be explained, it is argued, based on the social location of the individual actors. I will briefly outline those elements which I hypothesize will be important to understand the gendered difference in meaning, reflected in definitions of quality of life, and hence in participation of the rotational grazing farmers in the LSP. Each element involves examining the intersection of the individual and larger social or cultural systems.

Collective identities. Collective identity defines the boundaries of a social movement (Diani 1992). It can be deliberately drawn or unconsciously reflect the social construct of everyday life. It is important to keep in mind, therefore, that since boundaries by and large reflect social constructs, they can be gendered.

As I have already discussed, gender as a social construct shapes men's and women's experiences and perceptions and, therefore, their actions (Amott and Matthaei 1991; Smith 1987). As Gamson (1992) points out, it follows that collective identity is socially constructed and determines to some extent participation in a social
movement. "The construction of collective identity ...is central in understanding people's willingness to invest emotionally in the fate of some emergent collective entity and to take personal risks on its behalf" (Gamson 1992:60). Buechler (1993:228) makes an even stronger statement about the importance of analyzing collective identity in understanding the extent of inclusiveness in a particular social movement: "[P]eople who participate in collective action do so only when such action resonates with both an individual and a collective identity that makes such action meaningful."

Taylor and Whittier (1992) come to the same conclusion but from a different angle. Rather than examining the social construction of the collective identity itself, they explore the social construction of the activities and conflict that led to the formation of a collective identity. "To understand any politicized identity community, it is necessary to analyze the social and political struggle that created the identity" (Taylor and Whittier 1992:110). This definition calls to mind Allen and Sachs’ (1991) insistence that we examine the assumptions underlying the non-sustainability of agriculture (especially those imbedded in social constructs) as a means of understanding the boundaries of the sustainable agriculture movement3. In other words, the social constructs which determine the context in which the movement will or will not unfold provides important, if not complete, explanations for participation, or lack of, in the movement. Thus, rather than studying the gendered nature of the

3See the next section of the literature review.
Land Stewardship membership and activities per se, I have chosen to analyze the broader notion of the variations in definitions of quality of life as representative of the social location from which the potential for participation derives.

Buechler (1993:222) places meaning in the realm of ideology: "Ideology encompasses the ideas, beliefs, values, symbols and meanings that motivate individual participation and give coherence to collective action." Collective identity emerges when ideologies are shared or at least included within the movement. According to Buechler, the history of the women’s movement and struggle for suffrage in the United States provides an important example of how acknowledging and incorporating the diversity of ideology in a single movement can result in palpable change. He argues that over time the women’s movement incorporated diverse ideologies attached to women’s various social locations in the U.S. (differences in women’s race/ethnicity and class especially) which contributed to the fostering of a collective identity in the women’s movement and widening the umbrella at specific points in time in order to push through certain changes, such as women’s right to vote (Buechler 1993). While during certain periods ideological distinctions and schisms have characterized the women’s movement (radical versus socialist versus lesbian), it is also true that these ideologies have co-existed from time to time to unite women towards a common goal.

**Solidarity.** This concept is closely related to collective identity, but is defined by the extent to which an individual or social group is alienated from the organizational entities of the movement. Gamson (1992) suggests that the existence of
affinity groups is one way of measuring solidarity in a social movement. Affinity groups are small, formalized support networks, which function as sub-groups of the larger organization or movement and tend to the unique needs of that group of people. The male farmers' rotational grazing group in the LSP can be called an affinity group. They meet regularly and share information about grazing practices and productive activities they engage in. Such affinity groups do not exist for women in the LSP. While certainly individual women participate in LSP activities (outside of the rotational grazing group as fundraisers, program coordinators, educators, etc.), it appears that little to no organizing is initiated either on behalf of the LSP or in spontaneous and informal grassroots initiatives around the unique social location of women farmers. Again it is crucial to define that social location in relation to the definitions of quality of life to determine the degree to which the LSP either overlooks solidarity or only emphasizes male farmers' solidarity as a component of its organizing efforts. A feeling of solidarity partially motivates individuals to act on behalf of the social movement. Thus an inquiry of socially-constructed solidarity, as it relates to gendered definitions of quality of life within the LSP, points to motivators of action as they are shaped by gender.

Networks of informal interaction or micromobilization. This concept speaks to

\footnote{One exception is the Women's Sustainable Agriculture Network advertised monthly in the LSP newsletter. However, none of the women farmers I talked with participated in this group, and its activities are not integrated into the movement in the same way that the bio-monitoring project's activities are.}
such issues as recruitment and planning, but also the facilitation of solidarity by simply bringing people together. Micromobilization is the process by which individuals are connected to the socio-cultural levels of the movement (Gamson 1992; Diani 1992). Gamson uses the descriptively accurate term "meshing" to explain the process of such encounters. Likewise, Buechler (1993) points to the exclusion of micro-level analysis (for example, examining informal networks) in resource mobilization theory as a major weakness. Incorporating a micro-level analysis of collective action, for instance, brings to bear the issues of "individual motivation" and "social interaction" which topples the reigning notion of the social movement member as rational actor without a social location as well as the tendency to reify social movements (Buechler 1993:224).

Although, as Gamson (1992:73) reports, micromobilization theory is still struggling to identify what specific conditions of a mobilizing act further collective action, we can begin to identify "encounters" in which "potential challengers say or do things that help the development of a collective identity, solidarity, and collective action frame." Among other things, encounters include recruitment and other meetings internal to the organization or movement. Such meetings as the one I attended in June of 1994 with LSP scientists and farmers is one such encounter. In other words, the rotational grazing group is one example of the micromobilization efforts of the LSP. As I reported in the problem statement, women farmers and their voices were noticeably absent from the discussion of quality of life as well as the
research planning that took place throughout the day. Exploring differences in how
women and men define a "good life" point to the necessity for corresponding informal
networks. I am not suggesting that women and men farmers should be necessarily
organized separately, rather that the substantive basis of micro-level networks be
broadened to include a more comprehensive understanding of the difference in
meaning the women and men attach to the goal to create "healthy" and "socially just"
communities reflected in their definitions of a "good life."

**Consciousness and negotiation.** A current debate in social movement theory is
one of action based on rational actor models versus action based on meaning.
Resource mobilization theory views social movements as "normal, rational,
institutionally rooted, political challenges by aggrieved groups (Buechler 1993:218).
Social psychologists, on the other hand, introduce the notion that individuals active in
social movements participate in constructing meaning and socio-cultural processes that
offer meaning (Gamson 1992; Taylor and Whittier 1992; Buechler 1993). "It is not
through force or coercion that the regime maintains itself but through its ability to
shape our worldview" (Gamson 1992:65), and our ability to contribute to the
formulation of that worldview.

So while consciousness is a process central to attaching meaning to a
movement, it also enables marginalized people within the larger society or within the
movement itself to gain an understanding of their socially constructed position (either
in the movement or society at large) and leads to the establishment of new
expectations about their treatment. "When a movement is successful at creating a collective identity, its interpretive orientations are interwoven with the fabric of everyday life" (Taylor and Whittier 1992:114). Our situations in everyday life (and how they are constructed by gender) are crucial to our understanding of how society (or the movement) is constructed and what we can expect from them (Smith 1987).

Most successful social movements involve some sort of personal transformation; they give us a means to challenge the way our lives are socially constructed (Diani 1993; Gamson 1992; Taylor and Whittier 1992). Negotiation is a concept which refers to the forms of political activism in everyday life separate from strategies and tactics of the social movement as a whole. Negotiation involves "the politicization of the self and daily life" (Taylor and Whittier 1992:117). As Taylor and Whittier (1992:118) point out, "gender inequality is imbedded in and reproduced in even the most routine interactions." Negotiations about new ways of thinking occur in private and public settings. Social movements link the two. The LSP attempts to engage in building consciousness and encouraging negotiation, at least in principle, by taking the philosophy and ethic of stewardship to the level of the everyday; that is, in the agricultural practices and research endeavors carried out on farmers' soil. It is important to determine to what degree the "everyday" as conceived by the LSP represents a norm defined by male activities and male perceptions of the improvement in quality of life. In turn, this inquiry (which is reflected in the gendered differences that emerge in the meanings attached to quality of life by women and men who are at
least perceived to be supportive of LSP) sheds light on the opportunity for personal transformation by entire farm families disaggregated by gender within the LSP. If consciousness within the LSP is not based on the totality of voices on the farm, then it is shortsighted and will probably not result in "socially just" communities.

The social component of sustainable agriculture

The sustainable agriculture movement as conceived by the LSP is successful and viable if the family farm is transformed into an enterprise that not only attempts to regain biological integrity of the land while keeping the farm economically afloat, but if it also responds to the needs and visions for change of the family and the larger community. LSP encourages both a change in agricultural practices and lifestyle.

One of the LSP’s three stated goals is to build "healthy communities," defined in one instance as "encouraging understanding, interaction and respect for cultural diversity in terms of race, gender, age, profession, heritage and faith" (LSP pamphlet 1994).

Thus sustainable agriculture, as defined by the LSP, is not conceptualized in a social vacuum. The philosophy and ethics of land stewardship seep through the soil and vegetation of the farm to invigorate not only the pastures, fields and streams but also the lives of those who depend on the land as well as the surrounding community. It is not only the natural environment that must be healed, but the social environment as well.

Key words, thus, in the LSP movement are "family-based farm" and "socially...
just." The family farm makes up part of the landscape-lifescap\textsuperscript{e} on which sustainable agriculture operates, a vehicle through which the LSP stirs change, transforms land and people, and expands the movement. The family farm is thus central to the success of the movement. By first creating the social and agroecological environment compatible with sustainable agricultural practices on farmers' own land and within their household, the farmer and his/her operations will subsequently have an impact on the community at large. Implicit in the LSP’s stated goal of social justice, I would argue, is the notion that the family farm must first build solidarity and collective identity within (essential components to resource mobilization and the growth of any social movement) [Gamson 1992; Taylor and Whittier 1992] before enabling change at the community level. Therefore, we must look inside the family farm at its components and understand the potential for building solidarity and collective identity as they relate to the sustainable agriculture movement and the articulated goals of the LSP.

Sustainable agriculture constitutes an internationally recognized critique of conventional agricultural research and development. Its constituents fall under a wide

\footnote{A landscape, as defined by an experimental research program entitled the SANREM CRSP, is a spatial concept describing biophysical qualities. Lifescap\textsuperscript{e} is its social and economic analogue. Together they represent a "whole systems" view of the farm: the interdependence of people and the natural environment \textit{in context}. That is, the concept captures the farm not merely as a self-contained system, but within the larger systems it both acts upon and within and is acted upon. SANREM CRSP stands for the Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Collaborative Research Support Program, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development.}
umbrella: farmers, university scientists and administrators, consumers, and other activists. The criteria defining sustainable agriculture are diverse and, in some cases, contradictory, all mirroring the various material and subjective interests of its proponents (Allen and Sachs 1991). Some farmers are interested in market premiums; consumers want healthier products; and small-scale farmers wish to escape being swallowed up by larger enterprises and agribusiness. However, as Allen and Sachs (1991:571) suggest, proponents of sustainable agriculture do not aggressively question such diversity in the movement in the interest of "clos[ing] off the debate on the meaning of sustainable agriculture and get[tng] on with the project of making agriculture sustainable." They argue for an important pause in the transition from conventional to sustainable agriculture to examine whether or not, when we call for a return to or preservation of family-based farms, we recognize the gender, race, and class inequities that can be embedded in the family farm. This study is one of those pauses attempting to highlight the variation in subjective meanings attached to sustainable agriculture, reflected in its goal to improve quality of life.

As Allen and Sachs (1991:574) point out, proponents of agricultural sustainability tend to agree on the importance of "preserving external nature." What is problematic for the movement is the failure to recognize, understand, and agree on the social issues related to agricultural sustainability. The biggest oversight, according to Allen and Sachs, is the failure to deconstruct and specify the myriad and diverse proponents of the movement, reflected in the multiple levels of action and diverse
goals. (Male and female farmers represent such proponents.) The second is the failure to analyze inequalities imbedded in political and economic structures that support non-sustainable agriculture. The two are related. "A lack of sufficient specification of the societal subject for sustainability leads its advocates to prescribe future visions that do not consider social inequities and therefore accept domination based on class, gender and race" (Allen and Sachs 1991:578). Studies have shown that the family farm is one of those structures or institutions within which gender inequities or differences exist (Coughenour and Swanson 1983; Flora 1985; Haney and Knowles 1988; Jensen 1985; Neth 1994; Rosenfeld 1985; Sachs 1987; Smith 1987b). Whereas Allen and Sachs emphasize inequity, this study aims primarily at capturing differences. Understanding gender differences is equally as important for the social movement and this study as the concept of inequity. Difference does not necessarily imply inequity, although the two can, in some cases, be synonymous. As such, researchers and social movement organizers who do not examine the consequences of gender differences on the family farm risk promoting a vision of sustainable agriculture which reflects only the male articulation of quality of life, to the extent that a gendered difference exists.

According to Allen and Sachs (1991), the sustainable agriculture movement tends to reproduce women's traditional gender roles. The family farm is seen as the essential organizing unit, an aggregate, thus overlooking gender as a social construct within households and family-based farm enterprises. The fact that on the majority of
farms men control labor, capital and land (suggesting a patriarchal organization) tends not to be included is a problematic of the movement. When women are essentialized, it is for their reproductive role: food processing and preparation, subsistence gardening, and childcare. However, the sustainable agriculture movement has made little initiative to legitimize these roles by, for example, moving them into the public sphere.

Correcting these oversights, they suggest, will lead to a shared understanding of the concepts related to agricultural sustainability and a set of shared goals despite the various levels (individuals, household, farm, state, market) such change will affect. Focusing on the social issues, they state, will lead to a broader vision of sustainable agriculture that "might transform rather than reproduce existing social inequities" (Allen and Sachs 1991:578). To the extent that the vision of improved quality of life as articulated by the LSP is reflected in a difference in men’s and women’s definitions of quality of life (that is, the vision is normalized according to the male perspective), then the strength of the relationship between the gendered difference of quality of life and the stated or implicit goals of the LSP can be noted.

Allen et al. (1991) agree that social inequities abound within the sustainable agriculture movement, emphasizing that examining "social justice" (that is, the extent to which race, class and gender constructs are transformed and power relations

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"Allen and Sachs (1991) also present arguments for the absence of race, ethnicity and class in their article which I will leave out in this review in order to be focused.
flattened) is essential to the assumptions that underlie the non-sustainability of agriculture. However, they assert that a macro-level focus is what is missing from the understanding of social issues related to agricultural practices. The farm-centric focus is too narrow, they argue. "The [agricultural] system includes not only production of agricultural products, but also their distribution and the infrastructure that affects production and distribution at regional, national and global levels" (Allen et al. 1991:36). They point to consumer demand, urbanization, and restructuring of the global economy. Also problematic, they suggest, is the tendency to put short-term profitability ahead of "social goals." Proponents of sustainable agriculture must recognize that the two are not always compatible. The LSP, as a vehicle of the movement, tends to promote the idea that sustainable agriculture can lead to profitability (Chan-Muehlbauer et al. 1993; Granatstein 1993) but not to the exclusion of more abstract goals such as stewardship or caring for the land and community and assuming responsibility for its long-term survival evident in dramas on emotional attachment to the land and manuals for Christian congregations on spirituality and the land (Land Stewardship Resource Catalog 1994).

Finally, Allen et al. (1991) turn to equity as an ethical dimension of the movement. In order to incorporate equity issues into the debate, they conclude that the definition of sustainability must "define 'us' in terms of all fellow humans: not only farmers and future generations, but also farmworkers, consumers, nonfarm rural residents, the poor...and others" (Allen et al. 1991:38). Though convincing, Allen et
al., in putting forward their agenda for a "whole systems nature of agriculture," fail to address the implementation of related programs; that is how to translate a macro-level definition into practical, ground-level action. In seeking a definition based on global-level social justice, they risk taking the movement out of the hands of grassroots activists and farmers and placing it in the hands of political institutions. In this study I have chosen to focus on families and individuals, a micro-perspective of the movement, precisely because a broader focus has tended to gloss over important social differentiations, in particular the gendered nature of participation in the sustainable agricultural movement suggested by a difference in perspectives on what constitutes an improvement in the quality of life.

Kline's (1993) study on sustainable communities is one of the few that explicitly refers to "quality of life" as a central component in issues of sustainability. Although Kline's study does not speak to sustainable agriculture per se, it conceptualizes sustainable communities at the intersection of ecological integrity, social justice and economic security, mirroring the goals of the LSP. Addressing what she considers a broader movement of sustainability in communities in general throughout the U.S. (not just agricultural communities), Kline focuses on measurements, or "indicators," of sustainability, as an important way to define and measure progress towards a shared vision of the future. The indicators she identifies (and has tested in numerous case studies) correspond to those elements of social movements I have discussed whose presence (or absence) in the LSP potentially
reflects the inclusiveness of gendered differences in our everyday experiences and perspectives, including definitions of quality of life. Furthermore, Kline’s methodological strategy in conducting case studies supports an emphasis on a micro-level analysis as a means of capturing intra-community diversity in understanding the diversity of motives for working towards the common goal of a sustainable community (see Kline 1993, Chapter 4-10).

Quality of life, as Kline defines it, is linked to important elements of successful social movements. Community members must have access to basic survival needs, but also a sense of mutual care (solidarity) and feeling of "connectedness," a sense that they belong to and identify with the community (collective identity). "Empowerment with responsibility," the second indicator Kline links to social concerns, suggests that individuals must feel they have a voice in determining their own future, and that they take action towards rectifying situations they wish to change (micromobilization, consciousness and negotiation). "Reaching in" is a term she associates with empowerment. "It expresses the idea of examining to what extent communities actually broaden the base of participation…; it connotes the bridges and linkages made continuously to bring more and more people into discussions and to enable their diverse voices to be heard" (Kline 1993:13).

Although Kline’s discussion emphasizes the importance of diversity in community sustainability, she fails to address the inter-community social constraints to broad-based participation. That is, while Kline demonstrates that a variety of types of
communities with geographic, infrastructural and political differences can all build sustainable communities, she glosses over the social inequities and differences which invariably exist inside of communities, their organizations and households. Exactly who is being "empowered with responsibility" is unclear. In this way, Kline treads dangerously close to reifying the community in the way that many resource mobilization theorists have reified the social movement. Unlike Allen and Sachs (1991), Kline does not attempt to identify the social constructs operating in our everyday lives which prevent sustainability, focusing rather on how to measure the progress towards it. Her discussion could not therefore stand on its own as community members must first understand what motivates their actions and how non-sustainability is socially constructed before they can begin to initiate social change based on a new vision, and subsequently measure progress towards it. Kline's study is important for my inquiry in that she links quality of life to important processes in the construction of social movements, creating a two-way bridge. That is, while examining the gendered nature of quality of life may point to deficits in such areas as collective identity and solidarity, engendering those processes may in itself contribute to an improvement in quality of life in the context of participation in a social movement such as sustainable agriculture. In other words, Kline links individuals' equal participation in defining sustainability to an improvement in quality of life. So, while I bring to bear the gendered differences in quality of life based on the experiences of the Minnesota dairy and cattle farmers and the implications of those
differences for participation in the LSP, I also note the extent to which participation itself emerges as a part of the women farmers’ definition of quality of life.

**Gender, worldviews and work on the midwestern farm: A brief overview**

In the beginning of the literature review, I briefly discussed how gender functions as a construct which shapes our actions. Likewise worldviews, or perspectives, are shaped by daily experiences which are rooted in social relations defined by the constellation of variables that frame our social location. That is, the intersection of race/ethnicity, class, culture, age, and gender determine, to a large extent, not only why and how we act, but how we *perceive* the world around us as well as our expectations and hopes for the future (Amott and Matthaei 1991; Smith 1987a). Furthermore, gender emerges as the distinguishing characteristic in the social locations of farming couples in the rotational grazing group. Within the household couples share a common ethnicity, class and age. Another reality of family farm organization, extended families share a common class and ethnicity. To re-emphasize, definitions of quality of life are expressions of a particular worldview. Worldviews in turn are shaped by daily experiences. Therefore, examining the extent to which daily activities and routines of farming couples are gendered offers some explanation for the gendered variations in the quality of life.

In agricultural production the relationships of workers to the production process is unique (this is true for both men and women). Agricultural production
differs from other types of capital production in the U.S. because it largely flows with the rhythm of biological processes (Flora 1985; Sachs 1987). As such labor demands tend to vary by season, and production time is actually longer than labor time over the course of the year (Flora 1985). Family-based farming adds another element to the relationship of workers to production; that is, boundaries are significantly blurred between the household and enterprise. Thus, "the unit of production -- the agricultural enterprise -- is coterminous with the unit of reproduction -- the farm household" (Flora 1985:5). Such muddy waters makes understanding women’s and men’s work on the farm complex, and renders women’s work "invisible" (Sachs 1983).

Rosenfeld (1985) argues that the neglect of farm women’s work role on the farm is due in large part to sociologists’ explanation of the historical separation of work and family. Industrialization transformed the home as production and consumption unit to home as reproduction and consumption unit. Such a scenario is not compatible with family-based farming which, though rapidly being replaced by larger commercialized farms, has not disappeared. "[F]amily farms -- in which the workplace and the family are often indistinguishable both physically and psychologically -- did not fit [social scientists’] conceptions of a workplace and were left out of studies of work and occupations" (Rosenfeld 1985:4).

Yet numerous studies in the past two decades point to a clear distinction of work activities on the farm by gender (Coughenour and Swanson 1983; Haney and
Knowles 1988; Jensen 1985; Jellison 1993; Rosenfeld 1985; Ross 1985; Sachs 1983; Sachs 1987; Smith 1987b). While studies in the middle of the century tended to emphasize farm women’s roles as mothers and homemakers, more recent research demonstrates that this constitutes a mostly narrow-sighted and partial view of the social reality (Sachs 1983 and 1987). Because women’s productive labor on the farm is mostly unpaid family labor, it has been frequently under-counted and under-represented by labor researchers and census takers alike. However, more qualitative research (Fink 1992; Jellison 1993) as well as the 1981 quantitative survey of farm women (Jones and Rosenfeld 1981) provide great detail on the contributions women make to the agricultural production and household maintenance distinct from or in partnership with men. Jellison (1993:3-4) writes in her historical account of women’s use of technology on farms:

Commission members [of Roosevelt’s Commission on Country Life] stated that the ‘routine work of women on the farm [was] to prepare three meals a day.’ In reality, farm women’s responsibilities were much more diverse. While the farm man worked in the fields, the farm woman cooked, cleaned, and washed and mended clothing not only for family members but for hired help. She also preserved meat, baked bread and pastry, churned butter, tended the garden, canned fruits and vegetables, raised chickens and periodically worked in the fields herself. It was also largely her responsibility to market surplus dairy, garden, and poultry products. In addition to these duties, she reproduced the farm family work unit.

The interesting contradiction is that, although most farm women themselves (more than 60% in the 1981 USDA study) [Rosenfeld 1985] record their official roles on the farm and in the household as "wife, mother, housewife, or homemaker," more than
half of all farm women in the United States consider themselves to be farm or ranch "operators" (results from the same study, Rosenfeld 1985). Thus farm women themselves seem not to distinguish their productive work activities and roles from their reproductive ones. The two co-exist.

Today household or reproductive work is still predominantly women's work on the family farm. These roles have been and still are reinforced by political and institutional structures. The university-based extension system is still split into several camps, two of which are overtly gendered: agricultural extension (dealing with productivity of the farm) and home extension (catering to women and their roles as wives and mothers). Although general extension services to farmers date back as far as the early 1860's, they were only federally supported and divided along gender lines in the early 1900's, an organizing principle still in force today. "By dividing extension services into two categories -- farm work and housework -- the Smith-Lever Act [of 1914] promoted the idea of separate spheres on American farms, with men's work taking place out of doors and women's work being performed in the house... [T]he federally-supported Extension Service would not seek to upset the existing gender hierarchy on American farms" (Jellison 1993:16). As Jellison points out, this system was founded on a flawed understanding of what women's routine daily activities and daily experiences were on the farms.

Reproductive work includes child care and the daily maintenance of the home, but on family farms it also typically includes production for household use.
Production for household use is of great economic importance to the household. It involves tending chickens and dairy cows, as well as gardening, processing and preserving food and even some selling at the local market, contributing to the household economy as well as the maintenance of the strong cultural norm (particularly in the Midwest) of independence and self-sufficiency. Women, of course, are also active in the agricultural enterprise. The 1981 survey of farm women (Jones and Rosenfeld 1981) found that women on livestock farms tend to be more involved in the production process than on other types of farms. Livestock farms tend to require intensive labor on a daily basis. Women frequently milk, feed and herd the livestock in such cases.

Farm women's work experiences are not confined to the farm. In addition to private businesses out of the home and unpaid community organizing work (Rosenfeld 1985), off-farm work has increased in recent years as the agricultural crisis of the 1980's has settled in to stay (Davidson 1990). Both women and men seek off-farm employment which has different repercussions for the way labor is organized on the farm. By seeking off-farm employment, women enable men to continue to work on the farm full-time. However, women's departure often brings additional labor constraints. A study in 1984 found that hired labor often replaced the unpaid family labor that women provided, a critical indicator of the value or necessity of the women's productive contributions to the farm (Buttel and Gillespie 1984, cited in Sachs 1987).
Because farming couples' work experiences are unique compared to other sectors in the economy and overlap with their family experiences, it is crucial in this study to capture the range of possible experiences that shape women's and men's perspectives on quality of life. Furthermore, the concept of quality of life in the context of sustainable agriculture on family farms bridges the two spheres of work and family perhaps to a greater extent than in other families whose work experiences, while they undoubtedly affect the quality of life in the home, are at least physically separate from it. That is, on a family farm major decisions made in the workplace, I would venture, more often and directly affect productive and reproductive work roles of family members as well as the home environment in general. Because these work roles are gendered, it is necessary to understand how the transition to sustainable agriculture (the current major change in workplace on the dairy and cattle farms I am studying) is affecting the work activities of women and men differently and thus their quality of life.

III. Description of Methods

Methodology as a tool for the researcher and farmer

Action research and participatory research constitute two separate but related approaches to social research. Both approaches have their source in the continuing tension between pure and applied science in social research. In contrast to mainstream social research, advocates of "action sociology" (or applied science) hold that for
research to result in the improvement of human welfare, strategies must be devised for forging closer linkages between research and action (Latapi 1988). The problem identification and research takes place in collaboration with those who actually experience the problem and is therefore a problem solving approach to research (Elden and Chisholm 1993).

The roots of action research can be traced to the Chicago School (i.e. Robert Parks and W.I. Thomas) and the work of female sociologists at the turn of the century (i.e. Jane Addams). Action research fits under the large umbrella of applied research, broadly defined as research designed to create or revise technology, institutions, organizations or bring about some other form of concrete change (Sands 1986). Based on recent feminist interpretations of and modifications to action research, in this study I define action research as research with the intention of engendering a process of continuous change. Some feminists dispute the mainstream perspective of action research, arguing that its claims to be "political, polemic and derivative" can also be used to describe basic research; that is, research designed to generate simply a new understanding (Reinharz 1992:177). These feminists advocate more "open-ended" and "fluid" results to action research; that is, the research should not end in a "new final identity or institutional arrangement but the movement beyond a given identity or institution" (Roslyn Bologh quoted in Reinharz 1992:178).

Conceptually, participatory research builds on or transforms action research by introducing mechanisms to define how social change emerges from action research.
In participatory research, approaches are developed that seek not only to identify meanings actors attribute to the experiences in their lives, but to make those meanings explicit to those actors and other people in an effort to combine researchers’ and subjects’ knowledge for problem solving. If, as I have discussed in the literature review, meaning is what engages people and motivates them to act, then participatory research facilitates discussion of meaning such that it can be "claimed" or "owned" by those who have expressed it. In other words, through participatory research, intended beneficiaries can begin to acquire skills and motivation to challenge their economic, social and political place in society, to think strategically about change and progress.

As Paulo Freire (1970), in his pioneering work on pedagogy, asserts: the only "valid transformation" in a community is one where people are not just liberated from hunger but made free or enabled to create, construct, and produce. This is the essence of empowerment. It is this research tradition that sets the stage for and informs some of the methods I used in this study.

However, participatory action research, as Rocheleau (1994:5) cautions, does not guarantee a transformation of the society towards "more just, equitable, and ecologically viable futures." The researcher must constantly question and reform the approaches used in the participatory process. Approaches are not static in participatory research and must be constantly revised. Chambers (1992:2) calls this endeavor the "professional challenge;" that is, a constant questioning by the researcher. How can we further the farmer’s own analysis? How can we use
methods to change attitudes and behavior (of farmers and scientists)? Rocheleau (1994:5) sums up these challenges in one directive: Stretch the imagination of researchers and farmers. Although I entered the field with a carefully planned strategy, I revised components of the method when necessary, adjusting my schedule and time frame to those of the participant farmers and revising questions and activities based on their comments and insights.

The methods

In order to focus my study, I worked only with dairy and cattle farmers (wives and husbands) in the rotational grazing group in southeastern Minnesota affiliated with the LSP. I combined the methods of qualitative action research and participatory research, informed by feminist perspectives in methodology, in order to gather data to analyze trends across families and gendered variations within families. These methods were essential to ensuring the validity of the data by readily allowing the participants’ voices to emerge above my own pre-conceived notions and mingle with my own perceptions and observations. In addition, the methods are designed to include actors in the process of analyzing their own situations, bringing further validity to the study and helping to lay the groundwork for problem-solving by the farmers in partnership with researchers. There are four major components to the research process of the study.

Interviewing and participant observation. First, I conducted in-depth interviews
with women and men farmers individually, and with farming couples together. I combined an interview guide with the informal conversational interview and participant observation. I stayed in the homes of four of the six families and participated in their daily routines (milking cows, attending church and sustainable agriculture meetings, grocery shopping and cooking meals, reading to the children, checking on the cattle and so forth) talking informally. During the two days I spent with the family, I also scheduled more structured interviews which usually occurred around the kitchen table at meal times. The two families I did not stay the night with participated in about four hours of more structured interviews based on the interview guide. The interviews spanned a period of ten days and resulted in 22 hours of tape.

Second, I facilitated participatory research activities based on techniques that have been used most notably in developing countries with non-literate populations. I attempted to adapt these practices for a group of highly educated participants. These methods are designed to make the content of the research visible to the farmers as it is generated, allowing the farmers to learn and analyze as the process unfolds. As a result, their experiences and perceptions have become a crucial component of the analysis and, hopefully, they feel some sense of "ownership" regarding the information generated and the analytical tools used, rendering the research process less extractive. The following two participatory research activities were used during the course of my visit with the families, usually toward the end of my stay or visit after views about quality of life had been elicited and participants began more clearly
defining those elements of a "good or valuable life".

**Values or well-being diagramming.** Adapted from methods of wealth ranking and Venn diagramming (see Feldstein and Jiggins 1994 and Thomas-Slayter 1993), this activity elicits specific information on values and social institutions that participants themselves identify as the core elements of a good quality of life and the interactions between those elements. The exercise unfolds around one question: "What do you value in your way of life?" or "What makes a good life?". Participants (in this case, family members) were asked to reflect on this question silently then label those elements and arrange them conceptually on a piece of paper, drawing circles around the names they gave to the elements and showing them in relation to each other. The size of the circle indicates the relative weight or importance given to each element. The extent of overlap or distance put between two circles indicates the strength of the relationship or interaction between elements. Beyond these directions, participants were encouraged to innovate in any way they felt would best represent their conceptual idea of their own personal quality of life.

Family members were reassembled when diagramming was completed and asked to explain their drawing. In all cases the family members opted to discuss their conceptualization of quality of life with the entire family. As a result, a fund of qualitative discussion emerged. Both differences and similarities within the family were made explicitly clear in this manner. Couples especially noted which items they were surprised to see on their spouse’s drawing and those elements they obviously
shared. However, most everyone indicated some frustration at having to capture in
one physical space their ideas about quality of life remarking that it was a constantly
changing process. (Perhaps then this exercise could be used to monitor these changes
over time, especially as individuals or families become more or less involved in the
sustainable agriculture movement, or as their farms become more or less based on
sustainable practices.) As a research tool the exercise was valuable in that it involved
a great deal of self-reflection on the part of the participants, sparking informative
discussion, and allowed me to begin to compare trends across families.

Seasonal Labor Distribution Calendar. In order to elicit particular information
about how gender as a construct shapes perceptions of differences in quality of life, I
facilitated the building of a gender-disaggregated seasonal labor distribution calendar,
which is an outline by month of activities typically performed on and off the farm,
identifying in each case who performs them and when. Labor and resources in
agricultural production are highly seasonal, exhibiting sometimes major fluctuations
throughout the year. In addition, research points to the gendered nature of labor on
the family farm (Flora 1985; Rosenfeld 1985; Sachs 1987). This activity involved a
farm family (in most cases the husband and wife; in some cases children were also
included). I displayed a piece of poster-size newspaper with the months listed
horizontally across the page. I first asked each participant to describe the way in
which they "mentally" divide the year seasonally (i.e. according to grazing schedules
or the children's school calendar). I noted these divisions on the calendar by drawing
brackets around the months which make up a particular season and then labeling it so that it could be visible to the participants during the process of building the calendar. In most cases there was variation within the family regarding perceptions of seasonality.

Next each individual was asked to describe the principal activities to which they contribute labor throughout the year and seasons. This discussion worked much like a "brainstorming" session where family members helped each other recall the various types of "work" in which they were involved. The discussion itself generated interesting observations about the meaning-construction of work and labor. Occasionally family members disagreed on definitions of labor. More than once participants responded: "You know I never thought about that as labor, but it takes up a great deal of my/her/his time every month/week/season." I helped guide the discussion using Moser’s (1993) notions about types of labor: productive labor (formal and informal), reproductive labor and community labor (paid and volunteer). All of the labor activities were listed vertically on the poster-size newsprint.

Next, participants were asked to indicate on the calendar the seasons or months of the year when an activity is performed and classify it by level of intensity. A double line indicates that the activity was considered particularly labor intensive. A single line indicates that it was a considered a medium level of intensity. A dotted or broken line indicates that the labor intensity was particularly low. Participants identified who performed the labor and when. Finally each participant was assigned a
color and the labor lines were drawn accordingly. By displaying the calendar as it was being produced, participants made changes throughout the process based on their discussions with each other. They were thus able to identify and realize the peaks and valleys of labor activity throughout the year and how the intensity of labor varied for each family member. Finally, I asked the family members to recall the quality of life definitions they had identified previously and comment on how labor activities as displayed on the calendar enable or constrain a "good" quality of life.

**Focus Group Discussions.** Finally I facilitated focus group discussions, one with the group of women farmers and one with their husbands. The focus groups served to revisit the issues and problems relating to quality of life as farming families make the transition to sustainable agriculture that were elicited during my previous discussions with them as individuals and couples. The focus group meeting initiated the process of farming families in transition to sustainable agricultural practices coming together to discuss their perspectives on quality of life by sharing similarities and differences in their understanding of sustainability and their hopes for the future. In particular this was the first time that many of the women have met in a formal situation or been actively recruited into the research process of the bio-monitoring

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Sue Jarnagin, a graduate student in Sociology at Iowa State University, helped conduct the focus groups. Because of farmers’ time constraints, it was necessary to hold both focus group discussions at once. I led the women’s focus group; Sue Jarnagin led the men’s group.
group.

To organize the focus groups and ensure that I strategically used the limited time available, I relied on an interview guide (a list of questions or issues to be raised in the focus group) to structure the sessions (Patton 1980). The interview guide included an outline of the topical issues that relate to the central question: What do you value in life? What makes life good for you? Related topics in this particular farming context included: (1) The tangible effects of the transition to sustainable agriculture on the individual’s household and work life, on and off the farm. (2) Subjective meanings individuals attach to sustainability. (3) Division of labor in the household and on the farm. (4) Changes the individual would make to his/her lifestyle immediately, both in the household and on the farm. (5) Descriptions of an ideal lifestyle ten years from now and the changes that would have to be made, both on and off the farm, to bring to reality that dream. (6) Personal connections between spirituality and the land. I asked the participants to draw on the discussions I had with each of them individually or as families, guiding the discussions by reminding them of the issues that surfaced during those interviews.

IV. Descriptive Section: Gendered Differences in Quality of Life

Introduction

Quality of life is difficult to measure. It is virtually impossible to set a standard that will not fall under debate. Traditional sociological research quantifies
the quality of life for geographical regions or large populations by using literacy rates, demographic information, unemployment figures, rates measuring access to health care and land and other such items (Zabawa 1995, Report of the Sustainable Agriculture Quality of Life Task Force 1995; also see series of papers from the Southern Rural Sociological Association-sponsored workshop on "Quality of Life Issues in Sustainable Agriculture" at the 1995 annual meeting in New Orleans, LA). These studies, while successful in establishing the level of basic needs met in a community or region, measure quality of life as it has been predetermined and standardized by the researcher. Quality of life, I will demonstrate in this section, is a far more personal measurement that is shaped by social constructs; the unit of analysis better left to the individual or small group. As one of the farmers in my study said: "I think quality of life is like beauty to the beholder -- that for each person it may be a little different in how they define it."

Indeed, the farmers I interviewed set their own standards for defining, interpreting and measuring quality of life. And more than once they insisted that quality of life is not a static measurement; responses to my questions may change if I were to return in five to ten years. In fact, participating in the sustainable agriculture movement for some has introduced an entirely new spectrum of quality of life indicators attesting to their variability and dynamic nature. Life goals and daily experiences for most of the farmers I interviewed have changed significantly since their involvement in sustainable agriculture as their understanding of the practices and
philosophies at the foundation of the sustainable agriculture movement has ripened. Therefore, it is perhaps a more important and salient task of the social scientist to capture the meaning-constructing actor’s perception of quality of life and its social constructs than to simply measure it according to researcher-determined, standardized indicators. Such an endeavor I have undertaken in this study. In the following section I will describe the quality of life indicators and definitions and their variations by gender that emerged from interviews, focus group discussions and participatory research activities. Next I will suggest some reasons why these gendered differences in definitions of quality of life are important to the longevity of the sustainable agriculture movement.

General background of participant farmers

Over a period of four weeks I interacted with six married farming couples in southeastern Minnesota. Four couples are dairy farmers⁷; two are beef cattle farmers. All of Northern European heritage, the couples range in age from early thirties to mid sixties. Three families still have children living at home. Family size ranges from two to seven. All of the couples grew up in Minnesota, the majority of them on their parents’ farms. With the exception of one farm, all the couples are farming land that previously belonged to their parents. Farm size (total land holdings) ranges from 150

⁷"Farmer" refers to both the wife and husband in the household unless otherwise qualified and despite the individual’s self-identification with the term.
to 400 acres; herd size ranges from 40 to 110 at peak season.

All of the farms can be characterized as small, independent family farms; that is, farms are owned or currently being purchased by the couples themselves. Hired labor never exceeds more than two or three people and is employed year-round on only two of the six farms. The farmers themselves are both the managers of and primary source of labor on their farms. Almost all of the farmers were practicing some form of what is now termed "sustainable agriculture" before they came in contact with the movement. For instance, one family stopped using chemical inputs more than ten years ago; another began experimenting with rotational grazing eight years ago; and finally another had been practicing contour farming in the late seventies. Many served as mentors or case studies for the sustainable agriculture movement.

My primary research question in this study is to understand gender as a social construct in the definition of quality of life. Whereas in some cases generational differences or religious beliefs partly shape definitions of quality of life, I will focus on gender as a social location for the basis of comparison in this analysis. Historically, the family farm has been treated in research and policy debates as a single unit, with little analysis applied to the multiplicity of interests and roles within the family (Allen and Sachs 1991). However, a decade of research has established

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As mentioned earlier in the paper, racial and class differences are not major distinguishing characteristics in this population of farmers.
that intra-family variation does exist and can affect decision making and practices related to the farm (see for instance Chapter 6 in Bartlett 1993; Chapter 8 in Fink 1992; Jellison 1993; and Rosenfeld 1985). Despite this evidence the sustainable agriculture movement has largely failed to include gender as a significant source of difference or point of analysis. Evident in the farmer support groups and research projects attached to the movement, men and their perspectives are over-represented despite women's important contribution to the family farm. However, as I will demonstrate in this study, both farm women's and men's experiences, perspectives and visions are central to the land stewardship ethic that is the backbone of the social movement as well as the practices carried out on the farm.

**Time, self, empowerment and change**

Emerging clearly from the focus group discussions, central components of the male participants’ quality of life in their own terms include: change, empowerment, and flexibility in time and labor. The three components are interrelated; making changes in practices both grows out of and results in a stronger sense of self-determination. The practices themselves tend to be less time-consuming, require less manual labor and, therefore, afford the male farmer the time and freedom to experiment and creatively solve problems. As one farmer expressed: an "ideal world" is being active in a variety of arenas (milk production, grazing support groups, teaching and lecturing on sustainable agriculture, national farm politics) on his own
terms and time. "It is just astounding," he said. "You really almost have to start to
categorize choices now because there are so many that come at you so fast that it is
overwhelming. And then you find yourself changing too many things at once and you
don't even know which ones are the good ones and which ones are the bad ones. It
can get addictive, this change."

Reiterated in individual and group discussions with men farmers was the issue
of time. All of these men have significantly decreased the amount of time they spend
in physical farm work and management since they switched to rotational or seasonal
grazing management. Fields that once had to be seeded and harvested are now set
aside for grazing. Rather than their processing feed for the cows, the earth largely
does it for them. And whereas once farmers operated large combines and sprayers to
produce cattle feed, they now walk their land moving fences and herding cattle, letting
the soil generate feed and the cattle harvest it.

There were less chores so we had more time to do the work... You
know we didn't haul manure daily anymore. We were still hauling it
about twice a week. In the first year we realized that we had always
harvested feed for 365 days a years -- now we're doing it about 200
days maybe, or 150. We soon realized there was a lot less haying we
had to do. We don't have to put up as much. We're using more land
out there for grazing.

But there is no doubt that grazing, whether it is dairy or beef, that
rotational grazing has simplified your work.
We like being out with nature and being able to take 15 or 20 minutes or an hour to just enjoy what is here without having someone saying get to work, get something done. I really like blending my leisure time and my work time, sometimes it is hard to tell what we are doing or if there is any real plan for the day and sometimes there is not.

The issues of time, empowerment and change are entwined with the sense of self. Time frees the men farmers to explore other interests, to become more involved with the movement, and to develop a strong sense of self. For the first time in their lives many men farmers are becoming educators, teaching classes in grazing management or informally showing a novitiate the ropes. All of the men farmers reported spending the winter reading for self-improvement several hours a day, their bookshelves lined with texts on religion, philosophy, natural resource management and politics. Armed with information and time, these farmers have introduced change in their lives: change in the form of farming practices and in their sense of self in the larger society. As one farmer said:

I think the absolutely most important piece in quality of life is going from being a victim to being in charge of your life. When you're in charge and then assume responsibility for being in charge, then I don't think your circumstances have to change an iota, you feel good about your life.

And another: [Practicing rotational grazing] does give me the chance to do all the things I want because I am my own boss. And I want to have personal empowerment, too. The farm gives me a chance to do that. I have a playground where I can play and do my stuff.

Indeed in the conceptual values diagrams (Appendix I) a subtle but important difference between husbands and wives is that men farmers tend to include self as a
highly valued component in their lives. Where "self" is not an explicit category (as in diagram 5b), institutions and activities that highlight a sense of self figure among the most important criteria in their quality of life (i.e. recreation, leisure time, quiet time, support groups). Their wives, on the other hand, tend to emphasize activities and institutions that involve community managing labor such as being involved in social causes (1a), church and 4-H volunteer work (2a, 4a, 5a). One woman places her various roles in life (all emphasizing who she is in relation to other people) at the center of her diagram (2a). Any reference to self-improvement is couched in terms of spiritual growth (1a, 3a, 5a) (again who the individual is in relation to a higher being). The issue of flexible time is contentious for three of the women; change is not always looked upon favorably and empowerment is a word used only in relation to what the movement has done for their husbands.

On time:

As far as I can see the change [to sustainable agriculture on our farm] has very little to do with my time because I don't work outside. I don't work with the animals. I do all the bookkeeping and that should actually be less with sustainable but I don't really see that it is. [She spends about 16-20 hours a month doing book work for the farm enterprise].

Another woman farmer on the issue of time:

My [time since we started rotational grazing] hasn't really changed. No, I shouldn't say that. [My husband] has more time to sit around and day dream all this stuff he wants to do -- and I have to do it with him. The year he didn't milk I thought I was going to go out of my mind. He was driving me crazy. I'd come home from work and it was 'Pack your bag, let's go.' I said look at the floors... But it really
hasn't changed that much. I'm pretty much doing the same things: going to work, taking the kids out, that type of thing. It's changed his life a lot. It's a lot easier for him.

On change:

I guess one of the things that I value the most (and it's one of the things we don't have very easily) is security -- no one has. [Financial security?] Well, actually it would be financial security, but also just security. I bought my home, you know that kind of security, and I would like not to have a lot of changes, but that's not possible. I guess there are changes all the time [in sustainable agriculture] because you don't do the same things. How do we know if anything works because we don't do it long enough? You always think about something else or something that might work better, so you try that.

The one exception among the women's perceptions comes from the woman farmer most active in the organizational ranks of the sustainable agriculture movement. She will reappear as the comparative case among the women throughout the study. Having initiated her husband into the organized sustainable agriculture movement, she welcomes change and the ability to make choices. In contrast to the other women, she said: "It is kind of how we go about it. The idea of planning for what we are doing and not haphazardly letting our lives happen...I think choice is the key word. That is the word I keep hearing over and over again from everybody. We make choices rather than having choices made for us."

Spirituality/religiosity and the land stewardship ethic

What originally launched my interest in this research was the perception on the part of the men farmers that their wives did not "buy" into the philosophical
underpinnings of sustainable agriculture. Based on individual interviews and group
discussion with the women, this perception proved false. The women overwhelmingly
identify with the philosophy of a land stewardship ethic that penetrates not only the
agricultural practices of the farm but other facets of their lives. Evidence is found in
the women’s accounts of their spiritual or religious identities. These accounts of
spirituality as it connects to the natural environment do not vary by gender. Rather it
appears to be women’s resistance to the practical or concrete consequences of
sustainable agriculture in daily activities and experiences that the men were reacting to
in the initial meeting I attended.

Belief systems are intimately connected to the choice to practice sustainable
agriculture despite gender. In every conversation, spirituality was a center-piece for
discussion and conceptualized in each values diagram as an important (1b, 3b, 4b, 5b,
2a, 4a, 5a) if not an all-encompassing sphere (1a, 3a, 2b). Remarkably, each couple
(and sometimes individuals within couples) embrace a different expression of faith.
Although the majority described themselves as Christians, the forms of faith cover the
spectrum from highly organized evangelical or mission-oriented faiths to more loosely
defined animist-like beliefs. For everyone, spirituality cannot be separated from an
environmental ethic and sense of land stewardship. In fact, faith or spirituality, it can
be argued, has facilitated these farmers’ involvement in the sustainable agriculture
movement. As one male farmer explained:

For me it’s been real easy [the change to sustainable agriculture]
because of our involvement in the church and our beliefs that you're given stewardship -- not to accumulate, but to manage and give away. It's like you give money away or whatever. So that's a driving force for [me and my wife].

Another man characterized it more explicitly:

[My environmental ethic] comes from my spiritual faith and belief. I believe that we need to take care of creation...For me it is my sense of stewardship or responsibility that comes from the [Christian] scriptures and from realizing that what we have isn't really ours but we are stewards of it, caretakers of it. The farm I am on right now, my biggest responsibility is to take care of it and that means doing things like not letting the soil wash away or blow away, no soil erosion, trying to build up the soil biologically speaking, get it in balance, try to get it healthy. It is my responsibility to do.

In cases where women express discontent at some of the changes being wrought in their lives, none disagree with the spiritual motivation for accepting what the movement stands for. As one woman explained:

I've always... and I think my dad probably more than any other minister (my dad isn't a pastor, but he's a minister I think) -- he attuned me to that awesomeness of creation and that responsibility we have to it. And I think for [my husband] and I in the last few years we've been able to get both the spiritual aspect of the land and farming attuned to -- in line with -- what our faith has always been, and to see the stewardship aspect. I'm very interested in that as a topic itself.
And another woman:

I think you can see God working. You have the creation around you. You have the changing of the seasons. You have the birth of the animals, and the seeds coming up and all of that working through God. And how fragile life is -- I think you can see that when you're with it all the time. I've never really thought about it that much or spent a lot of time thinking about because it's always just been there. You know God is really important; God is involved in all of my life everyday. And it's just there. And never having been away from it -- I don't know what it would be like.

For the men farming practices are a conscious choice to blend spiritual beliefs and production. Indicators of a successful merging of spiritual and organic health for the men is largely aesthetic. Frequently they talk of the beauty of seeing their cows out to pasture and calves being born in the spring on a thick bed of green grass. It resonates for them intuitively. "You just feel it in here somehow," one farmer said pointing to his chest. "Everybody [in the rotational grazing group] feels this way. It's psychologically right."

Interestingly, however, many of the men commented that their wives did not necessarily appreciate the farm in the same instinctual and emotional manner. While they recognize that their wives share the same environmental ethic, they feel that their wives respond to that ethic more abstractly or, at least, not in terms of the farm. Two farmers commented that their wives were not "really into farming." They said that the women did not really have an appreciation for what it meant to the men on an emotional and philosophical level. And while certainly the majority of the women are not as deeply involved in the production process and care of the land as their
husbands, they nevertheless expressed an aesthetic appreciation for the farm and the physical environment in which they live. Again the men's perception of their wives' beliefs proved false. For instance, one of the women whose husband said she did not appreciate farming commented:

I feel more connected with God when I'm out on our farm, walking around, and seeing creation, and seeing things blooming -- now like the wildflowers coming up and going up into the woods and seeing all those things.

The connection that men frequently express between their personal spirituality and the farm is mirrored in their wives' comments. The gendered difference in spirituality lies rather in the importance they place on formal worship. I will return to this point in the analytical discussion.

Farming as a lifestyle

All of the study participants characterize both sustainable and conventional farming as a "lifestyle": a place where little division exists between where productive and reproductive work is carried out; a place where domestic and work life merge both in activities, physical location and in one's consciousness. Farming as a lifestyle both contributes to and detracts from quality of life. The gendered differences in how it adds to or detracts from quality of life are subtle but present.

Farming as a small and independent producer has largely grown in personal and professional value for men since their transition to sustainable agricultural
practices and involvement in the movement. They enjoy and work to preserve their
status as small farmers. Greater value placed on their status as small producers is
related to two prominent features of sustainable agriculture: the prospect and reality of
having greater autonomy in decision making ("Conventional farming is -- well, you
have no alternatives"), and the visible increase in environmental health ("This farm is
so fun! We have wild turkeys that walk down the driveway and deer that walk down
in and through the farm. Since we have been on the [bio-monitoring] project -- we
have always been kind of interested in birds and now it has just taken off and it is so
contagious."). Unlimited expansion in production is out of the question. Part of
quality of life, one farmer explained, is being able to remain a small producer and
make enough money to live comfortably. If they have to keep buying more cows and
hiring more labor, then they will simply quit farming. The men consider themselves
producers of food (a basic need) as opposed to producers of a commodity (an abstract
market item). This is an important distinction, they express, between sustainable
farmers and more conventional ones. Secondly, switching to sustainable agriculture
practices has meant less labor time as previously noted, which seems to have fostered
a change in work ethic. They take the time to read a book in the winter, for instance,
walk in the woods with their wives, go fishing with a son, or attend a daughter's
basketball game. Being a farmer is an expression of who they are as
environmentalists, spiritual beings, husbands and fathers, and who they are in relation
to the rest of society which depends upon their vocation.
The women describe themselves as being just as enveloped in farming as a lifestyle though frequently not as "farmers" per se. As one woman said, "whether you [as a wife] actually farm or not, still farming is a lifestyle." Another commented: "[Farming] is not a job; it's a way of life and so you don't ever leave it." When asked directly, not one of the women said they thought of themselves as a "farmer." "Farmer" does not figure prominently in their worker-identity, even when they spend a majority of their day devoted to productive farm work whether on a regular basis or as pinch-hitters. In reconsidering the question, one woman characterized the feeling of the women in the focus group:

If farmer can be extended to, it takes two to make the thing work, that someone needs to be there to take care of a household so that a farm can operate, sure, then I am a farmer in that sense. That is not the traditional idea of what a farmer is. Hopefully, the term "farmer" can be broadened in the future.

Women, for the most part, see themselves as homemakers in charge of the reproductive sphere (or the "inside arena" as one woman described it), support but not major players in or decision makers in the productive sphere of the farm. They are largely decision makers in the reproductive sphere of the farm or in their off-farm work. That is not to say that women do not embrace certain aspects of the farming lifestyle. On the contrary, women cited privacy, security and natural beauty of the rural farm life as important to their quality of life.
The importance of participation itself in the social movement as a facet of quality of life

How and why farmers participate in the sustainable agriculture movement represent perhaps the most palpable gendered difference of any aspects of quality of life that surfaced in the study. In the focus group the women (with the exception of the one woman who introduced her family to the movement) concurred that the movement has not rendered any tangible change in their lives as individuals. First, they pointed out, the agricultural practices on their farms inspired the movement and not the other way around.

So it’s something we’ve been doing forever and ever, for as long as we had cattle. So it was long before we knew anything about LSP; it was long before we knew about sustainable farming; it was long before we knew about any of those things.

It’s something we started many, many years ago. We stopped using chemicals and stuff. We just felt chemicals were bad for all living things. And so going into the sustainable movement really hasn’t had that much of an effect on us because it’s something we’ve always done.

The women do, however, consider themselves a part of the movement in that they are supportive of the changes in production practices their husbands make on their farm or they serve on boards or committees by association with their husbands. With the exception of one woman, participation in the movement largely boils down to two results for them: (1) new knowledge and information; and (2) affirmation that what is
happening on their farms is a valid form of raising cattle and producing milk.

Although, as one woman pointed out, it does not necessarily change the amount of input they have in how and when changes in agricultural practices take place on their farm, they understand the ramifications of those changes by attending the meetings, listening to the discussions and reading the literature. "I think going to the meetings and understanding things -- you can be more of a support to your husband. So when he’s out there doing these things you don’t think he’s nuts. Maybe there is some validity to what he’s doing."

All of the women expressed that their husbands had some expectations that they be involved in the movement if not in the actual farming, and that this followed a pattern of husband-wife involvement in the conventional farming community at large. If one of their husbands is elected to the Sustainable Farmers Association (SFA) state or local board, then it is understood to be a joint appointment. Women are often relied on to send out letters, take notes, organize meetings, and run registration tables at meetings and conferences. Their involvement in the sustainable agriculture movement to date has not been a necessarily new experience or source of gratification, rather a reproduction of a pattern of community managing labor expectations.

However, women value their participation in the movement for at least two reasons. First, it allows them to understand what is happening on their farms so that they can have at least some influence and control over those changes.

I mean you can understand what they’re [the men] doing and why
they're doing it, and you can have a say in what they're doing and why they're doing it. I go to the same meetings that he goes to so I can hear the same things he does and so I can understand why we need to do what we should be doing, and so I can talk to him about it, whether he likes it or not.

Secondly, it allows them to continue to support their husbands and play a community managing role with which they are both comfortable and familiar.

Only one woman, the exceptional case, is involved in sustainable agriculture as a social movement independently of her husband. Her organizational involvement actually precedes her husband’s. She was initially asked to serve as the LSP volunteer coordinator; later she signed their farm up to participate in the bio-monitoring project on her own initiative. She has even traveled on behalf of the movement to Washington D.C. to help design policy.

Men express entirely different reasons for their continued participation in the sustainable agriculture movement. They talk unilaterally about the importance of support groups ("We’re no longer an island in a sea of corn"), cooperative group learning processes, the chance to interact with researchers as experts and have an influence on agricultural science, and finally as a source of ideas.

Every two weeks we would go to someone’s farm and just walk the pastures for two hours in the morning and talk about what is working and what isn’t, where they are having troubles, just to help each other learn. That is kind of unique because you don’t see corn farmers going and walking in the farm fields and talking about growing corn, but us graziers are a different group and it is a different kind of people, people that are open to doing something different and something new.
There is a lot of peer support and a lot of ideas generated. My ideas have been generated from things other guys do. [There is] a lot of peer support to do some changing and be different. It’s really important that way. I think there’s a synergy that comes about as we sit around this table or sit around and talk about things that makes me better -- the sharing.

The men largely feel, they concurred in the focus group, that they have an obligation to stay involved, to help spread the values and the practices of the movement.

The values diagrams provide strong evidence of this gendered difference in participation in the sustainable agriculture movement as a facet of quality of life. Almost all of the men explicitly include a sphere representing SFA and LSP friends, networks or support groups (with the exception of 5b who in the interviews nevertheless discussed its importance in his measurement of quality of life). Only one woman named SFA activities in her diagram and placed it in the realm of peripheral or less important activities (2a). Even the one exceptional case among the women did not refer to it explicitly in her diagram (1a). Presumably it is included for her within the sphere she labeled "causes" and "social change." However, even this evidence points to a difference in how and why she participates in the movement. Rather than emphasizing support groups and the generation and facilitation of new ideas for the farm, this woman participates as a larger "life goal" of contributing to societal change. Sustainable farming is not the only or first cause she has been involved in, whereas for most of the men this is the largest and most important organized movement they have ever embraced. As she explained:
I don’t have farm roots and so I probably lack some appreciation of what farming is due to that. Yet I also grew up being involved in causes. My parents were involved in causes. And I just have a need to be involved in causes. That’s why I’m involved in Land Stewardship among others. It’s a need that I have to do that and I think it’s something that I’m supposed to be doing.

The gendered division of roles and labor

While not an explicit facet of quality of life as related by the participants, describing the gendered division of labor and roles on the family farm illuminates gendered differences in what they value in life as reported by the farmers themselves. Without exception all of the participants claim a gendered space and function on the farm and place an important value on it. Some women express a desire for some flexibility in those gendered spheres and others, not at all.

The seasonal calendars provide a detailed look at how activities are divided by gender on the farm (see Appendix II). There is some similarity in patterns across all farms. Since each farming couple generated these graphs separately, the labor activities listed are not identical in name. Four out of six families were willing or able to construct the graphs. However, all of the activities can be grouped according to productive labor (including off-farm employment), reproductive labor and community managing labor (also called volunteer work). The graphs reveal the greater diversity of roles and activities for women and also reveal sharp gender divisions among productive and reproductive work. Women are largely active in the reproductive sphere (household care and maintenance, childcare) and men in the
productive sphere of the farm (activities related to cattle, milk production or other income-producing activities). Women also predominate (though men are not absent) in activities that fall under the category of community managing labor (i.e. 4-H, church and school volunteer work). The graphs also reveal another interesting tendency in gendered labor roles. Women frequently cross over and participate in productive work or "male" labor roles, whereas men rarely recorded themselves as participating in reproductive labor.

Indeed, based on interviews with farmers, it became clear that both women and men participating in this study conceptualize life on the farm in terms of gendered spheres. One woman told me she thinks of it as the "inside arena" and the "outside arena": hers is the inside; his is the outside. And women are not uncomfortable with this division of labor and roles. They place a high value on being able to work largely in the reproductive sphere. As one woman wrote to me in a letter:

I don't want to have to go to a job away from my home everyday. I don't mind it once in awhile, or for a certain length of time, but not everyday. I see [my husband] as the head of the household, the provider, and myself as the helper, the person who makes our house into a home, a pleasant, comfortable place to be.

Women protect and value the decision making responsibility they have in the reproductive sphere. While husbands and wives discuss household and farm-related purchases with each other, one woman said, her husband has the final say on whether or not he buys that new tractor and she decides whether or not they are going to buy a
new couch or what vegetables to plant in the garden. In another household each individual used his/her sphere to assert his/her autonomy. For instance, one day the husband came home and announced that he had just purchased an expensive piece of farm equipment without consulting his wife. So the following week she made a unilateral decision to re-wallpaper the kitchen.

Community managing labor in the form of community volunteer work is highly valued by the women. In at least one case the husband is just as active in such roles as his wife. In the final analysis, however, women contribute to community managing labor in a larger variety of ways: at the local school, in the child’s classroom, in care of the elderly, cooking church suppers, and volunteering in the nursery school. The majority of men’s volunteer work revolves around sustainable agriculture activities: serving on boards, giving talks, and hosting researchers and young farmers on their farms. Still, most of the community managing work that men are engaged in involves their wives as well. As one farmer said, "If you get me [on the board], you get her."

The calendars reveal the rigidity of male gender labor roles and activities compared to the more malleable female ones. Women frequently cross over into the productive sphere of the farm, whereas men only occasionally participate in reproductive work. In their comments both in the focus group and in individual interviews the women recognized the inequity of this arrangement and the increasing elasticity of their time.

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So still [farm life] is not an "even-Steven" thing. Especially who we're married to -- it's still the man role and the woman role and, I mean, the house, the family, the cooking, the cleaning, the yard work, the gardening -- all those things are [the woman's] duty.

I don't mind doing that kind of work [helping with the cows]. It's just that I have all the other work to do [i.e. household and volunteer labor], too, and when I do that it adds to it and you still have all your housework to do and your gardening and whatever anybody else wants you to do.

When we are farming on our own [as opposed to her father or son working a full-time role on the farm], then I'm available to go out and help if they need help. That is how come I didn't get many things done for myself yesterday because [the hired man] had problems with the cattle and my husband wasn't here. [He was at a bio-monitoring project meeting].

Communication skills and farmer interaction

Traditionally, farming has been an isolated vocation. Farmers historically have not talked to one another across the fence. Instead they have eyeballed each others' fields to determine who is growing what in greater abundance with what kind of equipment and how many weeds. The climate of conventional agriculture is such that farmers have worked side by side largely in competition. In the form of chemical specialists and soil consultants for instance, agribusiness has fostered such competition and profited from it. The sustainable agriculture movement has brought to farmers a new level and different kind of interaction. Perhaps the single most important and frequently-mentioned distinction in men's quality of life since they have become

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involved in sustainable agriculture is the construction of a trusting network and support group of men farmers who cooperate to keep each other in business farming in a sustainable way.

The neat thing about sustainable ag is that the information exchange is totally different than it has been in conventional farming. We’re willing to share anything we know with anyone who is willing to ask us. And so you could start farming tomorrow and talk to the six of us and be looking for farming information and literally walk out the door ahead of any of us because your past experience is put together with all the knowledge we’ve gained in the past 6 years. It is an interesting phenomena because there are no leaders.

Perhaps the greatest symbol of this change from the closed-lip male farmer to the cooperative and communicative one, as well as the gendered nature of cooperative interaction, is a component of the Holistic Resource Management (HRM) Course (Savory 1988) emphasizing family-wide participation in goal-setting. HRM, as one of the male farmers explained to me, is a management strategy that emphasizes (among other things) communication skills within the family. These skills, according to the philosophy, are essential for successful management because everyone in the family must be invested in the goals of the farm to keep it running in a sustainable way. Employing the HRM strategy mandates sitting down with the family and setting collective goals for the farm, whether they be financial, ecological or centered on quality of life. One male farmer said that this course represents the first time in a farmer education arena that someone has talked to men about family communication. And most of the men farmers are enthusiastic about it and committed to learning the
necessary skills.

Their wives, on the other hand, found little revelation in the HRM course (they all took it, mostly at the insistence of their husbands). As one woman noted, "Extension has been talking to women about family communication for years." A regular feature in their home extension courses and lectures, the women talked about the communication skills HRM emphasizes as something they have been trying to employ in their family discussions for a long time. There has always been, they said, a greater willingness on the part of women to discuss with each other financial details and other issues men farmers do not conventionally share in order to solve problems or engender support. For these women, the HRM philosophy has always been present as an important means of attaining the quality of life they hoped for on or off the farm. Ironically it had not been put into practice in many of their families until their husbands took the HRM course. Now some of the families sit down, design and regularly revisit goals. Some families are more rigorous about it than others (actually writing it down) while others use the principles to generate discussion. All of the women (save the usual exception) emphasize that the HRM course has been imposed on them. Their husbands signed them up for it out of their own enthusiasm for the principles. And while the women certainly welcome the idea of consensual goal setting and the exploration of family dynamics, it was far from new to them.
V. Analytical Section: Why Does it Matter That There Are Gendered Differences?

The social construction of social movement participation

Gendered constructs make a difference in level of participation in the organized sustainable agriculture movement as well as the carrying out of its principles in concrete ways on the family farm. Boundaries of a social movement, as I argued in an earlier portion of this paper, can reflect social constructs. The collective identity of the sustainable agriculture movement is gendered in that it tends to reflect the male normative. This is evident and reflected in the analysis of the gendered differences in perceptions of what makes a life valuable and good. While rhetorically the ideology of the LSP is gender-neutral, in practice the movement’s outreach has been most successful among men farmers. This does not mean that women do not participate. Other researchers have documented women’s strong affiliation with the movement (Chiappe 1994, Paddock et al. 1988), indeed their seemingly visceral connection through "feminine thought processes" with the spirit of the movement (Paddock et al.:130).

Such elements as solidarity, negotiation, micromobilization and consciousness building do indeed emerge as prevalent and largely gendered forms in the sustainable agriculture movement. All of these elements compose the overarching form of a collective identity that defines the ultimate boundaries of the movement, indicating for whom the movement speaks and who speaks for the movement. I use gendered
definitions of quality of life as one indicator of how these elements have emerged along gender-segregated lines. In this section I will examine those elements and their gendered constructs to suggest what the actual and potential collective identity of the movement does and could look like. All of these elements are interconnected, but here I will examine them individually.

**Solidarity in networks**

Solidarity is the extent to which individuals or social groups within the movement feel alienated from or integrated into the organizational entities of the movement. Those groups that have formed solidarity are called affinity groups. The sustainable agriculture movement contains many affinity groups: the rotational grazing group, the bio-monitoring group, other research projects and even a Women's Sustainable Agriculture Network. This Women's Network functions as a support group for women farmers in Minnesota who are themselves practicing and managing sustainable agriculture on their own farms. According to the participants in my study, most of these women identify themselves as the primary farmer in their operations. Many of them have come into the actual practice of sustainable agriculture via organizational involvement in the movement; farming is not a primary source of livelihood for many of them. These women initiated the group themselves in order to get support and affirmation for their roles as women and legitimate farmers in the movement that was not occurring in some of the larger mixed groups. The meetings
are routinely advertised in the LSP newsletter. None of the women farmers in my
study has ever attended these meetings, though they are aware of the network. As one
of the women I interviewed said, "I don't fit in with those kind of women." And
their husbands agreed, explaining that these women are largely the primary producers
on their farms. However, I mention this group in order to stress that the type of
solidarity-building occurring in the mainstream movement does reflect a male
normative. The perceived need on the part of these women producers to form a
special women's support group, even though it does not speak to the farm women I
interviewed, attests to this.

For the farm women I interviewed participation in the movement is indeed
hindered by a lack of solidarity and sharing in a collective identity. The most obvious
indicator is the poor attendance of farm women at the bio-monitoring group meetings
and the grazing field days even though such meetings have a great impact on their
farm. There long-term decisions are made by their husbands and researchers about
research designs and future farm visits. But perhaps a more important insight is the
extent to which these women participate in other affinity groups unrelated, at least
organizationally, to the sustainable agriculture movement. The notion of informal
"support groups" so new to their husbands and only recently important to their quality
of lives, largely exists and has existed for the women outside of the sustainable
agriculture movement. Both women and men expressed the importance in their lives
of belonging to groups where people share solidarity. The difference is that for
women the presence of affinity groups in their lives is age-old; for men, it is a recent phenomenon.

For instance, two women have been considerably involved in agricultural extension activities with other farm women throughout their married lives on the farm. Both women have served in an organizational capacity: one helping to organize and facilitate weekend retreats, the other regularly bringing prepared lessons from the extension office back to her local group and facilitating them. The weekend retreats are designed to bring farm women together to discuss common issues. Frequently they engage in "trust-building" activities and other ways to engender solidarity. For many of the women, my informant told me, the meetings represent the first time they have been away from the farm and their families overnight. The annual retreats became an important means for this farm woman to reconnect to other women with similar lifestyles.

The second year there were a lot of people my age that were having some of the same concerns that we all felt -- like transition periods and farm families. Those get transferred. It was also just basically a good time to get away. And from what I have heard now, I have heard some rumbles about the women wanting it again.

This same woman attended an HRM workshop with her husband recently that addressed such personal issues as family dynamics and finances. Although these same issues were discussed freely and with enthusiasm at the extension overnight, she was less comfortable in participating in the HRM workshop. As her husband explained:

"What was hard for [my wife] was for a lot of us we knew each other from HRM and
from other meeting stuff and had developed a level of trust, so you could dive right into the exercise." Thus, for his wife, participating in this affinity group was hindered by not having previously engaged in building solidarity with the people in that group. She said: "There wasn't any stone uncovered, everything was just kind of laid out. And I couldn't believe the similarities that we all kind of had. But I just felt totally overwhelmed by the whole experience...definitely uncomfortable."

Although the potential for affinity existed (they all have much in common) she was clearly an outsider. Yet in her own extension group she was able to share similar feelings and personal details from her family life with little hesitation.

Other affinity groups that the women mentioned included friends from church who worked together frequently to hold church-related functions, groups of people who shared the same continuing education interests, parental support groups organized by the school, garden clubs, extended family, prayer or meditation groups and, finally, friends from work. Clearly, a constraint to participating in solidarity building within the sustainable agriculture movement for one woman is that she works at a full-time job off the farm and therefore misses opportunities to attend many of the meetings. Her off-farm work (no longer essential to keep the farm financially afloat) has become a place where she can practice a unique talent and art. There she interacts with other women who have become close friends and a strong support group over a period of eight years. She would really miss that interaction, she said, if she gave up the work.
These women do not begrudge their husbands these new-found support groups. On the contrary, they recognize the importance of gender-based networking in sustaining their quality of life and encourage their husbands’ affiliation. As one woman pointed out:

I am glad to see it with the men because women will find their social...at least most of the women I know, maybe some women don’t, but most of the women I know, if they want social interaction they’ll find it. Men don’t do it and it is just as important to them even if they don’t see it.

Gender-based solidarity is a part of what shapes the collective identity of the sustainable agriculture movement. This does not mean that the issues and themes are themselves gender-specific; rather that the fora for discussion and support have largely developed along gender-segregated lines. The men came together initially to exchange ideas and learn from each other. In fact, they were almost all solicited by the LSP or SFA to give speaking engagements and help "spread the word" because of the effective sustainable changes they were already making in their practices. Soon they found they were not alone in their environmental ethic and related practices, making their involvement in sustainable agriculture easier and less lonely. One male farmer summarized: "This information exchange thing does a couple of things. It gives you new information but it also gives you support all the time and gives you enthusiasm."

This enthusiasm has evolved into an informal grazing support group whereby male farmers regularly gather at each others’ farms to walk the land, share experiences and
begin to solve problems. The movement gave form to their actions and beliefs. The presence of affinity groups in their lives, facilitated or at least initiated by the LSP, has become something that they highly value about their lives.

Their wives, however, have not been solicited by the movement to help expand its outreach in a way that parallels their roles on the family farm or recognizes the unique contributions they make to the family farm. As perceived by the movement, the family farm is largely a single entity representing collective interests, including common indicators of improved quality of life. The social movement’s rhetoric about the importance of engendering social equity is devoid of any analysis of intra-family inequity or differences. As a result discussions of quality of life largely take place among solidarity groups of male farmers associated with the movement. Thus quality of life, as the movement comes to understand it, reflects a male normative. Therefore the collective identity of the movement is skewed by promoting mostly male-based solidarity groups who feed their perceptions, desires and definitions to the movement.

**Affinity groups and spiritual change**

Both women and men farmers, as I established earlier, share a spiritual conviction about stewardship, especially in relation to the physical environment, reflected in the way they care for and appreciate the environmental health of their farms. However, as I discussed in that previous section, a gendered difference in spirituality does appear in the importance these men and women place on formal
worship. In general, women place greater emphasis on formal worship than men. This does not mean that men participate less in formal worship (although it is true in some cases), rather that they expressed a change in attitude during recent years about the place of formal worship in society and in their own lives. This subtle but palpable difference can be partly explained by the fact that religion as an organization is still a source of shared collective identities, affinity groups, and outlets for community managing labor for the women. Men expressed less of a desire for such church-related experiences for several reasons.

First, being involved in the sustainable agriculture movement has enabled them to challenge assumptions they have lived with all their lives. For instance, they challenge the assumptions that agricultural "experts" are college-educated and university-trained, that bigger operations are better, and that cows can be better fed and controlled in the barn. Challenging assumptions about conventional farming wisdom has led to challenging assumptions in other arenas of their lives, including religion or spirituality. One farmer talked about how he was beginning to question the emphasis placed on Sunday school in his church. It seemed to him that a mission-oriented church should not be spending so much time talking to and teaching each other; real teaching and learning about Christ occurred in other settings where the presence of Christ was perhaps less visible. Another farmer talked about his growing disillusion with the Catholic Church and its inability to evolve into a more socially-responsive entity reflected in church policy as well as expenditure decisions made by
his local church.

Second, the sustainable agriculture movement has given form to a collective expression of a multi-denominational change in spiritual identity through affinity groups. These men, all sharing different types of spirituality, feel connected to one another by the concrete ways in which they express the connection between their personal spirituality and the land. Some express frustration that their churches rarely address what they consider to be one of the most important embodiments of their spiritual expression: human impact on the physical environment.

I have seen a real direct correlation among feeding the world and religion. Some verse in Exodus talks about it: where there is no justice for the land, there cannot be justice for the people who live on it. If you abuse the land, producing the solar dollars, then there is a shortage of wealth and then pretty soon the people start to hoard it. It really strongly suggests the correlation. So to me, I see [sustainable agriculture] as part of a mission, part of even working inner-city.

I tend to agree with some of the other guys that talk about it -- that this grazing is such a spiritual thing when you are out there that you almost don’t have to go to church. That is the way I find myself, too, that I don’t have the desire like I used to go to church. Although I’m still glad I can go because after I have been there I am glad I went. But I don’t have the desire like I did before. I guess I feel I am communicating with God by being out there and doing things the way … I think he wants them done.

Women, on the other hand, frequently talk about the importance of the "church family" in their lives as an expression of their personal spiritual identity intimately related to their definition of quality of life.

My church life and those people are important to me -- having the
church family and their support. [I spend] probably at least seven hours every week with regular things that go on [with the church] and you never know what comes up during the week that you are going to do.

For me [church] is just a draw...I found a real sense of peace and a sense of belonging. At the time we had this wonderful pastor and everything was just -- it was just what I needed and just what I wanted and part of that is growing up with traditional going to church -- this is just what you do -- but most part is the inner feeling about it I guess. It is just a real nice, peaceful, warm feeling.

These women emphasize the centrality of the church in their lives especially as a place for regular fellowship around common convictions and goals; in effect, a place where affinity groups are formed whose actions express collective identity.

The gendered division of labor and participation in the movement

Gender, which dictates to a large extent the spheres, roles and responsibilities on the farm, in turn dictates (at least in part) who can participate in the movement and how, thereby shaping the collective identity of the movement. The seasonal labor calendars and the values diagrams establish the existence of three different labor spheres on the family farm: productive, reproductive and community managing.

Women's time appears to be more elastic in that they move more often between all three spheres. Women's dominant sphere is reproductive and community managing, while men's time and efforts are largely concentrated in the productive sphere. Such an arrangement is reflected in the gendered nature of participation in the social movement. In turn, the gendered nature of networks and organizations outside of the
farm (those in the sustainable agriculture movement included) reinforce or reproduce the gendered organization of spheres on the farm.

As the seasonal calendars show, women are more often involved in community managing labor. What the calendars do not reveal is how they are involved in community labor. Men tend to include SFA and LSP activities among their volunteer activities, and indeed the amount of time they devote to it is significant (see calendars 1-3 in Appendix II). However, their roles in these activities tend to be as teacher, leader, decision maker and facilitator; roles that the movement encourages and that require, as the men described to me, a great deal of self-development and empowerment. Women, on the other hand, described their dominant role in community managing work as participant, supporter or worker. For instance, one woman described her role in sustainable agriculture activities and the church as mostly a supportive one. During the weekly Bible study, for instance, she cooks the church supper, serves the meal and cleans up while the study and devotional time takes place. She noted that she tends to be pulled into sustainable agriculture activities to "offer support" such as providing lunch, working a registration table or sending out a mailing. This reflects a pattern associated with all community managing work that was echoed by some of the other women: his involvement in community managing work becomes hers as well. Three different women made the following comments:

I'm more involved in the things that he does. I guess I'm always involved in the things he does. He's very, very seldom involved in the things I do. But he hardly ever does anything that he doesn't have me
involved in, too.

I'm not involved in the sustainable agriculture movement except that I'm his wife.

When he got involved in [the sustainable agriculture movement], why then he had expectations of me being involved in it, too.

Indeed, time for self-development is not something most women include on their values diagrams as an important facet of quality of life, as I pointed out in an earlier section. And the seasonal calendars reflect that where the husband is active in community work, the wife is, too. Community managing work associated with sustainable agriculture seems not to directly challenge the largely supportive role that women play in community managing work that their husbands become involved in.

As before, one exception among the couples stands out: One woman was solicited by LSP to play an organizing role. Consequently she brought her husband into the bio-monitoring project as well as other activities.

A similar pattern also appears in the productive work sphere. Men's productive activities and change in those activities can affect their wives' labor activities. One woman talked about the transition years ago from her husband's off-farm employment to farming. She said when he worked off-farm she was much more efficient in household maintenance and seemed to have time left over at the end of the day to organize activities for the children. With his return to farming, her labor load increased even with the departure of her adult children. Before he came back to the farm she was never involved in her husband's productive labor. But due to the nature
of farming, she was called upon to run errands, bring in cows, and cook meals for the hired labor. This pattern appeared again and again in my discussion with the farmers. Even the women who were most adamant about their conscious decision not to be involved in the farm reported on their seasonal calendars that they occasionally run farm-related errands, bring in cows when needed, plant and harvest the family vegetable garden, manage the barnyard chickens\textsuperscript{10} and generally help out during the busiest seasons. Productive work on the farm requires all available labor to pitch in at one point or another. Not one family member is entirely excluded from providing labor in the productive sphere.

Ironically, however, the enormous decrease in the amount of men’s time devoted to milk and cattle production because of sustainable practices instituted on the farm, as reported by the men themselves, does not translate into more leisure time (an important facet of quality of life that men reported) for women, as mentioned earlier. The most obvious reason is that the reproductive sphere and community managing sphere, where women contribute the majority of their labor, have not been affected by the change in practices in the farm’s productive sphere. Second, evident in the frequency with which women cross over into the gendered productive sphere, ultimately the needs of the productive sphere dominate over the other labor spheres co-existing on the farm. The sustainable agriculture movement has reinforced the

\textsuperscript{10}Vegetable gardening and poultry raising have always been considered “women’s work.”
import of the productive sphere by not targeting other parallel labor demands of family farm life. Therefore, the reproductive and community managing roles women report as essential to who they are and what they value about their lives are excluded from the collective identity of the movement. Also, as the women collectively pointed out in the focus group discussions, men do not choose to use their reduced work labor load to lighten or change the labor responsibilities of their wives. While they occasionally help out, they "don't feel that continuing sense of responsibility" to household maintenance and other reproductive labor activities.

VI. Conclusion

The social construct of gender makes a difference in how these farmers define quality of life. This social construction in turn affects participation in the sustainable agriculture movement, threatening its success as a movement that transforms the nature of small "family" farming into an "economically viable, environmentally sound and socially just" institution. At the root of these gendered differences in quality of life is the fact that life goals and daily experiences for male farmers within the family have changed significantly as their involvement in the movement has intensified. Whether organizationally, through building solidarity groups, or simply in terms of concrete practices in production, involvement in the movement has become central among the things that men report they value in a high quality of life. Much of what men emphasize in describing quality of life reflects the values the sustainable
agriculture movement itself espouses: self-empowerment, social activism, balance in economic gain and environmental health, creativity and autonomy in decision-making and problem solving. We can conclude, based on this study, that the collective identity of the sustainable agriculture movement resonates with these male farmers. For their wives, descriptions of quality of life are largely entwined with their multiple and highly elastic gendered roles and responsibilities on the farm, in the household, and in paid and unpaid work in the community, and much less with their involvement in the movement. Because these roles vary significantly from those of their husbands, women’s life experiences on the farm and in the community are different, lending a distinctively gendered shape to quality of life. And while women certainly express appreciation of and some identification with the values promoted by the sustainable agriculture movement, they also report indicators of quality of life outside of the movement’s collective identity boundaries. I would suggest that because women’s unique contribution to the farm and family are not institutionally recognized and addressed by the sustainable agriculture movement, the collective identity of the movement is gender-specific, reflecting a male normative.

It would be inaccurate, however, to suggest that these men and women embrace entirely different worldviews; for instance, both women and men in this study shared ideas about the notion of stewardship and its roots in spirituality. It would also be inaccurate to suggest that these women experience no affiliation with the sustainable agriculture movement. They do attend occasional meetings, participate
in pasture walks and support the movement in other ways. And one of the women, as I pointed out early in the study, regularly attends meetings and serves in a leadership capacity. However, she does play specific gender roles on the farm and in the household that, like those of the other women, are not targeted for change, study or simply consideration by the movement. Perhaps the most significant connection between gendered expressions of quality of life and participation in the movement is found in the notion of personal transformation. Women, as they reported to me, have not generally experienced the same sort of personal transformation that their husbands have in the past decade. Therefore life experiences that all of the men recognize as currently central to their quality of life (such as self-determination, a new work ethic, expanded self-identity as teachers, agricultural "experts," advocates and lobbyists, and leaders) are largely not mirrored in their wives’ construction of quality of life.

Personal transformation involves challenging the way our lives are socially constructed. This is an explicit goal of the sustainable agriculture movement in that it necessarily encourages farmers, researchers and policy makers to challenge assumptions central to conventional agriculture, both in terms of production practices and farming as a way of life. These individuals must feel personally empowered to do so. The results of this study would suggest that such empowerment has largely taken place along gender-specific lines.

Part of my rationale for using participatory research methods in this study was to contribute to that process of self-transformation so highly valued in the sustainable
agriculture movement. By facilitating activities that increased communication across
gender lines and within gender groups as well as activities requiring self- and group-
analysis, I hoped to at least initiate the process of farmer analysis of the gendered
nature of quality of life indicators in the context of sustainable agriculture. However,
it is difficult to measure how effective participatory exercises are bringing about
transformation or promoting self-analysis. And I did not build in any systematic
means of measuring the process itself. That was beyond the scope of this study.
However, as the LSP and other such groups struggle with bringing the whole family
more centrally into the movement, I see a role for participatory activities in capturing
the range of socially-constructed goals, desires and roles associated with sustainable
agriculture. In its most pared down form, participatory research engages people with
a multiplicity of worldviews in the process of studying a problem. Perhaps this
multiplicity of ways of understanding and perceiving the world is the central
processual element missing in the activities and goals of the sustainable agriculture
movement.

The scale of this study is too small to claim generalizability or resolve
conclusions. However, it was an important project, probing in a qualitative and in-
depth way a farmer-initiated inquiry about quality of life as it relates to participation
in the sustainable agriculture movement. For generalization, it would be essential to
expand this study to include a larger number of farm families involved in sustainable
agriculture in other states and regions of the country. However, in the short term the
study can be useful to the LSP's bio-monitoring project and the farm families who participated in the study as they reform their inquiries and analyze their participation in the movement. Naturally the results of this study suggest a number of research questions that deserve further study. Some of these are listed below:

(1) Specifically how does the sustainable agriculture movement reproduce existing gender inequities or lack of parity on the family farm? What does this mean for the longevity and success of the movement represented in its current goals? What sorts of changes could the organizations representing the movement make institutionally and organizationally to challenge these gender imbalances?

(2) If the goals of the sustainable agriculture movement reflect a male normative, how can these goals be reformed to be more inclusive of all members of the family farm?

(3) How and why is gender balance on the family farm important to sustainability?

(4) How and why is empowerment of all family members important to sustainability?

(5) How do changes in production practices on the farm contribute to the building of "socially just" communities?

(6) Do traditional values associated with rural life in the United States contribute to or hinder family farms in working towards sustainability?
(7) Finally, are gendered differences in quality of life fewer as women and men begin to participate in the movement in more equitable ways?

As Allen and Sachs (1991) argue, now is the time to take an important pause in the sustainable agriculture movement’s perhaps precipitous efforts to change practices on the land in order to examine the social constructs affecting and being affected by the movement’s progress. The land and the people tending it necessarily work in concert, whether consciously or unconsciously, to help determine the shape of the landscape-lifescape which is the basis for not only the health and food supply of their own families, but of society in general. This study begins to probe and question some of the assumptions built into the activities and rhetoric of the sustainable agriculture movement. Other social scientists will find a significant challenge in continuing this inquiry.
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Appendix A:

Values/Well-Being Diagrams
Family

4-H
Scott County Fair
Hunting & Fishing
SFA Friends
New Horizons Community
Church
Farm
3b, δ

Self

Community

Family

Environment

Friends
these are obviously connected but a big part of
farm is the example I can set or show.
Appendix B:

Seasonal Labor Distribution Calendars
Appendix II

FARM FAMILY SEASONAL LABOR CALENDARS

KEY

MALE
FEMALE
HIRED PERSON OR ADDITIONAL HOUSEHOLD LABOR (I.E. OLDER CHILDREN)
CONSISTENT LABOR
INTENSE LABOR
SPORADIC LABOR

C = community managing labor
R = reproductive labor
P = productive labor
FAMILY #2: SEASONAL LABOR CALENDAR

- FENCE/GRAZE/WATER
- MILKING
- CALVING
- SUMMER HARV.
- FARM MGT.
- FALL HARVEST
- FEEDING COWS
- BOOKKEEPING
- COOKING
- CLEANING
- LAUNDRY
- PARENTING
- CHURCH
- LSP/SFA
- SCHOOL VOL.
- NURSERY SCH. VOL.
- 4-H

J F M A M J J A S O N D
FAMILY #4: SEASONAL LABOR CALENDAR

- Calving
- Milking
- Feeding
- Breeding
- Grass Mgt.
- Mechanical Work
- Fencing
- Manure Mgt.
- Haying
- Purch. Hay
- Healthcare
- Heifer Care
- Farm Errands
- Bookkeeping
- Sideliner Bus.
- Cooking
- Cleaning
- Laundry
- Gardening
- Lawn Work
- Paint/Write
VITA

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