"Just As Good As They Are": Voices of Contemporary Women Involved in Farming and Ranching in North Dakota

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"JUST AS GOOD AS THEY ARE": VOICES OF CONTEMPORARY
WOMEN INVOLVED IN FARMING AND
RANCHING IN NORTH DAKOTA

by

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A Dissertation
submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the
University of North Dakota
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Grand Forks, North Dakota
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2001
This dissertation, submitted by Heidi L. Dyrstad in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

Mary Ruth Jacobson (Chair)

This dissertation meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

Dean of the Graduate School
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Title  "Just as Good as They Are": Voices of Contemporary Women in Farming and Ranching in North Dakota.

Department  Teaching and Learning

Degree  Doctor of Philosophy

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Finally, I thank the women involved in this study. Without their willingness to participate in a thoughtful and honest manner, the project would not be nearly as meaningful or significant as it is. I hope I have represented them well.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the current experiences of women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota. Specifically, women from across the state of North Dakota were interviewed to further our understanding of their lives as they experienced and reacted to the changing nature of agriculture. Interviewing was employed as the primary method of investigation to allow the women’s voices to be conveyed directly to others.

Through analysis based in grounded theory methodology, three descriptive assertions emerged from the interview data, and they are as follows:

1. The women involved in farming and ranching in this study are extremely busy and work very hard.

2. The women involved in farming and ranching in this study risk compromising, or have already compromised, their psychological health due to stress.

3. The women involved in farming and ranching in this study have many reasons to remain on their farms and ranches.

These three assertions led to a discussion on how and why we should listen to the voices of the women involved. This discussion centered on the concept that through paying careful attention to the women’s needs and desires, we may work collaboratively with the women to better understand, serve, and represent them in a variety of contexts.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

"I am tired. I am tired not like one or two nights sleep deprivation tired. I am tired of, of um, tired of the load."

"I am capable. I am proud of my family. I am proud of our ranch. I am proud of our community. I am a Christian."

"Your roots are deep in farming...The roots of being here are a lot stronger than words can really describe. Like so many people say, 'Why are you still here after all this?' Sometimes I don't know."

"People say to me, 'Isn't it kind of boring living there all alone?'...and I say, 'No, I'm not alone, and in the second place, it isn't boring! It gets pretty wild!'"

"Well, I guess I feel like I can do anything."

"Well, I feel that I am a very experienced farm wife, and ah, they look at you when you fill out these forms, and I write 'farmer,' but I am! I mean, farmwife, you know what people think of that, it's somebody who cooks and makes meals, and I don't just do that. I actually do the stuff, so I write down farmer."

"I'm happy to be a woman. I'd hate to try to fill the shoes of a man. There's no way that I'd like that...there are chauvinistic men that need to be taught a thing or two...but I think because I've had to be so independent...I think I feel o.k. about myself. I feel fine."

"I sort of tend to take care of others first before I take care of myself, and then of course pretty soon you aren't good for anybody until you take care of yourself..."

"I was his right-hand man...and it was tough when we had kids because I couldn't be out there all the time with him..."

"If we lose our place, some people, this is all they've known their whole lives...what would they do? Where would they go?...If they lost their place, they lost their house and everything. We have to start plum over... That's where it comes that people really don't understand what farming and ranching is all about and what the people and place are all about."
'It makes me think more about God, living this life.'

'...the country has just gone crazy...they don't really realize that this country was founded on agriculture and I mean, agriculture is as old as the world...But I think people have lost sight of that because they all live in cities out there and they all want to save the environment...'

'I know that we in agriculture kind of feel like nobody cares. What can we do to wake people up? And I don't think we're asking for a handout. We just want things to be fair, you know.'

'It's the whole NAFTA thing that's been messing it up for us.'

'...a lot of...really good and important things come out of those family farms and small operations. Good people with good values and good work ethics...'

-excerpts from interviews with women living on farms and ranches in North Dakota, summer and fall, 1999

Women have always been involved in agriculture, and they have taken on multiple roles and perspectives in its history. Although largely ignored by scholars until recently, the women involved have suffered, survived and thrived in a culture of agricultural change (Garkovisch, Bokemeier, & Foote, 1995). Agriculture in North America has endured numerous changes over the centuries, but one of the most remarkable shifts has occurred in the past one hundred years. Looking back through time, beginning with Native Americans, agriculture has largely been a subsistence endeavor. This tradition of cultivating only enough land and raising sufficient numbers of animals to feed and clothe one's family in addition to producing a few goods for trade or sale continued through colonial America and well into the nineteenth century (see, for example, Fink, 1986, or Jensen, 1981). However, as industrialization began to assert itself as a powerful force, increasing numbers of farming families quit the land and moved into cities for employment. Duncan, Fischer, and Taylor (1996) wrote of how the move towards urbanization has
been a long-lasting trend. This trend gained force with the advent of our two world wars, and by the mid-twentieth century, the number of farms in this country had been significantly reduced (Sachs, 1983).

Industrialization meant that the people remaining on farms and ranches faced drastic changes in time-honored traditions and methods for reaping a living from the land and home (Fink, 1986). These changes included pressure to modernize their operations and homes with newly invented equipment and conveniences such as tractors and indoor plumbing or electricity (Jellison, 1993). With newer farming equipment and home conveniences, it was possible to farm more land in a shorter amount of time with fewer people, and the roles of males and females on farms and ranches became more defined and separate (Fink, 1986). Furthermore, modern methods increased people's abilities to obtain more agricultural output per unit of land, a process known as agricultural intensification (Burton & Reitz, 1981).

The most recent major change in agriculture occurred in the mid to late 1970s when import demands caused the price of grain to skyrocket for American farmers. At this time, commercial lenders encouraged farmers to expand their operations as much as possible to increase yield and profit. Unfortunately, the farm crisis of the 1980s unfurled as import demands began to lessen and the prices for grain and land fell dramatically. As Haney and Miller (1991) wrote,

Farmers who in the 1970s had been encouraged to borrow heavily against an appreciating asset base were unable to meet interest payments on their loans. At the same time, land values declined by as much as half their previous levels. Farm bankruptcies skyrocketed; the economic downturn in U.S. agriculture had reached
crisis proportions. Particularly hard hit by the crisis were the medium-sized, family-based farms. (p. 115)

Many farms were forced into bankruptcy. These farm foreclosures differed from past economic trends in agriculture. As Murdock and Leistritz (1988) found, by 1986, approximately one fifth of all farmers in the United States were in financial distress. According to their research, the rate of farm foreclosures and bankruptcies occurred at several times that of the historical average. In the 1990s, we have seen those who were able to survive the crisis either obtain increasingly larger and more complex, often corporate-style operations or struggle day by day with smaller, family-oriented farms and ranches.

The changes in agriculture are occurring at an alarming rate, and as increasing numbers of farms and ranches and indeed, a way of life, are disappearing, it is vital that we understand what effects these changes are having on the people involved in, and witness to, these events. What has not changed over the centuries is that people on farms and ranches have continuously struggled and found joy in their chosen way of life. An additional and significant aspect of agriculture that has not changed is women's involvement in it. As previously mentioned, they have been integral to the success of farm and ranch living since its origin. Jensen (1981), citing Neithammer, wrote that

Before Europeans arrived in North America, and for centuries after, Native American women dominated agricultural production in the eastern half of what is now the United States. In other parts of North America, they shared in farming and food gathering; everywhere they processed food from the land. (pp. 2-3)
Other scholars have also shown women's involvement throughout the history of agriculture in the United States. For example, Lindgren (1991) explored women who homesteaded and farmed their own land in North Dakota. Benson et al. (1986) wrote of how women's work on farms and ranches was and continues to be vital for success. These and other researchers show women's active involvement from before colonization to the present. This study focuses on the often overlooked women involved in the changes, challenges and rewards of family farming and ranching today in a specific geographical location, the state of North Dakota.

Framing the Study/The Problem

For years, scholars from diverse fields of study have focused their research on the changing nature of farming and ranching and their accompanying life experiences, both positive and negative. This research includes mostly historical work and current, quantitative studies, as well as some qualitative studies done in other geographical areas. This research is discussed in Chapter II. Undoubtedly, this research is extremely helpful and valuable in gaining an understanding of farming and ranching and the people who engage in these professions. However, current, scholarly research coming from the qualitative tradition on the experiences of people in farming and ranching today in North Dakota, and especially the women involved, is practically nonexistent. This is problematic, for qualitative research may capture richer, or thicker, descriptions and meanings shared by those involved in farming and ranching today than those obtained through quantitative research alone. Furthermore, as farming and ranching are experiencing major changes, it is imperative that we understand them more clearly. Inductive, narrative-based research may lead to clear themes on the current experiences of
those involved. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) wrote, "Qualitative methods can give the intricate details of phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods" (p. 19). Qualitative methods allow for individual stories and experiences to be told in the words of the participants. In spite of this reasoning, I have found, through extensive searching, only informal and limited data on current farming and ranching conditions and experiences coming from the qualitative tradition of interviewing and/or participant-observation, especially concerning North Dakota. For example, various stories and question/answer or advice sections in magazines or newspapers exist, but nothing indicates any type of systematic analysis (see, for example, Dr. Farmer in the Fargo Forum, 1997).

More alarming than the lack of current, qualitative data on North Dakota, is that the existing, scholarly, analyses often do not take gender into account. This research, conducted almost entirely by state data centers and involving mostly phone or mail surveys, often does not differentiate between male and female respondents. Thus, the reader of these surveys has no idea who in a farming or ranching household has responded to any given survey. Women may or may not answer survey questions differently than their male counterparts, but based on existing research, we have no idea. As with the qualitative work discussed, some lay quantitative research does exist, such as a survey conducted by Rural Specialists from Lutheran Social Services as they have provided services to rural people in North Dakota, but none of this research is done in a scholarly manner. There is a definite lack of current qualitative research on farming and ranching everywhere, and this is certainly the case for North Dakota, and perhaps even moreso for women in North Dakota.
Women are often under-represented in agricultural research, and North Dakota is no exception. A primary reason for this is that the very term "farmer" is often attributed to males, and thus males become the focus of most studies, whether they were intended to be or not. Sachs (1983) wrote that "There is still a strong tendency to see men as farmers and women as farmer's wives" (p. xi). As farmers' wives, women's role in agriculture is often overlooked. Rosenfeld (1985) concurred, and wrote that "...because farming has been defined as a male occupation, their [women's] roles on and for the farm have often been overlooked or undervalued" (p. 269). This is a harmful oversight, because as existing research shows that women are vital to agricultural success, it may serve all those involved to know more about them. While there is a definite need for qualitative research on all farm and ranch people, it is critical that we explore the stories and words of the women involved in farming and ranching. This is especially the case in North Dakota, as agriculture plays an important role in the identity and economic well-being of the state (North Dakota Agricultural Statistics Service, 1997). By overlooking women's current lived experiences, we are ignoring a large portion of our population directly involved in the largest state industry. Additional information on the role of agriculture in North Dakota is presented in Chapter II.

Listening to the voices of women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota serves several specific purposes. First, the process will fill a broad gap in our understanding of a largely invisible— at least in the literature—population of North Dakota. Understanding may lead to increased accuracy in our perceptions about who is involved in a profession that uses over 90 percent of the land mass in this state and employs over one quarter of the population (North Dakota Agricultural Statistics Service, 1997). Next, with
increased understanding, we may learn how to better serve these women, through social services, education and general outreach. This is especially vital as farming and ranching are undergoing great changes through increased foreclosure, voluntary departure, complexity involving world markets, and corporate-style operations. If North Dakota agriculture is to survive these changes, and women are vital to the processes involved, it makes sense that we should try to understand them. Additionally, by providing a basic study of women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota, others may be better able to conduct meaningful research on similar topics. Finally, we may learn the value of current, qualitative research concerning a topic area previously untouched by those in the scholarly community using these methods.

The Research Questions

Although the rationale for conducting qualitative research on women in North Dakota is clear, it is important to be equally clear on what exactly is being studied at present. For this study, I have chosen to take the lead of anthropologist Frederick Erickson (1985), who suggested that qualitative researchers ask the following two questions: What is happening?, and, What does it mean to the people involved? To be more specific, I am asking, What are the women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota experiencing at the present time in response to their chosen lifestyles? I am also asking, How do they feel/think/behave in relation to these experiences? These are expansive questions, but it is appropriate to start with such questions in newly explored territory, as the answers to them will provide grounding for future work in this topic area. As is discussed in Chapter IV, clear themes and commonalities in women's responses to these questions emerged through careful analysis of the data.
These questions and their relationship to qualitative research mean that this is primarily a grounded theory study (Creswell, 1998). While grounded theory will be explained in detail in Chapter III, it should be noted here that, as Creswell wrote,

The intent of grounded theory study is to generate or discover a theory, an abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon, that relates to a particular situation. This situation is one in which individuals interact, take actions, or engage in a process in response to a phenomenon. (p. 55)

My interest lay in discovering how women in North Dakota are reacting to their particular phenomenon of current lifestyle issues revolving around farming and ranching as it is constantly changing. I hope to show a theory or theories of explanation that will help describe who these women are and how their lived experiences in relation to farming and ranching may affect them. The women are also reacting to a phenomenon of change. Their reaction to a phenomenon, even if it is an expansive one, means this is also partly a phenomenological study. Creswell wrote that phenomenology "focuses on the meaning of people's experience toward a phenomenon" (p. 38). As the tradition of inquiry chosen should reflect the focus of the study, and the focus of this study is to understand the lived experiences and respective reactions of women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota, I will use a combination of traditions or methods. Creswell writes that although it is common for traditions to overlap, a researcher must be aware of various complexities that may arise due to combining methods or traditions. Thus, my main focus is grounded theory, even if a few elements of phenomenology enter into the methodology. These traditions are chosen because they fit better than say, a case study, which is "chosen to study a case with clear boundaries" (Creswell, 1998, p. 39), or a biography, where a
"single individual needs to be studied" (p. 38), or ethnography, which requires more participation/observation and increased time in the field (Fetterman, 1989).

My grounded theory/phenomenological research was done primarily through the use of open-ended interviews with eighteen women over a period of four months. These interviews occurred in three separate, and quite different, geographical locations across the state. Three locations were chosen so that possible comparisons and contrasts could be analyzed for various types of operations and micro-cultures and the people involved in them. A discussion of the participants is included in Chapter III.

My Role as a Researcher

In my attempts to understand the women involved in this study, I believe it is important to try to empathize with them in some manner. However, taking a cue from Shulamit Reinharz, a sociologist and Director of Women's Studies at Brandeis University, I realize that who I am will affect my abilities in this area. She wrote that the ability to empathize may revolve around our own identity. Furthermore, "...every aspect of a researcher's identity can impede or enhance empathy. In...interview research that requires interaction, this issue may be more significant than in survey or experimentation that does not rely on empathy" (1992, p. 26).

Knowing that I will retell the stories of the women involved through the eyes and ears of my own experiences and knowledge, it is appropriate for me to explain who I am, at least those aspects of myself that I feel could most affect this research. I am a thirty-two year old Caucasian woman who grew up in a lower to middle-class suburb of a large midwestern city. These facts alone affected my work, for it is possible that I may have empathized more with the women interviewed as they were close to my age, Caucasian
and usually considered middle class citizens. Additionally, because I do not have a rural or farming/ranching background, I did not, at least initially, understand much of the farming/ranching culture. I attended a private college and majored in Speech Communications and French, and then attended graduate school for my Master's degree in Speech Communications. I am currently a speech communications lecturer at a medium-sized land-grant, research-based university in the midwest and am finishing up my Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education. While all of the women interviewed had high school diplomas, and several had college degrees, none of them had any graduate experience, and some were initially leery of anyone associated with a research university. I have been married for nearly ten years to my best friend and have no children, other than the feline and canine sort, for whom I have particular fondness. However, I am currently pregnant with our first child. All of the women interviewed are married, and they all have children--of the human kind. These differing characteristics may have caused some distance, and affected my abilities to empathize with the women involved. I love the outdoors--some people might even call me an environmentalist. As Chapter V will detail, the environmentalist in me would probably not be too popular with the women interviewed. I am fairly active, and I love being around other people as well as quiet time to myself. I enjoy reading and watching movies while munching on popcorn and sipping a glass of lemonade or wine. Many of the women interviewed enjoy these same types of activities and past times. Finally, I am a gentle person, who even has a difficult time squishing bugs in my home--I tend to scoop them up and take them outside, where I think they belong. I do not know about the bug-scooping practice, but all of the women interviewed seemed gentle and, if necessary, tough as nails.
During my doctorate work, I experienced the proverbial consciousness-raising so often associated with feminism. This left a lasting impression on me, and one that is here to stay. As an interviewer and learner, my ears listen with a decided feminist bent. These feminist ears have endured several changes over the years, but mostly in the way that I choose to listen to and interpret messages. I used to say that I wanted to give North Dakota women involved in farming and ranching a voice. How arrogant. I now do not believe that people have the ability to give voice to anybody other than themselves. North Dakota women involved in farming and ranching have always had a voice; it just has not always been heard, at least not by most people. My task has involved listening to the stories and worldviews of these women in an attempt to understand and interpret their messages and experiences. My efforts have allowed the women to represent themselves, in their own words. Whatmore (1991a), a prominent researcher in the study of women on farms in Great Britain wrote the following of her work:

...my representation of the working lives of the women portrayed does not mirror their own. Neither can it be read as somehow tapping a deeper level of 'reality' or 'truth'. It is limited to highlighting some of the discursive practices by which women come to represent their interests in particular ways.... (p. 148)

My feminist perspective conveys various meaning to different people. For example, some may view or carry that characteristic with honor, while for others feminist is a dirty word. However, I can not change who I am; nor would I wish to, for I believe that in order for my work to have integrity, I must be true to myself. I am certain that for some of the women whom I have had the honor to meet and listen to throughout this project, and others who may read the results, my standpoint will not be a popular one. However, I ask
any readers who find my feminism distasteful to think carefully before passing judgment, as concepts related to feminism are incredibly varied and complex (see, for example, Boneparth, 1982; Moore, 1988; Reinharz, 1992; Sachs, 1983). Furthermore, I share Salamon's hope as she wrote of her research participants, "I know they will not agree with nor like everything...but I hope they feel the text conveys an honest picture of their lives" (1992, p. xvi).

My feminist perspective is apparent in this study in many ways. I view research and the participants involved from a unique standpoint. I agree with Reinharz (1992), who claimed that "Feminism is a perspective, not a research method" (p. 240). Because of this, feminists may use multiple research methods, and may incorporate multiple disciplines in their research processes. Reinharz also wrote that "Feminist research aims to create social change." This is certainly true here in that at the very least, I hope to raise awareness of the lived experiences of women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota. In raising this awareness, I hope to show common themes in their stories, but will also attempt to show the uniqueness of each woman studied. This coincides with Reinharz's idea that "Feminist research strives to represent human diversity" (p. 240).

Shortall (1994) reiterated this idea by claiming that feminist researchers show respect for women in agriculture by not narrowly defining who they are and how they experience life. Additionally, feminist research often revolves around relationships, between researcher and participant, between researcher and reader, and between researcher and the research process. These relationships mean that the researcher does not act as an objective outsider, but instead involves herself in the study at various levels. Reinharz wrote that
Forming a 'deep identification' that breathes life into that which is studied and into the woman doing the study is another way in which some feminist researchers try to break out of conventional scientific strictures. The feminist scholar does not hide this identification from the reader. Instead, she discloses herself, sharing her story and inviting the reader to identify with her. Furthermore, the author frequently inbeds her process of identification in a larger personal story of 'becoming' and of writing. (1992, p. 233)

My involvement shows throughout this study. Furthermore, my desire for involvement in the research process other than as a statistics analyst, my participation as a citizen of North Dakota, my role as an instructor at a land-grant university, and my strong desire to study under-represented women led me to this interview study of women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota. Reinharz wrote that

> By listening to women speak, understanding women's membership in particular social systems, and establishing the distribution of phenomena accessible only through sensitive interviewing, feminist interview researchers have uncovered previously neglected or misunderstood worlds of experience. (1992, p. 44)

I feel this is the case with the participants in this study. This dissertation is the culmination of my efforts to recognize the "previously neglected or misunderstood worlds of experience" of which Reinharz wrote. It is also a starting point from which other projects and relationships may be formed in the future.

Finally, as a feminist researcher attempting to break out of the traditional modes of inquiry, analysis, and critical writing, I choose to write in a style that is accessible and respectful for everyone. This means that I refrain from using jargon which may complicate
the study for some readers. It also means that I refer to the study participants not as subjects, but rather by name. This style is in keeping with qualitative and feminist methods (see, for example, Davies, 1993; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Ross-Epp & Watkinson, 1997). Specific participant identification methods are discussed in greater detail in Chapter III. As an involved researcher, I also include my own reflections and thoughts on the overall research process, and these are found primarily in Chapter V.

Definitions

Farm/Ranch: "Any establishment from which $1,000 or more of agricultural products were sold or would normally be sold during the year" (United States Department of Agriculture, 1998, p. 6).

Women involved in farming and ranching: All women who are owners-operators of farms or ranches, or are the spouses, partners, or daughters of owner-operator farmers and ranchers.

Feminism: The beliefs and practices associated with the recognition, increased respect for and appreciation of women and other under-represented people. These beliefs and practices should result in equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all people.

Overview of the Study

Chapter I provides an introduction to the study through a discussion of women's involvement in agriculture, the rationale for and significance of their involvement as the focus of the study, and the specific research questions addressed here. Additionally, it explains my role as a researcher and how this role may have affected the study. Finally, definitions of terms used throughout the study are provided.
Chapter II includes a review of the related literature. This chapter begins with a brief review of literature on farming and ranching in North Dakota so that one may understand its importance as well as the environments in which the study participants live and work. More significantly, it covers the qualitative and quantitative scholarly literature in relation to women involved in farming and ranching on a state, national and global level. This body of literature continues to expand yearly.

Chapter III discusses the methodology used to collect, organize, and analyze the data, as well as the rationale for the methods used. To create a clear understanding of the women involved, a composite description of a typical participant is detailed. This chapter also includes the final descriptive assertions garnered from the analysis. Finally, this chapter details the limitations of the study due to the methodology used.

Chapter IV presents an analysis of the data drawn from the interviews, showing how the final descriptive assertions were reached. This chapter includes quotations and paraphrasing taken directly from the data used to support the final assertions.

Chapter V concludes the study with an overall summary of the analysis results. It also includes possible benefits for various people and organizations resulting from the information shared. It concludes with my own thoughts and reflections on the study process as well as recommendations for further practice and research.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the process involved in gathering and organizing literature relevant to the study. This is included to explain why specific materials are reviewed. It then presents a brief overview of agriculture in North Dakota to provide a context in which we may understand the participants and the analysis. Finally, it details the research coming from qualitative and quantitative traditions of scholarly inquiry focused on women involved in farming and ranching on a state, national and global level.

To support claims made in Chapter I, this review will show how my study fills a void in the existing literature on women involved in farming and ranching in general, and specifically, in North Dakota.

The Process

In 1987, Bouquet and De Haan wrote that “In our experience, those who study ‘family farming’…could well be living on different planets, so limited is their interchange” (p. 243). Maman and Tate (1996), reference librarians who put together the book Women in agriculture: A guide to research, wrote that

Our experiences as reference librarians…have been that information on the many topics of women working in the field of agriculture is spread over many areas.

Often it is necessary to use many sources to gather enough information to cover this topic with a degree of adequacy. (p. ix)
My experience piecing together literature for this study has been challenging at best, extremely frustrating at worst. Before organization could take place, the information needed to be located, a time-consuming task in and of itself. Sachs (1983) wrote that

Women have participated in agricultural production in the United States since before the invasion of European settlers, but the bulk of their labor has been performed under the direct or indirect control of men. As a result, accurate information on women's work in agriculture is sketchy at best. (p. 1)

Many scholars have pointed out women's invisibility in agricultural studies (see, for example, Boulding, 1980; Joyce & Leadley, 1977; Shortall, 1999).

Claims such as these and many others presented in this review often come from research completed in the 1980s. However, they are in keeping with the surge in women's literature on a broad scale resulting from the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s as well as the farm crisis of the 1980s. After extensive searching, I found large bodies of literature written in the 1980s, as well as some recent literature of the 1990s. Just as the general body of literature involving women and feminist studies is beginning to grow in this current post-modern and critical period, so it is with women involved in farming and ranching. I suspect and hope that even as this study is completed, increasing amounts of literature on the topic is being published for wide-spread use. In Chapter I, I claimed that the literature on this topic was practically nonexistent, and this is certainly true in relation to my specific study on the current experiences of women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota. However, as the following review will show, scholarly work on related areas has been diverse and it provides a base from which my research may become more clear.
Agriculture in North Dakota

A generalized discussion of agriculture in North Dakota provides a base from which one may better understand the women involved in this study. Agriculture in North Dakota, like in the rest of North America, has a rich and complex history filled with changes, challenges, rewards and promise. North Dakota was not settled by Europeans until the mid to late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Lindgren, 1991). Thus, the concept of farming or ranching a single piece of land year after year in the immigrants' European tradition is relatively new in this state as compared to the rest of the country. However, once the foundations were laid, farming and ranching in the European tradition became the predominant means of making a living in North Dakota and continues to be so today. Leistritz and Coon (1994) wrote that "Since statehood, agriculture has been the largest single component of North Dakota's economic base" (p. 11). According to the North Dakota Department of Agriculture (Johnson, 1998), roughly forty million acres, or 90 percent of the state's total land area, is in ranches and farms. Furthermore, over one quarter of the state's population is employed directly in agriculture or agriculturally-related business. In 1988, "Only Iowa...and South Dakota...were more dependent on the agricultural sector" for economic well-being than North Dakota (Leistritz & Coon, 1994). The figures had not changed much by 1992. A booklet titled The role of agriculture in the North Dakota economy: Summary, prepared by North Dakota State University, states that North Dakota's economy "ranked 4th in the nation in percentage of gross state product derived from agriculture" (p. 1).

Although ninety percent of the land is in farms and ranches, increasingly smaller numbers of operations make up this number. According to state census information, there
were 48,836 farms in 1964, and 36,431 farms in 1982. By 1997, there were 30,504 North Dakota farms (North Dakota Agricultural Statistics Service, 1997). While the number of farms is decreasing, the size of those remaining is increasing. In 1964, the average size of a North Dakota farm was 875 acres, while in 1982, the average size was 1,104 acres, and in 1997, the average size was 1,290 acres (North Dakota Agricultural Statistics Service, 1997). While no specific statistical data is available on why farming families have left their farms, the trend suggests that smaller farming operations often do not provide an adequate means to earn a living. As Leistritz and Coon (1994) wrote, "...recent problems in the agricultural sector, including low commodity prices and drought, have contributed to a long-term trend of declining farm numbers" (p. 11). Clearly, farming and ranching in North Dakota are changing. As discussed in Chapter I, a major focus of this study is to document and interpret how the women involved in these occupations are reacting to these changes.

Farming and ranching have provided challenging ways of life for those who choose them in North Dakota. Countless documents describe the drastic changes in temperature, rainfall and general growing conditions across the state. The participants for this study live primarily in the central part of the state, as well as the semi-arid western areas. Heavy rainfall mixed with periods of drought are not uncommon in the central regions of the state. Howling blizzards with shortages of water are common in the western areas (Webb, 1981).

Despite hardships determined by the weather, farming and ranching families in North Dakota grow a large variety of crops and raise several types of livestock. Crop farming is more common in the central and eastern parts of the state, described as "East
River” (east of the Missouri river) by the participants in this study. The primary crop is wheat, while sunflowers, canola, soy beans, and sugar beats make up the majority of other crops grown. “West River” (west of the Missouri river) is also known for crop farming, but as one moves toward the badlands of the far west, cattle ranches dominate the landscape. Some sheep, pigs, horses and bison are also raised, among other, smaller operations, but cattle are the livestock of choice (see, for example, Johnson, 1998; North Dakota Agricultural Statistics Service, 2000a, 2000b). For this study, roughly half of the participants live on farms, relying primarily on crop harvests for their livelihoods, while half live on ranches, relying primarily on livestock sales for their livelihoods.

Literature Related Specifically to Women

Much of the qualitative literature shows how women are or have always been involved in farming and ranching. More significantly, the focus of this research helps make women’s ever-present force in agriculture visible, and perhaps valued. I have divided the literature related to women into six sub-categories. These are history, economics, politics, stress/psychological hardship, power and labor.

History

A large body of the literature is historical in nature, documenting how and why women contributed to daily tasks, and why many of these activities were and are often overlooked or ignored. Stanley (1993) wrote that

Anthropologists now generally agree that women invented agriculture. More precisely, in their role as main food-providers in gathering-hunting times, they became the plant experts of the species, and thus the likely inventors of gardening, which became agriculture. (pp. 1-2)
Neithammer (in Jensen, 1981) studied Native American women and their central importance in agriculture in this country. She wrote that

Before Europeans arrived in North America, and for centuries after, Native American women dominated agricultural production in the eastern half of what is now the United States. In other parts of North America, they shared in farming and food gathering; everywhere they processed food from the land. (pp. 2-3)

Brown (1976) wrote of black women in American agriculture. After reviewing several specific time periods, Brown concluded that black women made "significant contributions to agricultural development through hard work, thrift, industry, and the acquisition of property" (p. 208).

Scholars give various reasons why these contributions have often been overlooked. For example, Jensen (1981) wrote of a lack of written records due to time constraints, low levels of literacy, strong oral traditions, and no pressing need to write. However, Jensen also wrote of her discovery that "Women had left far more records than their treatment by historians had led us to believe" (p. xviii). Here Jensen referred to the male-dominated focus of past research. Her 1986 work, which focused on women's role in agriculture as it changed in relation to industrialization in the United States, further criticized the lack of attention given to women. She wrote that

Many histories discuss the urbanization and industrialization process of the new nation; some even discuss the role of women in that process. None focuses on rural women and their place in the transformation of the American agricultural system. (p. xiv)
She went on to write that her work “...places the rural majority in its proper place, at the center of the history of American women” (p. xiv).

Lindgren (1991) is another historical scholar whose work shows how women are often overlooked in agricultural research. Her book, Land in her own name, describes mid-western women who filed and worked land claims in their own names at the end of the nineteenth and into the beginning of the twentieth century. Much of this research centers on North Dakota and she claimed that women are often overlooked in the settling of the plains because “…the domestic sphere is considered secondary and this is the sphere in which women are usually historically studied” (p. 210). Lindgren’s data showed that many women did not take a secondary role in settling North Dakota. Indeed, she found that the percentages of women who failed or canceled their rights to their homesteads was about equal to that of men. For example, Lindgren studied the failure rate in two counties and found that in one, 28% of men had canceled their rights, while only 24% of women did, while in another, 29% of men and 32% of women canceled their rights. Smuts (in Boulding, 1980), supported Lindgren’s work as she wrote, “...women had taken up claims on public land in all parts of the West” and “...all over the thinly settled portions of Dakota” (p. 277).

Historian Handy-Marchello’s (1996) research discusses women’s contributions to farming in relation to work, family, and community-building in the same major settlement period as Lindgren. Handy-Marchello concluded, as the title of her work suggests, that women were clearly “carrying half” in their efforts to create and sustain a way of life on the Dakota plains. Like Jensen and Lindgren, Handy-Marchello also discussed the theme of women’s invisibility in historical work. She wrote that “…the historic subordination of
women generally, and specifically in agricultural history, has obscured the significance of women’s partnership in the successful settling on northern plains farms” (pp. 4-5).

While other historical research exists, this small sampling shows the primary themes of the research. Some of my research focuses on similar issues, such as showing how women are involved in farming and ranching as it is changing, and how their work is often overlooked or ignored. However, my work details the experiences of women currently involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota, and the only historical aspect of my research concerns background information of the women and their involvement in their chosen way of life.

Economics

In addition to research centering on history, other scholars focus solely on the economic contributions of women in agriculture. Specifically, the economic literature reviewed here concerns monetary issues. While the discipline is different than history, the theme of women’s invisibility rises to the forefront of this body of economic literature just as with the historical literature. This theme is given a historical base, as women’s monetary contributions to farming are cited, but is expanded to include current monetary issues related to the women and families involved in farming.

The fact that women are important to the economic success of farms has been documented over time. For example, Rosenfeld’s work (1985) showed how in the first quarter of the twentieth century, fully eighty percent of the farm household’s daily living expense money came from women selling what they produced and processed through livestock, primarily dairy products and eggs. Handy-Marchello’s work (1996) also supported the claim that women were primary sources of monetary income on the farm.
Much of the current literature on economics and women involved in farming focuses on off-farm employment. Deseran, Falk, and Jenkins (1984) found that “Off farm-employment of wives has become an economic cushion that has permitted many family farms to continue in operation...a phenomenon which may become even more prevalent in the future” (p. 41). Maret and Copp (1981) concurred when they wrote that “To summarize, the economic contributions of resident farm women appear to be crucial to the well-being of many of our nation’s farms. Overall, increasing levels of labor-force participation comprise an important source of nonfarm income” (p. 114).

Gasson (1984) also studied women’s off-farm employment, and wrote how many seek it for financial reasons, but may not attain it for the following reasons: lack of access to suitable employment due to long distances, lack of social services (e.g., no day care) and expectations to always be available for work at home. Gasson explained, writing that “Being a farmer’s wife may carry the expectation that the woman will always be on hand to perform the numerous small tasks, usually undervalued, unappreciated and taken for granted, which contribute to a smooth running business” (p. 221).

Perhaps because it is more easily measured than on-farm contributions, off-farm work is frequently discussed in the literature focusing on current economic aspects of farming. However, some other aspects are discussed as well. Maret and Copp (1981) wrote that “The largest area of economic contribution for agriculturally employed farm women remains that of ‘unpaid family worker,’” but that these “agriculture efforts of American farm women appear directly related to farming income in a way that is frequently overlooked” (p. 113). Gasson’s 1992 work, done in the United Kingdom, supported this idea. She wrote that
Despite their substantial and many-sided involvement in the farm business, a number of respondents complained that the wife’s contribution was frequently taken for granted, overlooked and under-valued, both within the family and beyond the farm gate. For example, at the ‘official’ level, the category of farmers/partners/directors in the Agricultural Census excludes wives/husbands of farmers even if they are themselves partners or directors. The Census category of ‘spouse doing farm work’ seems intended only for those doing manual work on a regular basis, ignoring the many other kinds of contributions (managerial, secretarial, administrative, domestic, supportive) which wives make and without which the family farm could not function. (p. 83)

Although Gasson’s work took place elsewhere, similar sentiments emerge in research completed in the United States. Mammen, Rathge, and Whan (1986) wrote of wives on North Dakota farms. They claimed that we have “…a deflated estimate of wives’ economic contributions to their family relative to their husband” (p. 29). The researchers referred to unpaid work, but as Maret and Copp stated, “The fact that contributions are unpaid does not [sic] mean they are without economic value” (p. 113). As previously stated, it is clear that women’s invisibility shows in the economic literature.

My study involves some of the same issues discussed in the economic literature. However, economics is not the main focus of my study. For example, my data shows that women’s economic contributions are vital to a farm or ranch’s success, but it expands on this concept to describe possible implications of these contributions for the women themselves. It discusses women’s feelings about these contributions, and how women may suffer emotionally and physically because of their responsibilities related to the
success of their respective farms and ranches. My study also focuses only on the present experiences of women currently involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota.

**Politics**

In addition to the historical and economic research presented thus far, a third body of literature, that of women in agricultural politics, also relates to my study. As discussed in Chapter V, my data suggest that women are highly knowledgeable about and involved in the politics of agriculture. The existing data focus primarily on women's involvement in the past, but I discuss it separately from history because its main theme is women's involvement in off-farm organizations rather than their involvement on the farm itself. Aside from historical organizations, some of the research revolves around current organizations and those of the very recent past.

Women involved in agricultural politics have been largely ignored or repressed throughout history. Thus, much of the literature on women's involvement works to show the strong presence of the women. As previously stated, this involvement is documented in women's creation and maintenance of various organizations. The organizations have various purposes and roots, but it is clear that they arose from women aiming for equal rights and recognition of who they were and are as catalysts for change in society. A common tendency is to view women's activism as taking place in the 1960s and 1970s, but as Evans wrote (in Backhouse & Flaherty, 1992), feminism was not entirely new in the 1960s. Evans wrote that it may have been marginalized and depoliticized earlier, but it certainly did exist.

Although some research shows women's movements taking place much earlier in history, the involvement of women in farming and ranching politics in the United States
can be traced back to women’s suffrage. Since my study focuses on North Dakota, it is relevant to discuss women’s suffrage here, specifically the struggle faced by rural women in the fight for the right to vote. Brigl Zins (in Benson et al., 1986) wrote that geographical considerations, namely distance, made it difficult for rural women to organize their efforts in a meaningful manner. In addition to geographical barriers, the women of North Dakota faced what all other women faced, the “…prevailing Victorian attitude against women’s participation in public life,” and common fears and misconceptions such as “…women could not vote intelligently because they have a diminished brain size; voting would adversely affect women’s sexuality; women had the vote already, through their husbands; [and] women should not be exposed to the corruption of politics” (p. 28). Despite the arguments against women’s suffrage, women were eventually allowed to vote. Handy-Marchello (1996) wrote that although women were allowed to vote on local school issues by 1883, full suffrage rights for women did not pass in the state legislature until 1919. However, the fight for full suffrage rights had been an active one in the state for many years. Brigl Zins summed up women’s work in this effort by reciting an anecdote about a grandmother talking to a class full of students about her life: “A young boy asked her: ‘How did you feel when you were given the right to vote?’ She said patiently, ‘We were never given anything. We fought hard for over 50 years for that right”’ (p. 28).

With the struggle for the right to vote came increased political activism by all women, including those from agricultural backgrounds. Some of the earliest agricultural groups to which women belonged were actually started by men. One of the first agricultural organizations to document the involvement of women was the late nineteenth-
century Grange, otherwise known as the Order of the Patrons of Husbandry. While predominately a male organization, Marti (1983) wrote that it was known for its equality and its support of women’s suffrage. Marti wrote that the Grange became known as “…the rural arm of the women’s rights movement” (p. 247). However, the Grange was not all equal rights. “In fact there was opposition. Cautious men feared that admitting women to the Grange on terms of equality might encourage feminist excesses, which they identified with equal suffrage advocacy” (p. 249). Additionally, even though women participated in the Grange, “The boundaries of women’s sphere were to be vigilantly guarded” and Grange women were proud of “…one of their most intense interests…’Household Economy’” (p. 254). Indeed, “Domestic skills were absolutely essential to proper womanhood; neglecting cookery, a sister wrote, was an ‘outrage on woman’s nature’” (p. 254). Thus, the Grange included and recognized women, but partially only to create better women in their proper place, and not solely for the purpose of equality.

Other agricultural organizations in which women became involved were the Farmers Union, the National Farmers’ Alliance, the Non-Partisan League, and Extension services. Researchers have been careful to point out that women’s participation in these organizations was limited (Haney & Miller, 1991). For example, Neth (1995) stated that except in education, most state offices in the Farmers Union were held by men. Additionally, organizations that supported women in at least general terms, such as the Non-Partisan league, were usually attacked as a “…threat to the family” (Neth, 1995, p. 116).
The organizations discussed above may have included women, but they were not formed by and for women. Agrarian women have been a part of women's organizations, such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, throughout history. However, it was not until well into the twentieth century that many organizations formed by women centered on the issues of farming. Haney and Miller (1991) wrote of an organization called WIFE, or Women Involved in Farm Economics, chartered in 1976 and started in Nebraska with nine women from farms. The organization was, ironically, named by a male reporter, who stated that its main goals are to “...preserve family farming, and to unite farm women for political action” (p. 118). WIFE, as far as I know, exists today, and the organization does the following in their efforts to realize its goals:

[develops] legislative handbooks for its members, encourages members to testify before Congress, organizes letter-writing campaigns, seeks time with Congressional staff of key agricultural and environmental committee members as well as the Secretary of Agriculture and his staff, and participates in trade missions. Similar lobbying activities are carried out at state levels. (p. 118)

At the time the article was written (1991), WIFE had achieved many of its goals, in that “WIFE members sit on a number of boards and commissions and continue to be appointed to leadership positions” (p. 118) and that “…as one of the first national organizations of farm women, [WIFE] has made women a visible force in U.S. farm politics and policy circles in the past decade” (p. 115). WIFE is but one example of women organizing politically for agrarian issues. Haney and Miller wrote of other agricultural organizations created and sustained by women in the United States such as American Agri-women and United Farm Wives.
Shortall's (1994) research also analyzed women's agricultural organizations, but she cautioned that we must not oversimplify the groups by labeling them. Specifically, she questioned whether or not the organizations should be labeled feminist, or farming, or community groups, or new social movements. She concluded that any one label may be both harmful and helpful. She wrote that "...how these groups are classified...greatly affects their financial support and assistance. It also reflects our continued inability to conceptualize the complexities of the lives and work of farm women" (p. 282).

Part of the complexity of which Shortall wrote shows in the work of Benson et al. (1986), who wrote of women's involvement historically. They wrote of women who were not involved for various reasons. For example, they wrote that

The particular social and political disenfranchisement of women in North Dakota may partly be related to a popular attitude here that distrusts all institutions, including political ones. People did not come to North Dakota seeking political change, few were in the habit of thinking about politics at all. Free land was what they wanted. (p. 6)

Despite this reason for a lack of involvement, Benson, et al.'s work also shows the opposite to be true as they wrote of more recent times. They discussed a letter submitted to the Grand Forks Herald from a Mrs. Barabara Adam in 1979 that stated

Most of my life I have voted Republican, but it is clear right now that was a mistake if North Dakota Republican opponents of ERA continue to be so fatuously chauvinistic. I am seriously embarrassed by the realization that I have supported some such people, unaware as I was, of their narrow-mindedness in respect to the status of women. (pp. 5-6)
Although this work points to some exceptions in the literature of women's involvement, most research on women involved in agricultural politics documents women's active involvement over time. Shortall (1994) wrote that "...the very existence of a successful, visible farm women's group dispels the traditional silent role of farm women on farming issues" (p. 279). Women participated in agricultural politics to varying degrees and with varying success. Even if they were not always in prominent positions or valued as equals, they were part of many political processes. Haney and Miller (1991) wrote that "While the body of research is small and scattered, feminist scholarship is beginning to show that women's failure to appear on the officers' list of business and political organizations gives a false impression of lack of involvement in agrarian politics and policy-making" (p. 115). Hill (1991), in a review of women and farm organizations, wrote that "Very little is known about the internal operations of these organizations, the meaning of membership, or the characteristics of the members" and that "This analytical approach has been virtually abandoned in the social sciences" (p. 378). Clearly, further research is needed in this area. However, the existing literature works to make women's involvement not only visible, but also viewed as complex and valuable.

In Chapter V, some discussion of women's involvement in politics is included, but it differs from the existing literature in two significant ways. First, politics are not the only focus of the discussion. Politics are woven together with other elements of farm and ranch processes to show women's awareness of current issues and possible influence on various levels of local, state and national agricultural political processes. Furthermore, my research centers on North Dakota at the present time, and the existing literature does not.
Stress/Psychological Hardship

In addition to history, economics, and politics, another common theme in the existing literature is that of stress. Much of this research emerges in the psychological and sociological disciplines, and although some of it emphasizes positive emotions, most of it focuses on the negative mental/emotional affects of farming in relation to increased financial hardship. Haley (1988), in her review of studies involving women on farms, wrote that “Several studies of farm women have indicated that finance is the major factor of stress on family farms” (p. 62). Additionally, Light, Hertsgaard, and Hanson (1984) claimed that

Farming and ranching have been identified as occupations conducive to stress and tension. There are tensions and problems that at best may be character building and at worst are sources of deep pain and distress. For instance, income is unpredictable and dependent on factors that are often beyond the control of family members. (p. 21)

Farming has always been a risky business venture (Lasley, 1994), but as was discussed in Chapter V, it is becoming increasingly difficult for farms to remain solvent. As Light et al. (1984) noted, farming families face uncertain financial futures, and uncertainty often leads to stress. Garkovisch et al. (1995) wrote of how faith that farming “will be better next year” (p. 16) is a common theme in farm families. However, they went on to write that “But such hope and faith are not without cost. Many farm families often feel ‘stressed out,’ full of uncertainty and anxiety, and it is not surprising. Faith alone does not buy food for the family or pay the utility bills, and no lenders will accept hope in payment of loans” (p. 17). Garkovisch et al. also found that in addition to uncertainty, stress may be caused
by the constantly changing nature of farming. For example, they discussed that it is no longer enough to raise and sell crops and to hope for a good price, but that farm families must now also be aware of and understand the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), import controls, and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT). They stated that “This climate of constant change creates considerable stress. Too much seems to be happening, too many events are interacting to be able to get a good grasp on how these changes may affect you or what you can do in response” (p. 16).

Teigland (1984) studied stress and anxiety in North Dakota farm women through a survey instrument. Teigland measured anxiety in relation to mastery, or feelings of control, in the women’s lives. She concluded that women on farms who feel more control over their lives feel less anxiety than those who do not. Light et al. (1984) reached a similar conclusion in their survey study on North Dakota farm and ranch women. They wrote that “…it is definitely to a woman’s advantage, where mental health is concerned, to have a high level of perceived control over her own life” (p. 22). With higher levels of perceived control, women showed lower scores on tests measuring levels of anxiety, depression and hostility.

The same study by Light et al. (1984) showed that gender seemed to play a part in who experiences more mental hardship in farming situations. They wrote that “In addition to occupational sources of tension and stress, gender is also considered to be a factor; females experience depression, anxiety and hostility much more frequently than do men. The reasons for this difference have been argued by many authorities” (p. 21). Some of these reasons have been discussed in the literature. For example, Gasson (1992) wrote
that "...many farmers may have only their wives to share anxieties about the business" (p. 83). Haley (1988) concurred and wrote that

...the farm wife is expected to provide emotional support in times of trouble. She is 'the family 'health guardian.' It is she who detects the tension in her husband as he fears going under. It is she who must deal with the children's irritability because of their parents' fatigue and lack of attention. (p. 62)

As "health guardian," a wife may place her own health last on her list of priorities. Evidence shows that she is viewed as strong and capable, even during difficult times or when she herself may not feel this way. Haney and Miller (1991) claimed that "...the primary concern of farm women has been and continues to be the family farm and farm family welfare rather than themselves as farm women" (p. 120).

Aside from financial hardship, lack of control, or placing others first, isolation factors have been linked to psychological distress in women on farms and ranches. Specifically, isolation is linked to loneliness, depression and personality disorders (see, for example, Hart, 1986, or Richardson, 1987, in Geissinger, Lazzari, Porter, & Tungate, 1993). Although isolation is discussed by many, the exact nature of isolation is disputed in the literature. For example, Pedersen's 1988 work (in Geissinger et al., 1993) showed that although isolation is often associated with depression and loneliness, "...isolation, aloneness and solitude are sometimes perceived as selected options" (p. 279). The work of Light, Hertsgaard, and Hanson (1983) did not support isolation as a primary factor in the lives of farm women in North Dakota. They wrote that

The image of life for women on North Dakota farms and ranches as one of isolation with few if any social activities is commonly held by many people. Such
an idea may have originated many years ago when transportation was relatively poor or when the tasks of daily family and farm care left little time for social activities. (p. 30)

Light, Hertsgaard, and Hanson based this claim on their survey research and concluded that

Based on the results of this study of 760 randomly selected farm and ranch women, the idea of the social isolation of North Dakota farm and ranch women is a myth. This study portrays these women as active in clubs, organizations and churches. In addition, visiting with neighbors was frequent, further dispelling the myth of isolation. (p. 31)

This conclusion clearly does not match that of Geissinger and her colleagues, who found that isolation commonly occurred in “...three categories of relational disconnection: from specific to nonspecific others, such as groups or the larger community; or as combinations of both” (p. 277). Although disputed by some, Pedersen concluded that “...isolation is overwhelmingly discussed in the literature as being associated with...negative experiences” (in Geissinger et al., 1993, p. 279).

A final aspect of farm life in relation to psychological distress is that of covering, or hiding, emotions. Garkovisch et al. (1995) found that although crops, weather and general activities may be discussed in farm families, personal lives are usually left out of conversations. They stated that “The independence and self-reliance that can be seen as an enduring theme of any story of life on the farm can also be a barrier, locking up feelings and concerns” (p. 11).
Even with some disagreement, it is clear that at least some women in agriculture feel the affects of hidden emotions, stress, isolation and their accompanying problems. Because this is true, women have developed various coping mechanisms to help them through difficult times. Some of these mechanisms are discussed in the literature. For example, Gasson (1984) wrote of how seeking and obtaining off-farm employment may bring a sense of independence for women. It may also provide a chance for increased socialization. Haley (1988) wrote that other women cope with stress by joining organizations meant to alleviate its causes and symptoms. Haley, whose research took place in Canada, found that “A number of new farm women groups have emerged across Canada,” (p. 63) such as church groups, self-help groups formed by health-care providers, and more formal organizations like Concerned Farm Women and Women for the Survival of Agriculture. Another Canadian group, The Ontario Farm Women’s Network (OFWN) “…sponsored a series of mental wellness workshops for farm women in three different areas of the province” (Fletcher, 1996, p. 26). The goals of the workshops were to help women recognize their own stress and their ability to have the power to resolve it, to learn the process of conducting a community-needs assessment and “To develop an action plan for solving problems unique to farm women” (p. 26). Similar groups exist in the United States. For example, North Dakota State University Extension Services sponsor workshops on stress for people from farms and ranches, such as the seminar “Hard Choices in the Heartland” held on March 23, 2001.

Some of my research is quite similar to the psychological literature which is discussed here. Specifically, my second descriptive assertion covers topics of overwhelming stress related to “doing it all,” isolation and hoping for a better, if uncertain
future. However, my research differs in several ways. First, the more recent research
done in North Dakota (see, for example, Light, Hertsgaard, & Hanson, 1983; Light et al.,
1984; Tiegland, 1984) is quantitative, while mine is qualitative. My research yields slightly
different results in that the descriptions of feelings and their preempting factors are more
detailed, as is common in interview research. Next, my research expands on the existing
studies because of its recency. The other work done in North Dakota is largely historical
(see, for example, Handy-Marchello, 1996). As farming and ranching are changing very
quickly, it is important to document the reactions of women as they occur. Finally, my
descriptive assertions are formed based on a wide combination of themes and concepts,
rather than on specific ones, such as mastery, or isolation or depression.

The literature discussed thus far focuses on specific areas of research, such as
economics or politics. There are three other bodies of related and intertwined literature on
women in farming and ranching that transcend these specific disciplines. These are power,
decision-making, and labor. They encompass historical, economical, political and
psychological aspects of women in farming and ranching in an attempt to understand the
experiences of the women on a broad and critical scale.

Power

The three areas are difficult to separate, for power seems to work with decision-
making and labor, even if it is not represented in this specific fashion in the literature.
With power, the literature seems to focus on what power is and who has it. Power is
represented in the literature as who owns or controls resources and who makes the
decisions, both daily and long-term. These delineations are my own, for none of the
literature simply states, "Power is control of resources," or, "Power rests with the decision makers."

If power is partially based on who owns or controls resources, we can begin historically. Lindgren's (1991) work on women homesteaders showed that women had some control over land, the major resource in farming. Brown (1970), in her research on the Iroquois, found that women "...controlled the factors of agricultural production, for they had rights in the land which they cultivated and in the implements and the seeds" (p. 164). Similarly, Conte's (1982) work, through her study of Navajo women, found that women had substantial power in relation to agriculture through control of resources.

These two studies on Native American traditions contradict much of the existing literature on European American history. For example, Haney and Knowles (1988) claimed that with the exception of the Homestead Act of 1861, women had little control or power over production through use of the land. Jellison (1993) and Fink (1986) found that even if women did not own the land, they had more power before farm modernization occurred in the early part of the twentieth century. As newer equipment, such as tractors, became common, women were increasingly relegated to the domestic sphere, consisting mostly of housework and childcare. Bossen (1975) found this to be true about women and modernization in general. She wrote that "...modernization favors an inferior status for women" and that this concept contradicts the common assumption that "...modernization generally brings an increase in sexual equality" (p. 587). A more recent study completed by Salamon and Keim (1979) on farming communities in Illinois, showed that even if women owned the land, "...men control the actual farming and distribution of what is produced" and that because of this, "...women generally cede power obtained by means of
land ownership to husbands or male relatives” (p. 109). Sims-Feldstein and Jiggins (1994) asserted that in any gender analysis related to agriculture, one must ask, “Who has access to or control over resources for production?” (p. 4). Based on the limited existing literature, males appear to have the majority of control over resources.

In addition to controlling resources, males seem to control much of the decision-making on farms. Gould and Elbeert (1984) wrote that there was substantial literature on decision-making beginning in the 1950s and continuing on into the 1970s. They found that much of this literature focused on who made decisions about what. For example, did males or females make farm resource or farm operations decisions? Most of the research concluded that major farm resource (land and equipment) decisions involved both partners and that daily and long-term decisions about farming practices were made by males. Hill (1991), in her review of literature on women in agriculture, found that in reading much of the early literature, ...one finds a pervasive concern that women, to the extent that they were involved in farm decision making, might inhibit what the land-grant universities regarded as progress—larger farms, increased mechanization, intensified petrochemical dependence, and larger debts. Women, it was obliquely suggested, might tempt their husbands to misdirect resources into family consumption rather than farm investment. (p. 375)

Hill went on to write that most research on decision-making is questionable in that the process is difficult to study because decision-making is intertwined so closely with family relations. To remedy this, she suggested that existing survey research be expanded to include participant-observation and interview research.
Aside from the dated research discussed above, Danes and Rettig (1993) studied farm wives' involvement in decision making concerning short and long-term resource decisions as well as household decisions made during times of economic stress. They found, through survey research, that if women in farming families felt respected, their involvement in, and satisfaction with, decision-making processes increased.

My research has some basis in power and decision making, but this was not the focus of my study. For example, the women in my study discussed their willingness to leave farming and ranching if necessary, but they doubted if their husbands could leave as easily. The final decision seemed to rest with the males. Some of the questions asked and answered in my study also showed that males and females made almost all resource and production decisions together, even if the females maintained control over household decisions. However, despite these similarities, my research focused more on the possible outcomes of various relationships and decision-making, and not solely on who did or had what. Furthermore, most of the existing research is historical or quantitative in nature, while mine is qualitative, and, as such, mine yielded slightly different results. Finally, my research is based in North Dakota, and the existing studies are not.

Labor

Labor is the final area of literature to be discussed. Whatmore (1991b) wrote that "...the labor process is important as an active constituent in the making and remaking of gender identities and relations" (p. 75). However, Whatmore wrote that much of the literature is misguided and that her work "...critically examines traditional 'explanations' of the gender division of labor on the family farm" (p. 71). She explained that typically, it is by patriarchal assumptions that we first assume women perform household labor, and
we then use this assumption as a starting point to explain gender relations. While it may be true that women have traditionally performed most or all household tasks, Whatmore argued that we must rethink gender and power in relation to labor before delving into other specific areas such as division of labor, or who does what.

Despite Whatmore’s arguments, much of the literature does indeed focus on the division of labor on family farms. Basically, it begins with description and moves on to implications revolving around the concept of women being ignored and/or undervalued concerning aspects of agricultural labor processes. For example, Borish (1995) found that New England farm women’s work in the nineteenth century was expected, but largely unappreciated. Other researchers have reached similar conclusions. For example, Sachs (1983) found that women tend to be what she labeled “the invisible farmers.” Borish even found that men thought “…domestic labors to be health-promoting for farm women” (p. 83). However, “Farm women expressed discontent about performing hard labors and believed such work actually depleted their fitness” (1995, p. 83).

In reviewing literature over time, Hill (1991) found that it is difficult to measure women’s labor input on farms simply because the jobs they do are often overlooked or under-represented. She wrote that

Indeed, what constitutes ‘work’ on a farm? Defining work on a farm is a conceptual challenge. Answering the telephone, running errands, and waiting for the fuel delivery all constitute work, but this does not seem to be ‘real work’ in the eyes of agricultural economists who have historically counted only men’s labor inputs. (p. 373)
Whatmore, in her earlier work (1988), wrote that this was problematic in the literature at least until recently. Before the 1980s and the farm crisis, women's work or who they were had received little attention. She wrote that even after this, much of the research has focused on women's contribution to the commercial side of farming, and not so much on household labor.

With some searching, one can find exceptions to Whatmore's claims. For example, Reimer (1986) studied farm women in Canada, and found that

...women make a crucial contribution to agricultural production on the family labor farm. This contribution is not made only through their participation in the direct production of goods for the commercial market, but also through the more indirect contributions traditionally associated with women (subsistence and reproduction). (p. 143)

Light, Hanson, and Hertsgaard (1983) also studied women's work on farms and found that women engaged in many types of labor, and that it all made a valuable contribution to the farm's success. They wrote that “...North Dakota women continue to play an important role in farming and ranching. The magnitude of their work suggests that they can handle a diversity of tasks requiring strength and skill” (p. 26).

In addition to labor on the farm, some research focuses on women's off-farm employment, which has become increasingly common with modernization and especially with the farm crisis of the 1980s. Moore (1989) found that women may feel more independent and less subordinate to their spouses when engaged in off-farm employment. Wilson (1990) found that with increased independence due to labor force participation, women were more likely to engage in social activism. However, much of the literature
shows that women who work off-farm suffer increased work loads as they continue to perform all regular household and outside farm tasks. For example, Godwin, Draughn, Little, and Marlowe (1991) found that employed farm wives worked longer hours in general than those who weren’t employed off-farm. Specifically, they found that women worked more “…in all production (paid work, farm production, and household production)” (p. 389). They also found that, for various reasons, women who worked off farm often experienced “…less satisfaction with their marital relationships” (p. 389). Haugen and Brandth (1994), who studied farm women and women farmers in Norway, found that women’s entry into the labor force, including that of running family farms, had not changed their traditional roles in relation to domestic work. They wrote that “Women are both farmers and housewives; men are mainly farmers” (p. 219).

My research focuses on what the women do, both on and off the farm or ranch, but it expands on the existing research to assert how this work may affect the women themselves both mentally and physically. Furthermore, most of the existing research is either quantitative, or qualitative work completed in other geographical locations. My research may help to fill in the gap of literature on current, qualitative research focusing on women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota. To demonstrate how my research may fill in gaps, I have reviewed the literature on agriculture in general in North Dakota, as well as literature specific to women in agriculture and including aspects of history, economics, politics, stress/psychological hardship, power and labor.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This chapter details the methods used in gathering and analyzing the data of this study. Specifically, why qualitative methods were chosen is explained in addition to the detailed steps taken in data collection and analysis. Furthermore, study limitations are included at the conclusion of the chapter.

Why Qualitative Methods? Why Interviewing of Participants?

Strauss and Corbin (1998) wrote that by the term 'qualitative research,' we mean any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can refer to research about persons' lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings. (pp. 10-11)

As discussed in Chapter I, qualitative methods were chosen for this study. I used qualitative methods based on the concept of allowing the research topic to guide the methodological choice (Marshall &s Rossman, 1995). The topic of North Dakota women involved in farming and ranching calls for qualitative methods for two primary reasons. First, qualitative studies on the current experiences of women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota are practically non-existent. Thus, there is a large gap in our scholarly literature and knowledge base. Next, even if there were more studies of this
nature, each one would likely reveal slightly different results, as each qualitative researcher enters a study with her or his own worldview. Miles and Huberman (1994) wrote that "Researchers have their own understanding, their own convictions, their own conceptual orientations; they, too, are members of a particular culture at a specific historical moment" (p. 8). This qualitative study could add depth and breadth to our knowledge base on these women in a unique and important way.

Due to time constraints and busy schedules, this became primarily an interview study. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) wrote that "In the interpretive tradition, the interview can be the sole basis of a study" (p. 64). They continued, "You might interview in search of opinions, perceptions, and attitudes" and that "The opportunity to learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what you do see is the special strength of interviewing in qualitative inquiry" (p. 65).

Seidman (1991) offered prolific advice on how to conduct a quality interview when he discussed listening well, asking follow-up questions, exploring and probing, avoiding leading questions, asking open-ended questions, not interrupting and following hunches (pp. 56-68). Other experts affirm these practices as well (see, for example, Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Based on this advice, interviewing is clearly a complex enterprise, and one that should not be taken lightly. Lindlof (1995) wrote that the interviewer must be "...a skilled conversationalist...a translator of cultural norms...an effective, nontargeting interrogator...a willing student" (p. 175). The background information on interviewing presented here guided my efforts as I moved through the study.
Data Collection

Data collection included preparatory work, negotiating entry, locating the participants and the setting, and the interviews themselves. Each of these steps is explained in the following discussion.

Preparation

The preparation for the collection of data related to this study began two years ago during an independent study with my advisor as I began to familiarize myself with the existing literature on the lives of women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota. I pored over any information I could find, and it consisted of both "technical" and "nontechnical" literature. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explained that "technical literature" consists of "Reports of research studies, and theoretical or philosophical papers characteristic of professional and disciplinary writing" (p. 48). "Nontechnical literature" consists of "Biographies, diaries, documents, manuscripts, records, reports, catalogues, and other materials..." (p. 48). I reviewed the historical and statistical technical literature as well as the related newspaper articles, diaries, novels and films. My goal was to obtain background information without locking myself into specific thought patterns. Strauss and Corbin (1990) discussed this concern as they wrote "We do not want to be so steeped in the literature as to be constrained and even stifled in terms of creative efforts by our knowledge of it!" (p. 50).

In addition to the independent study, I took courses on the history of rural women and on the sociology of the Great Plains, which had a specific focus on North Dakota. These courses helped me understand the context from which these women became and continue to be involved in farm and ranch life. These courses also introduced me to more
expansive issues related to farming and ranching, including political, economic, and psycho-social aspects. These early attempts at some sort of data collection were broad-based. However, as Taylor and Bogdan (1998) wrote, "You cannot be sure what literature might be relevant to your study until you have completed your research" (p. 41). With my base of knowledge, I was ready to begin official data collection.

**Negotiating Entry**

In my original proposal, I planned to spend approximately two months--June and July, 1999--in one farming community. I had one possible contact in this community and assumed that by living there for two months, I could meet and interview other women through interaction and participation. This would have been ideal for a mini-ethnographic study. However, funding this type of study on my own was not possible. In April of 1999, the contact fell through for various reasons. Soon after, a dissertation committee member provided me with the name of a social service worker who had been doing short programs in various communities around North Dakota revolving around the issue of farm and ranch stress. This social services contact had focused on males and females separately, as well as couple-related therapy. After we made initial contact, she set up three meetings with women in North Dakota in July of 1999 for us to attend. The social service contact was my way in to the lives of these women; she would be my gatekeeper, at least in the beginning.

The social service for which my contact worked had recently hired eight rural specialists--one from each area of the state that had been declared a federal disaster area for various reasons. The specialists were to help direct farming and ranching people in their communities toward financial and social services available to them free of charge.
My contact's intent at our meetings was to train the specialists through modeling a meeting with interested women. She focused on women rather than couples in response to my study focus. She cautioned me to maintain a low profile at first as many of these women might be suspicious of somebody from the university—an outsider, so to speak—who might have a hidden agenda. She arranged for three meetings in three days. Two of these meetings would be held in the eastern part of the state, and one would be in the far western part of the state. The eastern meetings would draw women from farms while the western meeting would draw women primarily from ranches.

Once at the meetings, my contact briefly introduced us, and then each woman introduced herself, including her background. At the first meeting, there were seven women, at the second there were ten, and at the last there were sixteen. Throughout the process, before, during and after the meetings, I took notes, drew sketches, and asked questions. These activities provided a base for future interviews. My contact encouraged the women to talk about frustrations and joys in their lives. The women seemed very willing to share. They showed trust and openness with comments such as, "It's about time someone did something like this," and "You don't seem very scary. Don't worry, you're o.k." The terminology they used, the topics they discussed and the experiences they shared were new and foreign to me, even though I had been reading voraciously for months before this time.

At the conclusion of each meeting, I explained my study and asked them to sign a sheet of paper with names and telephone numbers if they consented to be interviewed. Twenty-one out of the thirty-three women agreed to be interviewed. In the following weeks, I called the women from each community and set up interviews. I had successfully
negotiated entry, and the rigor of qualitative research became increasingly clear. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) wrote that "A qualitative study is not an impressionistic, off-the-cuff analysis based on a superficial look at a setting or people. It is a piece of systematic research conducted with demanding, though not necessarily standardized, procedures" (p. 9).

Participants and Setting

Detailed, yet anonymous descriptions of each participant are provided in Appendix A. A hypothetical study participant is described here. A typical participant is about forty years old. She is married and has three children. She is part of an active farm or ranch, which may be roughly fifteen hundred acres of crops or two hundred cow/calf pairs. She is responsible for much of the housework and childcare, and she often engages in outside work as well. She has some sort of post-secondary training, and holds a paid job outside of the home, mostly because the family needs the income to stay on the farm or ranch. She is European American and Christian. She attends church regularly, and is involved in community service events and functions. She is current on the politics and economics of farming and ranching, and is well aware of the economic stress at the present time. She is hardworking and dedicated to her family. Finally, she is open and outgoing, at least to the point of coming to a community meeting and consenting to be interviewed on her way of life.

There were exceptions to this composite figure. For example, farms and ranches ranged in size from three hundred and fifty to ten thousand acres. Some women had four-year college degrees, some had secretarial training, and some had no post-secondary training. Some had grown children, while some had toddlers. However, by reviewing the
detailed descriptions in Appendix A, one can see that the above composite best represents
the women involved in this study.

The Interviews

Before beginning my interviews, I consulted with a member of my committee with
expertise in qualitative methods who advised me to begin with a set of open-ended
questions to ask everyone, knowing I had the freedom to move beyond these specific
questions. Seidman (1991) affirmed this practice when he wrote that if a researcher uses
an interview guide, she or he "must allow for the possibility that what may interest them or
other participants may be of little interest to the person being interviewed" and concluded
that "Interview guides can be useful but must be used with caution" (p. 70). The caution
of which Seidman wrote refers to the idea that a rigid guide may not allow for extra and
often quite telling information to arise in conversations. Kvale (1996) explained that a
less-structured interview may produce more lively and spontaneous responses, but will
likely be more difficult to analyze later, while a very structured interview may lead to
greater ease, or increased clarity, in analysis. The guide I developed with the committee
member was both structured and flexible enough to allow for the women's own interests
to emerge.

Before sending my questions to the committee member for review, I considered
the thematic and dynamic dimensions of the instrument. Kvale (1996) explained that the
thematic dimension refers to how well the questions relate to the general topic, while the
dynamic dimension refers to how the questions affect the interpersonal relationship
between the researcher and the participant. My goal was to balance thematic and dynamic
dimensions in the questions. Thus, I began the interviews with relatively "safe" questions
concerning general background, hobbies, interests, or what Lindlof (1995) called "grand tour questions" (p. 187). I then moved on to more sensitive or personal questions relating to the women's current lived experiences. After sending a copy of the questions to the committee member and having them approved, the committee member suggested the addition of index cards with prompt words on them that might jog the thoughts and memories of the women to be interviewed. See Appendix B for a list of the questions and prompt words used.

In addition to setting up questions in advance, I purchased a tape recorder, microphone, and audio cassette tapes. I also used a laptop computer, notebooks for journal entries and a hand-held tape recorder to capture immediate impressions after and in between interviews. Note taking in the field became indispensable to aid in remembering all that had taken place on my most recent interviewing trip. Many research experts and instructors encourage this practice. For example, Taylor and Bogdan (1998) recommended "maintaining a detailed journal" about the interviews as this will "assist in guiding future interviews and interpreting data at a later time" (p. 115). Strauss and Corbin reinforced this idea when they wrote that using memos is "crucially instrumental in assisting you to keep a record of the various development aspects of your theory" (1990, p. 200). Throughout the data-gathering process, I followed the advice of Glesne and Peshkin (1992) who explained that "Your field notes should be both descriptive and analytic...strive for accuracy, but avoid being judgmental. Make sure that your notes will enable you, a year later, to visualize the moment, the person, the setting, the day" (p. 47). These notes, while perhaps not as effective as direct participation and observation, did serve as some sort of triangulation in my analysis, which Taylor and Bogdan (1998) define
as "...a way of checking out insights gleaned from different informants or different sources of data" (p. 80).

Aside from the data-gathering items discussed above, I considered my wardrobe, appearance, and manner. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) wrote that "...entree is a continuous [sic] process of establishing and developing relationships" and that "successful negotiation through the front door is not always sufficient to open other doors" (p. 22). Thus, I was conscious of how I presented myself and my goals throughout the research process. My efforts at creating and maintaining productive and ethical relationships with my participants and their respective communities reflected what Lindlof (1995) called being a "good person." Lindlof wrote that "The inquirer's disposition is important at all times. He or she continues to function in a scene only at the pleasure of the culture membership" (p. 138). As the women had ultimate control of my access, part of my "good person" disposition was to appear casual, but neat and polite. I could not possibly pretend to fit in, but I also did not want to seem too aloof or alien. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) advised that "The researcher is and should act the learner" (p. 25). However, Lindlof (1995) drew from the work of Weick and cautioned that although "...such an appearance...can be useful when the researcher wants to be taught things by culture members...too much of this naive behavior may convince members not to trust the researcher with important information" (p. 139). Maintaining a balance between the integration of my past experience and knowledge on the one hand, and my lack of understanding and willingness to learn on the other was challenging throughout the study.

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) wrote that "The first days in the field are the most anxiety-producing, as you question whether people will accept you and whether what you
are doing is 'right'" (p. 42). I was anxious, but Fetterman's (1989) work reminded me to
keep matters in perspective. He wrote that "Inadvertent improprieties or faux pas will
occur, and people will generally forgive them," as long as I did not show a "consistent
disregard...for the group's basic cultural values..." (p. 55).

The interviews lasted approximately one to two hours each. Various time
allotments are recommended in the literature. For example, Glesne and Peshkin (1992)
recommended an hour, but also wrote that one should "Take what you can get" (p. 73).
Seidman (1991) advised a ninety minute interview, as "An hour carries with it the
consciousness of a standard unit of time that can have participants 'watching the clock.'
Two hours seems too long to sit at one time" (p. 13).

The interviews began with small talk, moved to the Institutional Review Board-
approved consent form (see Appendix C), and finally the interview questions and answers
themselves, which were all tape recorded. Kvale (1996) wrote that by tape recording,
"...the interviewer can...concentrate on the topic and the dynamics of the interview. The
words and their tone, pauses, and the like, are recorded in a permanent form that can be
returned to again and again for listening" (p. 160). Seidman (1991) confirmed this
practice when he wrote that "There is not a question in my mind that in-depth interviews
must be tape-recorded" (p. 86). Seidman went on to explain that failure to obtain exact
wording is problematic without tape-recording, for "The participants' thoughts become
embodied in their words. To substitute the researcher's paraphrasing or summaries of
what the participants say for their actual words is to substitute the researcher's
consciousness for that of the participant" (p. 87). Seidman conceded that even with exact
wording, a researcher's consciousness becomes part of the process. However, this is less
likely to become invasive with a tape-recorded interview. Other benefits discussed by Seidman include less likelihood of misquoting someone, increased reliability as others may check the data, and that the tapes allow for reflection and practice on technique.

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) cautioned that while tape recording offers many benefits, it may also cause uneasiness in participants. Fetterman (1989) agreed, stating that "Tape recorders can inhibit individuals from speaking freely during interviews" as they "may fear reprisals because their voices are identifiable on tape" (p. 81). Despite contradictions in the literature, I found the benefits of tape recording outweighed the problems. I took notes as back-up or if I noticed a certain facial expression, body posture or setting peculiarity, but mostly I focused on the conversation. The exception was the occasional "interview after the interview." Occasionally, interesting information was shared after the tape recorder was off, and I was packing up to leave. I wrote down everything I could remember of these conversations.

I could complete three interviews per day. Although the actual interviews lasted no more than two hours, I spent time seeing the farms and ranches, visiting with the children, taking pictures and driving in between homes that were sometimes many miles apart down unfamiliar country roads. Thus, I found that I needed to allow four hours per interview, and after one three-interview day, I scheduled two interviews per day. There were some days with only one interview as I worked around the women's busy schedules. I spent free time dining in local cafes, shopping in small-town stores and meeting people at gas stations, restaurant/bars, or town parks. I stayed in small, local motels to keep myself as close as possible to the setting.
I spent a total of three weeks traveling—three days for the initial meetings, and two and a half weeks for interviews. I visited each community twice, as this was the only way to schedule all the interviews. While most of the interviews took place in August of 1999, I spent two weekends traveling in September and October of 1999 to complete the final interviews.

In addition to the initial interviews, I telephoned some women with follow-up questions and I received a letter from one woman explaining some important information that she had forgotten to include in the interview. However, as previously discussed, the formal interviews became the primary focus of the study. There was not much opportunity for participation or observation. The participation/observation I did other than seeing a few of the daily activities occurred in the spring of 2000. During my interviews the previous year, I had been invited to attend a calf-branding day on one of the ranches out west. These are all-day events involving the owners of the respective ranches, their families, and all the available neighbor help. Each ranch takes a different day for branding, and people help out where and when they can. I attended the branding, understanding from my interviews that this event is one of the more exciting and fun jobs on a ranch, and not part of a typical day.

I transcribed all the interviews myself. I wanted to listen to the interviews again, in their entirety, to further familiarize myself with the data. The transcription process was a lengthy one; it took me two months to complete transcriptions of the interviews. At the conclusion of transcribing, and aside from my own notes and memos, I had approximately two hundred and fifty single-spaced pages of data.
Data Analysis

Analysis began in the field with note taking and memos, continued with transcribing, and was completed using hand and computer coding techniques. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) wrote that data analysis involves organizing all information so that it makes sense, and that "To do so, you must categorize, synthesize, search for patterns, and interpret the data you have collected" (p. 127). This organization can take on many forms, but most researchers call this process coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) defined coding as "a progressive process" in which one puts groups of information together in "code clumps," which are then broken down into "subcodes" and eventually put into a "meaningful sequence" (p. 133). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) explained coding procedures, but did not use specific types or terminology to explain the process. Strauss and Corbin (1990), however, used very specific strategies known as open, axial, and selective coding. These coding procedures commonly work toward the creation of grounded theory, and they are extremely rigorous in nature.

Grounded theory is, at its most basic level, theory grounded in the data. Strauss and Corbin (1998) wrote that grounded theory is "derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process" (p. 12). One does not begin with a preconceived idea, but rather allows the data to speak for themselves, in that themes and theories eventually emerge from the data. Strauss and Corbin further explain that "Grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action" (p. 12). In Chapter I of this study, these aspects of grounded theory were discussed as goals and rationales for the entire study.
Taylor and Bogdan (1998) recommended that during the coding process, one should "...refine the coding scheme; add, collapse, expand, and redefine the coding categories. The cardinal rule of coding in qualitative analysis is to make the codes fit the data and not vice versa" (p. 152). This means being rigorous and flexible in coding, being careful to allow for new themes to emerge, and allowing for slightly different methods in the process while maintaining a thorough and detailed process.

As this study is primarily a grounded theory one, I began coding following the advice of Creswell (1998) who wrote that "The process of data analysis in grounded theory research is systematic and follows a standard format:...open coding...axial coding...selective coding" (p. 57). Strauss and Corbin (1990) wrote that these methods should "Give the research process the rigor necessary to make the theory 'good' science" (p. 57).

Because the coding procedures involved in a project where theory emerges entirely from the data are complex and rigorous, a brief explanation of the process is included here. Specifically, the initial coding (open) began with line-by-line analysis of the interviews. This initial analysis led to the creation of at least one hundred and seventy-five codes, which I then eventually grouped into several categories. This led into axial coding, labeled such because "...coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 123). Strauss and Corbin explained that properties are characteristics one could give a category regardless of the context in which it was derived. Dimensions help to place aspects of a property along a continuum. For example, if "tasks" were a category, duration, necessity, and difficulty might be properties associated with it, while short and long, choice and absolutely
necessary for survival, and easy and extremely difficult might be the ends of the
continuums for the dimensions of those properties. The idea is to work with all possible
properties and then to place various participants' experiences on the continuums of the
respective dimensions. This information is drawn directly from the data. As this process
continues, the analyst constantly compares and asks questions about any emergent
patterns or variations in the data. One must then ask whether or not the experiences agree
or disagree with each other, or if they are affected by various contexts and why or why
not. If further exploration, clarification, or validation is deemed necessary, this axial
coding is also done for subcategories of each major category. Eventually, through
constant comparison and revising, the analyst is able to eventually discern patterns in the
data. This is where selective coding plays its part. The patterns then become descriptive
themes, which eventually are integrated into theory. As previously stated, this a complex
and time-consuming endeavor. (See Appendix D for an example of the process for one
category.)

To complete the coding process, I initially coded by hand, and then moved to
computer-aided coding designed for qualitative research. Lindlof (1995) wrote that

For actual analysis...the real power lies in database management programs. Such
software can save enormous amounts of time, avoid certain kinds of inaccuracies,
identify category relationships systematically and apply coding techniques to entire
data sets (not just the parts the analyst has time for). (p. 226)

There are undeniable benefits to computer-aided analysis. However, Kvale (1996) warned
that using computers in analysis "...could...reinforce existing trends toward reifying the
transcripts and disregarding their basis in a lived social situation. [This] may lead to
analyses of isolated variables abstracted from their context in live interpersonal interactions" (p. 174). It is possible that the analyst may lose some of the human qualities involved in data collection and analysis. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) added the following of using computers in analysis:

It can help...It does not, however, think for the researcher. The researcher decides what to enter into the computer, what to ask it to do, and how to use the results of the computer's mechanical manipulations. The products of computer-assisted analysis are only as good as the data, the thinking, and the level of care that went into them. (p. 145)

I used the program Ethnograph 5.0 designed for personal computers, but I was cautious not to rely completely on the program.

As coding neared completion, clear themes began to emerge, from which I created my own theory, or what I label descriptive assertions in this study. The assertions are explained in Chapter IV, and they are as follows:

1. The women involved in farming and ranching in this study are extremely busy and they work very hard.

2. The women involved in farming and ranching in this study risk compromising, or have already compromised, their mental health.

3. Despite the physical and psychological hardships discussed in assertions one and two, the women involved in farming and ranching in this study have many reasons to remain on their farms and ranches.
Limitations

Limitations are included in this chapter because it was during data collection and analysis that it became clear how the context of all of my work would limit the generalizability of the results. There are five specific limitations to the study. First, the nature of qualitative study assumes that results are based on my interpretations, or my unique perspective. If another researcher completed a similar study, she or he may have reached markedly different conclusions than my own. Thus, while the findings are relevant and valid in this specific instance, they can only make up a small part of our knowledge base on women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota. They may provide a base from which other studies begin, or they may be only a small piece to a grand-scale puzzle. Either way, they are unique to this context, to these specific times and to my worldviews.

Second, the women studied make up a very small sample of all the women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota. The findings here are clearly not generalizable to the entire population. However, as with the limitation concerning my perspective, the small sample size does not make the words or experiences of the women studied less valid, or perhaps more significantly, less important. The women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota have been largely ignored in scholarly research concerning current experiences. Thus, any systematic and rigorous research may help shed light on the lives of these women.

Next, as an interview study, there was very little chance for triangulation involving observation and participation, or other methods, such as reading personal documents and
histories. This lack of triangulation further supports the claim that the results are only a beginning and therefore speculative in nature. They are not definitive.

Additionally, the women themselves were fairly similar in that they all agreed to come to a meeting on stress, and they all agreed to be interviewed. I may have heard strikingly different stories from women who were not actively involved with community events, who were shy to the point of refusing an interview or who were outsiders in some other manner. For example, two of the initial meetings were held in churches. It is quite possible that some women who may have agreed to be interviewed were not involved in their church communities, and thus were never even possible participants in this study. There are countless possibilities, but the fact remains that I could have missed some of the variety I may have attained had I endless time, financial resources and energy. The similarities of the women may have made it easier to find themes among the available data, but they also may have hindered the generalizability of the final conclusions.

Finally, almost all of the existing literature relates specifically to women on farms. Ranch life, revolving around livestock, is either not separated from farm life, or is not included at all. For example, of all the literature reviewed for this study, only two small survey studies included information specific to women on ranches. My study includes women involved in farming and ranching. I found it necessary to use the available literature as a base for my research. Thus, the results garnered from women on ranches may eventually relate more clearly to emerging literature in that area than to that which is presented here.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

In this chapter, each interpretative assertion is stated, explained and supported. The explanations begin with lists of initial codes and categories which are discussed using the evidence taken directly from the data consisting of quotations from the interviews as well as notes from my observations. This material is descriptive in nature, and it leads into my own interpretive assertions. The chapter begins with the most basic and simple assertion and moves toward the most complex assertion.

Assertion # 1

The women involved in farming and ranching in this study are extremely busy and work very hard.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>busy</td>
<td>too much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can’t keep up</td>
<td>more than in past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no time to relax</td>
<td>less time for leisure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

busy

63
Table 1 cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hard work</td>
<td>getting older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical work</td>
<td>not easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in fields all day</td>
<td>tasks on top of tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tired</td>
<td>hours worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exhaustion</td>
<td>accidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worn out</td>
<td>illness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jobs</td>
<td>tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meal preparation</td>
<td>fencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child transportation</td>
<td>sorting cows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gardening</td>
<td>canning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outside employment</td>
<td>errands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parts-running</td>
<td>kin-keeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haying</td>
<td>branding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rounding up cattle</td>
<td>driving equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paperwork</td>
<td>bookwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laundry</td>
<td>grocery shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repair work</td>
<td>meal transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>childcare</td>
<td>housecleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>planning/buying</td>
<td>marketing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The categories presented in Table 1 come together to show that the women of this study work hard at physically-demanding tasks with very little time for rest or relaxation. The women are able to do their work because they are multi-talented and they keep themselves continuously busy in order to maintain their farming and ranching lifestyles. To explain this assertion, I will use the data to show that the women are versatile, busy in general, continuously occupied with physically-demanding jobs specifically related to the farm or ranch as well as repetitive or mundane jobs, often consisting of domestic tasks. The women also engage in off-farm employment. All of these details make for long days with very little respite.

Sally (ranch) claimed that some people simply do not understand the demands made upon those involved in farming and ranching. She said that

And then I know some people say that the typical farmer [rancher] just sits by the mailbox and waits for their government check. Give me a break. Yea, that’s all we do. I mean, gee, our work’s all done, and we’re just sitting here waiting.

The tape recording shows that intense sarcasm was clearly present in her voice. Kate (farm) shared a similar sentiment as she discussed her anger: “One of the bankers said, ‘Well what do you farmers expect, you only work three months out of the year?’ In the first place, it’s not three months (much laughter).” The data shows that the people involved in farming and ranching, including the women of this study, do not sit around waiting for government checks. Indeed, they do a great many tasks at a dizzying pace. Several women in the study discussed the ability to function in many roles under various contexts. For example, Jean (farm) stated that some people
view farm women as very strong—being able to do lots of different things, probably at the same time (laugh), and farm women are good at that, because you may be making supper while you’re doing something else, while you’re helping your kids with school, while your husband needs a ride to a different field, and so you do know how to juggle things.

Many women, those involved in farming and ranching as well as those in any busy urban center, may be able to relate to Jean’s thoughts on juggling multiple tasks at once. However, there seems to be a difference on the farm or ranch in the sheer variety of tasks and the immensity of the home/farm/ranch operation. Deb (farm), in discussing the workload, said, “Maybe a lot of people have that, but there isn’t the magnitude, um, that’s on the farm.” Julie (ranch) addressed the variety and magnitude when she stated that I have many hats, just as all…women do. I do, you know, the cooking, all the cooking. I do, um, the ranch books. Um, I do a lot of riding—helping guiding, helping sort cattle. I do fencing. I drive the tractors. Um, I feed cattle.

Julie went on to list a number of other tasks for which she is responsible. She is in charge of all household matters, as well as many of the outside jobs concerning the livestock. As Bobbi (ranch) explained, “You just kind of do everything.” This versatility is a must, for as Sue (farm) claimed, “We do have to be very versatile out here, and…you know, we work like a hired man, really…without the paycheck…we are capable of doing and working in many situations.”

I argue that these women work more than a “hired man,” for their work is not finished when the outside jobs are completed. Bobbi (ranch) said that “There’s just never a dull moment around here. You have no chance to be bored. There’s always a million
things to do.” What they are doing is keeping them extremely busy. Many of the women interviewed commented on the hectic schedules they must keep to get the necessary farm and ranch tasks completed. Maureen (farm/ranch) said that “…the work goes on and on and on and on...and you try to get time off and nope, we've got a cow calvin', [so] can't do that.” Kate (farm) concurred as she stated that “We're just doing more and more on the farm all the time.” When I asked her why she thought this to be the case, she said “I don't know. I think because we're working harder and harder to try and stay even.”

Based on historical studies of women involved in farming and ranching, the lifestyle has always kept people busy, but Kate’s statement suggests the intensity is increasing.

Whether the level of activity is increasing or not, the fact that these women are busy is clear. Further evidence from the interviews shows this to be true. Cindy (ranch) said it would not be so bad

...if you could not go to the Forest Service meeting, and not go to Bismarck to the legislature when they’re talking about the environmental, the things on the Clean Water Act, and whether it’s going to pass or whether the river is going to be scenic or wild or are they gonna designate it a federal river. You know all this—there's just so MUCH [her emphasis] now, and we are tired. We are tired from trying to still keep up at home, and then to do all that other stuff. Other businesses and companies are more, people have their areas that they do, just that part for that business...They don't have to do all the work plus all the marketing plus all the PR, plus you know, and we do ALL [her emphasis] of it. And we are tired; we are all tired. The women are tired; the men are crabby (laugh).
Bobbi (ranch) also spoke of the busy schedules, but led into it from something positive, almost as if she was thinking her schedule through as she talked. She said that, “...at least I’ve been able to stay at home and be with our kids. Although sometimes it’s like I’m here, but I’m not here, because I’m so busy.” Some of the women showed good humor when they discussed their hectic lives. Marla (ranch) said, “You know, you see these people on TV saying, ‘Calgon, take me away.’ Who’s got time to sit in a bath tub and soak? By the time you get done with the day, I’ll sit in the chair and watch something on TV and fall asleep.” Ruth (farm) stated that “Sometimes I get really tired of long days, and we always laugh that we gotta go to work [off-farm] to rest (laugh). Well, you know, there’s just always somethin’ to do here.” Finally, Sally (ranch) explained, “It’s not like Green Acres where [you’re] out there with a pitch fork and you know (she inhales deeply at this point and smiles with her eyes closed). Yea, you get to do that, but you don’t have a lot of time to do it!”

A common perception with farming and ranching is that everything slows down in the winter. I asked some of the women about this, and received mixed replies. Sue (farm) said that “There really isn’t a break in time because you go from seeding, to spraying, to haying, and then harvest, and then feeding in the winter time, but it kind of slows down in the winter.” Kate (farm) took a firmer stand when she said that “No, it doesn’t really slow down in the winter.” Kelly (farm/ranch) chose middle ground when she stated that “The only time you ever really have time to do things, you know, watch movies or whatever, is in the winter time, and even then, if it’s an open winter, we’re busy all winter long.”

The busy lifestyle, with very little time off, is what many of the women dislike the most about living on a farm or ranch. For example, when asked about her least favorite
aspect of her life, Julie (ranch) responded, "...the long hours we all have to work with very little time off. It’s hard to just get away." Jackie (ranch) said that "We don’t get enough time to take off and visit other people, and vacation—not even necessarily vacation, just...just getting away." Sue (farm) chose a similar item for her least favorite aspect. She said she dislikes "The hard work, and no leisure time...I guess I should say the continuous work."

The women are not only versatile and busy, but the work they do is often physically difficult. Jackie (ranch) stated that "I do work hard, we all work hard, and I don’t think they [others] know how hard we work and how much physical labor we put into our place." Kelly (farm/ranch) painted a vivid picture of the physical labor often performed by these women. She stated that

It just kinda frustrates you when you hear ‘Oh, I could sit on a tractor all day.’ O.K., hey, could you? I’ve been on a tractor all through haying. I have no cab, I have no umbrella over me, nothin.’ I’m out in the sun, you know, it’s ninety-five degrees, and you know, could ya sit on that tractor all day? You know, some of those guys I just say, ‘O.K., come on out, for one week, you come and do my work for a week.’ [We’ll] just see how they feel at the end of the week.

Kate (farm) also spoke of fieldwork, but she began with housework. She stated that "My husband goes out in the morning and works on the tractor and I do whatever I have to do around here, wash clothes, do the dishes, get lunch ready, then I go out and then I take over the tractor for the rest of the day, probably until 7:00 or 8:00." Sally (ranch) said that even though the men may typically do more physical work than the women, "...in so many cases, we’re there helping them with it, and at the same time, we come in and tired
or not, we cook the meal and then throw some clothes in the wash and maybe take the clothes out of the dryer, and we might fold ‘em and we might just throw ‘em in the basket (laugh).”

Almost all of the women are engaged in this type of physical work, and they do not seem to view it as a choice if they want to make the farm or ranch remain viable. Louella (ranch) claimed that “We’re working hard, and you know, people that are gonna make it out here and do things and accomplish goals, you gotta work hard.” Although all of the women interviewed work hard, there were exceptions to the difficult, physical-labor aspect of farming and ranching. Two of the eighteen women did not engage in any outside farm or ranch-related work. A third woman had cut back her farm and ranch work load only temporarily while she concentrated on raising her two small children. However, a failure to engage in field or livestock work did not suggest less work in general.

Throughout the previous discussion, some of the jobs the women perform on a regular basis were mentioned. However, to fully understand the variety of work these women do, it is necessary to focus on how they describe their daily, weekly, or yearly activities. Specifically, what kinds of jobs or tasks do they discuss and claim as their own? Fourteen of the eighteen women interviewed hold jobs for pay outside of their regular home, farm or ranch duties. Although Julie (ranch) underplayed the time commitment for an outside job, stating that “It is only twenty hours a week,” the other women typically mentioned their outside employment immediately after being asked about what they do. For example Deb (farm) said “I work full-time now, and that started three years ago.” Sally (ranch), who sells and processes insurance policies from her home, explained that her
family wakes at about 7:00 a.m. and that “When the kids leave for school, about 8:30, then I start my day...I’ll work ‘til, say 5:00, stop for supper, and then until about 7:00 a lot of times I’ll go back to work.” Although Sally claimed her day starts at 8:30 a.m. when the kids leave for school, it actually starts before this with breakfast and getting the kids ready for school. Michelle (farm) leaves for her job in human services at 7:30 a.m., but she gets up at 5:30 or 5:45 because, as she stated, “I like to have about an hour to myself. I take that time and get ready for work and kinda get organized.” After her hour alone, she helps to get her children ready for school and daycare before leaving the house. Ruth (farm), said that “We get up at 5:00...Bill gets ready for work, I pack his lunch...and that’s like our time...and I go back to bed for an hour (laugh).” After time with her husband and a bit more rest, Ruth gets up with her children around 7:00, gets them ready, and goes to work in town from 9:00 to 5:00. Some of the women have part-time jobs, or find ways to work from the home, as is the case with Sally selling insurance, or Jackie (ranch) who does daycare in her home.

Several of the women commented on why this outside employment is occurring, and some focused on how it can strain schedules and relationships on the farm or ranch. For example, Cindy (ranch), who does not hold a paid position off the ranch, explained that “Very few of the women around here can be home. Most of ‘em have to work—not that there isn’t enough work for them at home on the ranch—there is—but they can’t afford not to work somewhere else.” Sue (farm) also discussed why she works when she said that she works because she enjoys it, but more importantly, she does it for financial and added security reasons, or “because of the benefits, the health insurance. And that is a BIG [her emphasis] one for the farm. I know a lot of families aren’t carrying health
insurance, because they just can’t afford it.” Cindy and Sue spoke to why the women work. Sue and other women spoke to how their outside employment affects work on the farm/ranch. Sue (farm) said that, “I guess once I started working more off the farm…my husband really missed, you know, I wasn’t here to lend the extra hand.” Sally (ranch) claimed that “Since traditionally farming was where husband and wife work together, and then when that had to break apart and the wife goes to town and gets a job…I think the man feels a little alienated there.”

Working outside of the home/farm/ranch environment leaves little time for other activities or jobs, and yet the women usually keep up their normal work routines at home. Deb (farm) talked of this when she said that

Before that [working off farm], I was busy all the time on the farm, and it was hard to adjust from having all day to get that kind of stuff done, and then having to work around a working schedule. It just blew my mind ‘cause I didn’t know how people that worked all the time could ever get everything done, but we still have. Deb has coped with this mounting load of work by keeping busy during all of her waking hours. She said that “I put my feet on the floor in the morning and the first load of clothes is in the washing machine (laugh).” I asked her how she manages, and she said, “I cook on Saturdays and Sundays… I regroup on the weekend and get caught up for the rest of the week. I don’t have a fussy family, which is good.” Deb claimed to enjoy cooking and cleaning, but that now it is almost a luxury to be able to stay home and do the house-related activities. She explained, “But now I find myself coming home on weekends and not wanting to go anywhere else. I love to be in my house.” Sally (ranch) also addressed
the issue of work on top of work when she discussed coming in from outside work being exhausted, but still having to get dinner ready or do the laundry.

This form of double duty was commonly discussed in the interviews. Kelly (farm/ranch), who holds part-time off-ranch employment, said that although her husband helps with some of the childcare, like “...holdin’ Jessica and playin’ with her...but um...other than [some] housecleaning...he don’t do none of that.” She continued, “...that’s kindof hard, because I do everything outside with him, but he does nothing inside with me (laugh).” Other women made similar comments. For example, Kate (farm) said, “I don’t mind helping, but, I mean I have other things to do, and they all get put by the side, and he says, ‘Well, we can do those later.’ Weil (laugh), when does later come?” Sue (farm) also discussed this phenomenon as she detailed her regular jobs and how they often are interrupted by requests for help from her husband. She said

For myself, if they’re [the men are] gonna get going before noon, I will prepare lunch that they’ll carry—both the lunch and the afternoon snack. And...you never know, I usually, for myself right now is the garden, ‘cause I usually have a large garden. So yesterday, I picked beans and cucumbers and um, and in-between that your husband will come and say, ‘Can you take me out to the field (laugh)?’ And that’s kinda happened on a daily schedule right now, and you can be gone anywhere from half hour to two hours (laugh)! So, you just work around those schedules. Um, and last night, I guess, the evening meal can be from anywhere from, like 7:00, if you take it out, or last night it was at 10:30, you know.

Although not stated directly, the women seemed to imply that the farm and ranch work came first, and their tasks came second. Thus, in addition to possibly working outside of
the home/farm/ranch, they also worked in the fields or with the livestock before completing their regular household tasks.

The work that these women do both on and off the farm or ranch varies tremendously, but it becomes clear that they are all very busy when one considers the sheer variety and number of tasks they perform. Additionally, although the jobs or tasks the women perform are in the code list at the beginning of this chapter, how they cope with them is not fully explained. For example, in addition to working outside on the farm or ranch, taking charge of most childcare issues, and keeping up on all the housework, Kelly (farm/ranch) also cleans the community church and works at the community livestock sales barn. Kelly’s work in the home is compounded by the fact that the family’s drinking water is nearly a mile away. She and her family carry their water from a well in their pasture. I asked her why this was, and she said the water in the house is “…full of iron, it’s full of salt, you don’t dare drink it. So we carry it, for drinking, and some for cooking depending on what I’m making.” She went on to say, “But what kinda stinks is in the winter when it snows a lot is we can’t get to it, you know, and then… we’re running out of water all the time.” Kelly is the primary water carrier.

Childcare is commonly stated as part of the women’s workload, but coping with small children while working outside and inside presents a challenge. As Ann (farm) stated, “I was his [husband’s] right-hand man, and it was tough when we had kids.” Deanne concurred as she stated, “With the kids, it’s been kindof hard.” Jackie also agreed, as she said it seems like, “When the kids are here, you just are constantly. kinda watchin’ them and cookin’ meals…and you don’t get a whole lot done.” However, based on other women’s responses, it seems the women do plenty of other work. When asked
how they manage, the responses varied, but they all showed creativity and improvisation. For example, Kate (farm) said that when her oldest child was about eight, she cared for her younger sibling while her parents worked in the fields. Kate said this was “...probably not good, but it worked out o.k. and we feel really lucky that way, but I didn’t know what else to do. I had work to do, and there was never any money there for a hired man.”

Kelly (farm/ranch) who also does a lot of field and livestock work, said she simply “Took ‘em with,” when referring to the care of her young children. She said

Yea, like on really hot hot days, his [husband’s] mom would watch ‘em, but otherwise they’d sit in the corner of the field, and I’d give ‘em a bunch of toys, and well, the two boys are only two years apart so they’ve always been best friends...and then I’d tell ‘em, you know, ‘Every single round I make, wave at me,’ and that way I’d know where they were, and they would, they’d stand up and wave every round I’d make.

This occurred when her children were roughly two and four years old. When I asked other women how they managed to keep up with farm and ranch work in addition to raising small children, common answers included strategies similar to those used by Kelly. Kate (farm) said, “They spent a lot of time out [on] the farm with us.” Julie (ranch) recalled having babies fall asleep in her arms as she rode horse to check fences and cattle, a job often requiring several hours. She said her arms would be “...just about falling off,” but that was how she managed. Julie also discussed checking cattle in the middle of the night when her children were infants. She said

Then when you’re calving heifers—that’s their first baby—you need to check about every two to four hours all night long, and that’s my job. It turned into my
job 'cause of my wonderful kids, and I'd be up feeding them in the middle of the
night, so I'd just put them back to bed and then I'd go out and check the heifers,
and I've always liked that. I don't mind it at all.

Julie enjoyed checking heifers because of the new life she often witnessed coming into this
world. However, whether she enjoyed it or not, it must have been physically draining to
be up for an hour or two every few hours for weeks at a time.

The coping mechanisms do not stop when the children are older, especially for the
ranches where there is no bus service for schools that are often twenty to thirty miles away
from home. Louella (ranch) said that, “When you raise your kids out here, the running
doesn’t ever stop, because we go so far with our kids to school and things.” She went on
to say, “Like I always say, for a home game, when they’re in sports, we gotta drive thirty
miles, just to go to a game (laugh).” Bobbi (ranch) shared similar sentiments when she
discussed the difficulties of “The kids—getting them to places,” and how this has always
been her job in addition to all other ranch and home duties. Even the women on the farms,
whose children had access to bus services, discussed how busy work schedules interfered
with childcare. For example, Kate (farm) said

I don’t have time to go…the biggest social activities in Carrington are the football
games and basketball games in high school, and we don’t have time for those.

Even when my son was playing basketball or football, well, maybe once in awhile,
we’d take time off—me more than my husband, because we felt somebody should
be there, but to ever go to an out-of-town game or anything, we never did that.

In addition to coping with childcare, some women discussed the trials of running for
various parts and other farming or ranching equipment. For example, because much of the
farm and ranch equipment is old and often needs repair work, it is necessary to go to salvage yards to find parts. I heard many stories of driving one or two hours to get to a salvage yard where an old or outdated part could be found. Once at a salvage yard or parts store in town, Ida (farm) claimed that “They [owners] don’t really think women know anything about that machinery at all…Well, I know what I’m going to get!” I do not doubt this, as Ida also does her own repair work, butchering, haying, feeding, housework and childcare.

As I interviewed these women, it occurred to me to ask about hired help, especially as I began to appreciate how hard they work. Only two of the eighteen farms and ranches have some kind of regular, hired help. Only one has year-round hired help, and this was on one of the largest ranches. Although the women carry tremendous loads of responsibility in regards to their workloads, a few admitted to letting some jobs go out of sheer necessity. For example, as discussed earlier, Ruth (farm) let some of the farm work go while raising her two small children. Ruth’s situation is an exception to the rule, as she discussed how she and her husband have more flexibility than some others as they both have outside employment. Thus, they do not need to rely on the farm as much as others may for their primary income. Sue (farm) stated that “I do all the cooking, all the meal prep, um, parts-running, the go-for [jobs]. I do some of the book-keeping, but I don’t do a lot of it. I used to, but I guess when I started working like seventy percent time outside of the home, I just kinda ran out of time (laugh).”

Almost all of the women claimed to be busier than in the past, and that the rewards of the past are no longer present. I quoted Kate (farm) earlier as saying “We’re working harder and harder just to stay even.” The implication here is more work for fewer
financial rewards or gains. Many of the women made statements referring to this struggle. Kate (farm) discussed “…working so hard and not getting many rewards for it, financial rewards for it. I mean, we work LONG [her emphasis] hours, and hard hours.” Julie (ranch) said, “I guess no one minds if they have to work long hours and hard hours, if you are getting substantiated for it.” Ida (farm) said, “Well, yea, farming is frustrating. I mean, as hard as you work, you would think you would get more money for it.” Cindy (ranch) said

It just really doesn’t seem fair. If we were all just a bunch of no goods who weren’t trying and who hadn’t done a good job, and who didn’t have anything to offer or who weren’t making a legitimate contribution to the country, I guess it would be one thing, but we aren’t. We ARE [her emphasis] hardworking people. Deb (farm) shared similar frustrations when she stated

My attitude is that it kinda makes me mad because I know that actually I work what I consider almost full-time here—I mean if people ask me what my job is, I say farming/ranching, because this takes A LOT [her emphasis], even if I’m not out on the tractor, it’s still what I do, and so, to think that you can work at that full-time and still have to work someplace else just to buy groceries and stuff, it kinda makes you mad.

Maureen (farm) went a step further in her ideas about how unrewarding farming and ranching has become for many people. She discussed the possibility of leaving and said, “I used to think I’d miss it. I don’t know if I would anymore. It’s gotten to the point where it’s just too much, you know, for what you’re paid.” Despite this feeling, many of the
women and their families are indeed staying, and the reasons for this are discussed in the third assertion of this chapter.

The data presented above clearly shows that the women are busy, that they work hard at physically-demanding tasks for very little financial reward, and that they are able to take very little time off from their hectic schedules. The situation does not seem to be improving for farmers and ranchers in North Dakota or any other part of the country. As the literature suggests, this is not a simple or temporary trend, but one of some permanence, as increasing numbers of people are leaving the farming and ranching lifestyle for one which may allow them more financial stability and perhaps less stress. Some of the women alluded to the idea that their physical health may suffer due to their demanding schedules. For example, they made comments such as, “The older you get, the harder it gets, (Bobbi, ranch)” or when discussing the Public Television Station film The Farmer’s Wife, “The only thing wrong with that film was that they didn’t show any accidents or anything. Well, if you work that much, something will happen when you’re that tired (Ida, farm).” However, none of the women actually said “I can’t go on with this,” or “My physical health is ruined.” The strain of the women’s busy schedules and hard work is compounded by the overwhelming emotional and psychological stress discussed in my second assertion.

Assertion #2

The women involved in farming and ranching in this study risk compromising, or have already compromised, their psychological health due to high levels of stress.
Table 2

Codes and Categories Related to Stress in Women Involved in Farming and Ranching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>uncertainty</td>
<td>supporting others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no social outlets</td>
<td>very little money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weather</td>
<td>time crunches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worry</td>
<td>concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no time for self</td>
<td>illness in family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>depression</td>
<td>medication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frustration</td>
<td>anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sadness</td>
<td>hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor family relations</td>
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The two categories presented in Table 2 come together to show that the women of this study experience high levels of stress which result in psychological hardship in various areas of their lives. The stress is continuously increasing as the women work harder to maintain their family’s lifestyle of farming and/or ranching. The women and their families are able to remain on the farm or ranch in part because of the efforts made by the women. These facts are descriptive and come directly from the data. I assert that should the women continue to experience the stress that they do without some sort of outlet, they
may compromise their psychological health. Indeed, as the data will show, some already have. To explain my assertion, I will use the data to show that the women experience a variety of triggers, or causes, of stress, and that these triggers result in negative consequences for the women.

Ida (farm/ranch), who had just presented three pages of self-description to a psychiatrist she had seen after her husband was incapacitated, was asked the following by the health-care professional: “I have one question—how did you keep your sanity?” One might wonder this about a number of the women in this study after reviewing the data presented here. When combined with the work loads detailed in the first assertion, the psychological hardship experienced by these women may affect their health in a negative manner. Many of these women seem to have reached the end of their proverbial ropes.

Kelly (farm/ranch), when discussing some friends who were just starting out in farming, said, “…you know, I told her, ‘I’d NEVER [her emphasis] do it again.’” Deb (farm) said the following of their struggles:

…it seems like EVERY SINGLE FACTOR [her emphasis] is against you. You know, it’s not just the price...when it’s every single thing now, and every time you turn around, you know, it compounds...so it builds. It’s just so crappy right now (laugh), that it’s REALLY [her emphasis] hard to look past it. It’s really hard to say, ‘Well, there’s always next year,’ because you just keep thinking, ‘Is next year gonna be any better?’ So, it’s just absolutely the worst I’ve ever seen it, worse than ever.
Later in the interview, Deb said

If I get angry I think, 'Let's just get out of here. Let's just call it quits and pack up and leave, and get out of here,' and he [her husband] looks at me like, 'How can you just pack up and leave?' But I think I could in a minute. Maybe I couldn't when I really left, but it's like, there has to be a better way to live than in the constant turmoil and stress, and not knowing.

Kelly (farm/ranch) shared similar sentiments when she said, “There’s no way that we can keep goin’ the way we are. We are, you know ALL [her emphasis] our money goes to the bank, just about all of it, and it’s just, it’s just too much.” Later, Kelly said, “Sometimes I think, just forget it, let somebody else farm the place. You know, just sell the place, or rent it out and just move.”

The women explained that these feelings of wanting to leave come from the burden of making the farm or ranch successful. The stress is too much. There is always a struggle. As Jean (farm) said, “Um...there is a struggle for farm women, because even if, whether you’re working on the farm and next to your farmer husband, or off the farm supporting your farmer husband, there’s a struggle.” When asked about their least favorite thing in relation to farming or ranching, many women immediately responded with the word “stress.” For example, before I had even finished my question about her least favorite aspect of farming/ranching, Kelly (farm/ranch) and Jean (farm) both said, “The stress.” In a related discussion, Deb (farm) said, “There’s a very high stress level, even sometimes when things are going well, there’s a stress level, because a farmer always thinks, ‘What’s gonna happen to me next?’” When asked if the stress level fluctuates or if it is constant, Kelly (farm/ranch) claimed, “It’s been pretty constant.” This stress seems to
be escalating. For example, Cindy (ranch) said, “There’s just so MUCH [her emphasis] now, and we are tired. We are tired from trying to still keep up at home, and then to do all that other stuff... I am tired... of the load.” Deb (farm) said, “It’s just so piling up, it really is. It feels like more, and maybe because we’re not as young and optimistic.” Out of eighteen interviews, there was only one case of disconfirming evidence about the stress of farming and ranching. Michelle (farm) said that even if “Obviously during these times there’s stress stuff that comes with farming. It’s not going to do us any good to sit around and ponder it, and discuss it with a thousand people, and worry about it.” She said this even though she admitted that “…even with really good crops, the odds of us making money this year is slim to none.” Although she did not say it directly, it is possible that Michelle and her family feel the loss somewhat less than others because of Michelle’s job with the state, which provides them with most of their living expenses.

The stress is caused by many factors, but those that emerged most clearly in this study, and listed according to frequency with which they were discussed, were a lack of money, no outlets for stress relief (including time for self or time with others), the strain of emotionally supporting other family members, uncertainty about a variety of factors leading to constant worry and concern, the weather, and illnesses in the family.

Many of the women discussed the lack of money, and how this created stress in their lives. For example, Jackie (farm/ranch) said, “Every nickel or penny you spend, you think about it, and that’s what makes life tough.” When asked about her least favorite aspect of ranching, Marla (ranch) said, “The stress and not knowing if you’re gonna have enough to pay the bills. We’ve never gone hungry, but there’s been times when we’ve had all these bills, and you can’t pay ‘em.” Louella (ranch) stated that “We’re taking in less
for our calves, and our finances keep going up, and that's the other hardest thing to deal with, is just, ah, finances.” Sally (farm/ranch) also spoke of financial strain when she stated, “We've got all of those pressures...economy, market prices, the prices of things we have to buy continuing to raise and escalate.” Similarly, Jean (farm) claimed that one of the most difficult aspects of farming to contend with is money. She said that, “The stress of not knowing if you're going to get a price. That ongoing stress is probably what will force us off the farm.” Deb (farm) said that

It's kindof like the whole stress of this whole awful farming is peaking right now, because we're just starting with the first of our harvest. We've got almost all of our barley harvested, and our barley crop looks good, but there's no money for it, and the elevators aren't making any money, so they are discounting as much as possible for any little flaw in the grain, 'cause they have to be able to save their hide, too. So, even though it's harvest, and that's usually an up time for me, 'cause I think it's so exciting to get started on it, it's terribly tense this year, because you don't know if you're gonna have enough to pay...It's kindof like, 'Well, how bad is it gonna get? Are you gonna be able to ride through it?' And now, it's worse than ever, so you kinda wonder what it's gonna hold for you.

Kelly (farm/ranch) said that “I think people are more tired now. I think people are tired of being broke, because you talk to so many people and everybody is just...there's just no money.” Kelly also went into detail about their family living expenses. Her story shows just how much some families are struggling financially. She explained

It's not easy...Last year, our living expense was $11,000 for our family living [family of five], and that's with insurances, and absolutely everything...And our
banker told us that 'You guys have got to do something different because you're living like church mice,' he says. It's crazy, and it is, you know, it's gettin' to the point where it's just crazy. He told us that the average living expense is $30,000 [for a family of five], so we're living on a third of that, and he said that's nuts... but um, last year we didn't make our [land] payments. All the other years we've pretty much made our payments and if we've been short it's been maybe a thousand, or two thousand, so it hasn't been that bad. Last year we were WAY [her emphasis] short. This year we're gonna be WAY [her emphasis] short (laugh) just from prices.

Because of their meager family living allowance, Kelly said that they are unable to upgrade their equipment. She said, "We have junk, if you look around. It runs, but it's nothin'.' We don't have nothin' nice. You know, any kinds of breakdowns that you're not expecting, you know we don't know where we're gonna get the money to fix them."

Kelly later said that if they do not stretch out their loans, "We may as well pack our bags tomorrow." Ida (farm/ranch) also described their dire financial situation when she discussed using inheritance money for her ill husband and when she stated that, "We're at about the point right now where we don't know how we're going to pay the electricity bill." Bobbi (ranch) described the financial situation as dark. She said of bookkeeping that "There's always that big cloud over you," and that "Sometimes you want to go away and hide."

Clearly money, or lack of it, is a primary cause of stress for these women and their families. Other, related items also contribute to the stress. Everybody experiences stress, but with sufficient outlets for it, it may be manageable. However, the women in this study
showed that they do not have many healthy outlets for their stress. Thus, it accumulates, rather than moving in circles as it may with many people.

One way people may alleviate stress in their lives is to do something for themselves. Thus, I asked the women what they do to take care of themselves. Several of the women claimed that they simply did not take time out for themselves. For example, Marla (ranch) said, "I don't have time to take care of myself." When I asked Kate (farm) what she did just for herself, she responded, "Not a whole lot sometimes! (laugh) That gets to be a real problem." Bobbi (ranch) also said she did not get the chance to do much just for herself, even though she would love to get out and run a few miles. Kelly (farm/ranch) said, "Well, actually, not really anything." She later conceded that if she really needs time to herself, a big luxury is to be able to drive to town or to work by herself, without the kids and in a quiet atmosphere. Ruth (farm) said, "Well, once in awhile I get to go to the bathroom by myself (laugh). And I tell Bill that it's really pathetic when the highlight of your day is a shower (laugh)." Finally, Michelle (farm) said of spending time on herself, "Actually, I've found that the older my kids get, the less I have of that."

Many of the women mentioned that if they had time to take care of themselves, they would like to spend more time socializing with others, just to get out and away from everything going on at home. For example, Bobbi (ranch) said that if possible, "I would go and have coffee more with friends. Go out to supper with friends, and these would be like, my friends, not couple friends, and maybe even more of that—just having the time to do that." However, as most women claimed, this was not usually a possibility. Kate (farm) said that her socializing consists of a monthly meeting with other women in a
homemakers group, but that often the meetings are cancelled because of more pressing farm-related issues, such as planting and harvest seasons. She claimed that her socializing consists of, “I go by my neighbors and wave as I go by, and that’s about all we do...I mean, sometimes it seems like there is absolutely no social life.” When asked if the monthly meetings, when they occurred, felt like enough time with other women, Kate simply said, “No.”

Being busy on the farm or ranch was the reason other women gave for a lack of socializing as well. For example, Cindy (ranch) said,

One of the things I dislike is the responsibility. We never really are—we always feel responsible even if we’re gone for the weekend... You know, you go to bed with that responsibility. You never, you can’t shut it off like you maybe can in other kinds of jobs. It’s just always there, and it gets weighty.

Michelle (farm) said, “The thing I probably dislike is not being able to just go.” Ida (farm/ranch) said, “I mean, you never went any place. Even if you went to church, you went to church and you came right home. I mean, you didn’t hardly dare talk to anybody, because something might, a cow might have a calf.” Ida’s husband was more controlling than most, and she was speaking of times past, but she said that even with him absent from the farm due to illness, there was not much time for socializing.

Jackie (ranch) said that they never “go visiting,” and that this was a problem because “I think women need to have other women.” She went on to explain that “I think we’re more emotional, and if you have other people to talk to and you can see that their hardships are the same as yours, then things aren’t so bad, and just to talk about it.” When later asked what she would change about their activities, one of the first things she
said was "Just more interaction with people." Jackie wished people were more neighborly so that this interaction could take place, but she seemed to know that it was not a matter of neighborliness, but of busy schedules. She later said, "We just get too involved in our own stuff and we don't get out..." Kelly (farm/ranch) also lamented the fact that she did not get to socialize very much. She wanted to spend more time with her sister, and said, "I wish I had more time to go and spend a night and come home, you know, and I never get to do stuff like that... That I would like to change."

One reason the women did not see each other as much as they would have liked was because of their isolation. Bobbi (ranch) discussed being isolated simply because of distance. Cindy (ranch) said this is difficult for women who are used to having more contact with each other. Bobbi said she had become used to the isolation more now, but that it was very difficult when she first married and moved to the ranch. She said, "I was a teacher, I moved out here, um, far from town, [I] didn't get to see my friends much... so those first three years, they were quite a hurdle." She continued with "And of course I came to Jack's home. You know, he didn't have to go through any of the stuff I was going through, which WASN'T [her emphasis] fair (laugh). You know, it's NOT [her emphasis] fair!" Despite comments on isolation due to distance, there was disconfirming evidence in some women's statements. For example, Louella (ranch) said, "You know, you're not as isolated as we think we are. We have good roads out here, and the telephone." Cindy (ranch) also provided disconfirming evidence concerning socializing. She said that even though they "...just need to get together and have fun sometimes," it does not always happen due to the farmer's own attitudes about work and fun. She said
Sometimes I think farmers and ranchers are so busy doing their work that they kinda forget to relax and have fun—laugh, you know. And you know, that's our fault. Nobody can do that except for us, but we get kinda wound up, and sometimes I think we get kinda, you know, you don't want anybody else to think that you didn't get your bales hauled, so you do it for guilt, or you do it so you look good, instead of saying, 'Nope, we're gonna quit at noon and we're gonna do this,' 'cause you know, a year from now nobody's gonna know if we got 'em hauled or not that day (laugh). But you know, the attitude is kinda that as long as the sun is shining, you should be working. So we kinda have to get our husbands to think otherwise. But yea, there's a certain amount of, of almost competitiveness, or something. Whatever it is, but, you know, if we're honest, we'd admit that.

Cindy's comments show that it may sometimes be a matter of choice when deciding whether or not socializing is a possibility. However, she also mentioned that the choice may be made by the husbands, and not the wives.

Part of the reason the women do not have time for themselves or to socialize is because they are constantly taking care of those around them, including their husbands. When asked what she does for herself, Sally (farm/ranch) said, "Oh, that's kinda tough [the question] because I'm usually doing something for everybody else." Kelly (farm/ranch) said, "I used to do a lot of like cross-stitch and stuff, but I don't anymore, because every time I get a project started, Jim's in and wants me to help him with somethin'." Her method of coping? "...when I go to hang clothes up, I go the way that Jim don't see me, so he can't ask me to help him (laugh)." Sue (farm) said, "I'm torn
between um, what I should do and what I should do for others (laugh)... You know, what I’d like to do for myself, but it usually ends up that I’m doing it for others, or like my family members.”

Bobbi (ranch) spoke of how taking care of others may have a harmful impact. She said, “It’s that good old balancing act, and you know, I sort of tend to take care of others first before I take care of myself, and then of course pretty soon you aren’t good for anybody until you take care of yourself.” When speaking of taking care of upset husbands, Deb (farm) said, “It’s kinda scary, ‘cause who’s taking care of them? Their wives, which is why all their wives need to be on medication (laugh). But you know, that bothers me a lot, ‘cause you can’t get those guys to go in [for help], and you know things can’t be good at home if their wives, you know, I mean there’s gotta be a lot of worries.”

Sally (farm/ranch) and I had the following interaction:

Sally: I went through a time where I kinda sunk down in that depression, too, for awhile, and I realized I wasn’t as strong as I thought I was, you know...

Me: Did you feel like you had to be strong?

Sally: Yea! I didn’t have a choice!

Me: Why is that?

Sally: I think part of it’s maternal. We have to be there for our kids. I mean, if it wasn’t for my kids, maybe I wouldn’t have been that strong, but I felt like I had to be strong, and I had to be strong enough to get him [husband] through it. I think men are stronger on the outside than they are on the inside a lot of times, because when they have to deal with emotional things, they sometimes can’t deal with the reality and they lean on us [the women], um, and we feel like we have to be strong.
Sue (farm) shared a similar sentiment when she stated, “There’s no way a young man can really do it on his own, you know, if they don’t, you know, have the support of your spouse (laugh).” Aside from emotional support, many women supported their spouses and the farm or ranch by working outside of the home to bring in much needed income. Ida (farm/ranch) summed it up well when discussing some friends: “The only reason he’s still farming is ‘cause his wife has a good job.”

The women did not always discuss taking care of others in a negative manner. For example, Julie (ranch) said “I’ll do whatever it takes to see it through, but I’ll also do whatever’s right for our family. If we have to move, or leave, you know, I will do what’s right for this family.” Deb (farm) said, “I always seem to rate my success with the success of my kids...It’s nice to get so many bushels in the field, but really what it’s all about isn’t the bushels in the field, to us it’s our kids.” Jackie (ranch) said of her children, “You’re not thinking about yourself so much. You’re thinkin’ about your kids and family and you aren’t so important anymore.” Cleary, Julie, Deb and Jackie put others first, but there were no negative connotations in their comments. They seemed proud of the fact that they put their families first in these ways.

Although some women discussed putting others first in a positive way, most discussed the negative aspects of the situation. Ida (farm/ranch), in speaking of her husband before he had to stop farming due to illness, said, “All he ever wanted to do was farm. He didn’t care about our needs. He didn’t care about anybody else.” Ida’s needs were placed below those of the farm. Jean (farm) shared a story about when she and her husband first began farming. She said they had been living in town, and were eventually planning on taking over the family farm, but the change occurred without any input from
Jean. She was called two days before they were to move by her husband and father-in-law, and told to pack up, because they were moving to the farm and their house in town was going to be destroyed. She said, “I felt a little resentful,” but she did what others had decided, and moved to the farm. She conceded that this was fine in the end since that was their long-term plan, but that she would have preferred to be consulted on the decision first. Jean also discussed taking a secondary role regarding farm decisions now that they live there, but she did not seem to think of this as negative. She said, “The farm is [his], and he makes the decisions, and I support his decisions because he’s the one with experience. He knows what’s best.” Jackie (ranch) was another woman who, at least sometimes, deferred to her husband’s decisions on the farm. She said, “Yep, we garden, but that’s more my husband. He plants, and I go up with him and we plant it. It’s planted the way he wants it. I don’t say anything about that anymore. I just stick it where he says to plant it.”

In addition to the obvious comments about putting or taking care of others first, many of the women, when asked questions, responded by discussing something related to their husbands before they would talk of themselves. For example, I asked if in the winter the pace slowed down a bit, and Michelle (farm) said, “Oh, he’s busy.” When I asked Deanne (ranch) the same question, she said, “Yea, in the summer Bob works like mad…” When asked about what was important to them, none of the women said themselves, but instead talked of family, the farm or the ranch. The manners in which the women put others first takes time away from themselves. Their time alone or time socializing with others is compromised in some respect. These factors may lead to increased stress levels as outlets for stress are reduced.
Aside from lack of money, time for socializing and not taking care of themselves, the women felt stress due to uncertainty concerning a number of issues. The examples are numerous, even if brief. Ruth (farm) found it difficult to face such an uncertain future. She said, "I think it’s really scary, you know, when you look around the area, how many people, how many families aren’t going to be here next year. I think it’s scary. I really do.” Deb (farm) said of her least favorite things, “The not knowing. The financially not knowing from day to day, month to month, year to year where you’re gonna be.” She went on to say, “There’s no guarantee, so from year to year, you might have a really good year and then a really bad year. There’s never really any guarantee.” Ida (farm/ranch) concurred, saying, “The uncertainty of everything... You can never really plan ahead at all because things happen... You might get ahead a little bit, but then this breaks down, or that breaks down.” Marla (ranch) said, “I think people should know how stressful it is, and how you can wake up in the morning not knowing what tomorrow’s gonna be, you know, if we’re gonna be here or not... We gamble every day of our life.” Jean (farm), when asked about the future of their farm, said it’s “Very tenuous at the moment... You’re never at the level where you think things are gonna run smoothly for the next few years.” Bobbi (ranch) claimed that “I think world trade has changed the face of agriculture, and I don’t think people know where it’s going to go.” She later said, “I just don’t know where things are going to go. I have no idea what to tell my kids.” Sue (farm) said, “We don’t know what’s going to happen.” Kate (farm) spoke of uncertainty regarding their retired lives. She said that they would be ready to retire in about fifteen years (in their late sixties), but that “…there’s not gonna be anything there to retire on... I’m not sure what’s gonna happen.” Louella (ranch) expressed a similar concern. She said, “It’s kinda hard
right now, 'cause we're wondering what we're gonna do when it comes to our retirement age.” Some of the women were more concerned with basic needs than with the future. For example, Kelly (farm/ranch) said, “It comes down to your basic needs, you know, and if you don’t have a guarantee of where your basic needs are gonna be met, it’s pretty hard to look beyond that.”

Part of the uncertainty results from a lack of control. Louella (ranch) stated, “We see it here, where the smaller places have folded up, and I guess we don’t have control over at what point that will stop.” She later expressed concern over their own place being large enough to make it. Lack of control comes in many forms, but some discussed by the women included price and weather. Louella said, “Probably the worst part about agriculture is that you can’t ever determine your income.” Bobbi (ranch) also stated that a difficulty in agriculture is “...the lack of control you have when it comes to selling your product.” Ann (farm) also discussed this as she recounted past struggles. In discussing the weather, Louella (ranch) said, “You know, you have no control over it. The things that are hardest, we really have no control over.” Deb (farm) said, “You put the seed in the ground and then what? Then you have no control about anything from that point on (laugh). You know, it’s like, ‘It better rain.’” Kate (farm) said

Well, my business is a little bit different than [others] in the fact that mine relies on the weather so heavily. You know, if it um, if it rains at the wrong time, or it’s too dry at the wrong time, too hot, too cold, and also I have no control over my market whatsoever. I mean, I have to put that crop in the ground in the spring, and I don’t have any idea what’s going to happen in the fall, and that’s one way
that farming is different than any other business. It’s dependent on price, it’s dependent on weather, and I have no control over either one of those.

Concerns about the weather came up in conversation fairly frequently, and these concerns led to stress. Ida (farm/ranch) said that the weather can be frustrating, especially “…if you have to do a lot of extra feed, if the weather is bad, or if you have to shovel a lot of extra snow. It’s all these things that make a lot of difference.” Jean (farm) said “The stress of what the weather’s gonna do this year” is very difficult for them. An example that many women used to discuss the weather was the blizzard of 1997. Julie (ranch) said “I think that farmers and ranchers…felt like they got forgot about. There was SO [her emphasis] much publicity about the flood, and no doubt those people were devastated, you know, that was awful. But, it was JUST [her emphasis] as bad for people out here—just as bad.” She explained that this was a “…big mental loss” because

You saw all these cattle dying and you couldn’t do anything about it, or you’d maybe save them for a day or two and they’d die of shock, so it was a big huge strain…My daughter was watching our son at the time, you know, she had to just stay in the house and watch him, while my husband and my oldest son and I were out trying to get feed to the animals that were alive—trying to FIND [her emphasis] them. Just trying to find them. Just the mental and emotional strain on people was (pause), you were just exhausted…Everybody was hungry and tired and you just felt hopeless.

Kelly (farm/ranch) also discussed the blizzard, saying, “So when you go and see these dead lambs and ewes and cows, you’re just feeling so terrible.” Blizzards like that of 1997
do not occur regularly, but many of these farm and ranch families are still recovering from it, both financially and emotionally.

Words related to stress and chosen quite frequently from the prompt cards (Appendix B) were anxious and worried. I listed these as a separate code because the worry seems to engulf so many aspects of the farm or ranch. For example, it is not related only to money or weather, but to a number of items. Perhaps most important is the fact that the women expressed constant worry over many aspects of their lives in general. Louella (ranch) said,

I think I feel anxious a lot, 'cause you wonder about what’s gonna happen, especially when my kids are gettin' to the age where they’re young adults. You know, it’s almost not that I’m so worried about myself, but the next generation, you know, what they might end up doing and what they might be and that kinda thing.

Deanne (ranch) said “You always kinda wonder what’s gonna happen to this way of life or this area, or what’s going to happen to people who could lose the ranch at any time, so basically I get anxious with that.” Maureen (farm/ranch) said, “You gotta worry about the cows dying, the weasel getting all your chickens (laugh), and the farm, and the grain prices are just obnoxious, you know.” Jean (farm) said, “Anxious and worried sticks out because that’s kinda where we are right now. We’re anxious about what our future is going to bring, and we’re worried that we won’t be able to stay on the farm.” Marla (ranch) claimed, “The only time I get anxious and worried is when I sit down and do bookwork and have to pay bills every month (laugh).” Sally (farm/ranch) listed a number of things that she worries about, such as old machinery breaking down, the weather, the
prices, the harvest, and talking to the banker about another loan. She finally said, “Anxious and worried has to do with just about every phase of the farming and ranching.”

Cindy (ranch) said she is worried about the future of their ranch due to changing federal plans for the land. She stated, “I’m anxious and worried about the outcome of the National Grassland plan that the Forest Service has. We’ve been worrying about that a lot.” This was the case with many of the ranch families out west. Much of their land is in the Federal Grassland program, which means that every ten years, the government decides whether or not to let the ranchers continue grazing their cattle on the land, or if it will be made completely into a preserve of sorts. At the time of the interviews, the ten year review was in session. Although the review officially occurs every ten years, the women explained that the actual process usually lasts two to three years each time the issue comes up for review.

For some women, a concern is that other people seem apathetic to the plight of farmers and ranchers. As Bobbi (ranch) said, “I think another worry is nobody is, you know, nobody really seems to care.” Julie (ranch) discussed some of the implications of her constant worrying. She explained that:

I get real anxious and worried. In fact, I think, but I’m not sure—this last January I had to go on a medication for allergies that I’ve NEVER [her emphasis] before had in my life, and I kinda think it’s when I get worried or uptight about something—anxious. You know, and I wish I could do something about that ‘cause I don’t wanna take this medication anymore, but that’s all I can figure out, and that’s all the doctors can figure out. But I think as farmers and ranchers, we do a LOT [her emphasis] of worrying, and you know, that is really kinda, you
spend a lot of energy doing that. What a waste. But you worry about the weather, and you worry about the kids and you worry about the crop and about your faith, and um, our livestock. You know, I worry a lot about our animals and I just, you know, we have to do a little bit of farming, so I worry about that, but it’s not as important as the livestock and our pastures and how the grass is for them.

Clearly, worrying is a part of these women’s everyday lives. Even in the one instance of disconfirming evidence, when Jackie (ranch) said, “I’m not a big worrier” because “It’s just a waste of time to worry or be anxious about things because then you end up gettin’ mad when things aren’t working out,” she later admitted that she had to work at not worrying. She said that being on the ranch has helped her to be more “laid back” because she has to be.

A final aspect of stress relates to illnesses or accidents in the women’s families. None of the women claimed that these illnesses made life more difficult for them. Indeed, I think most of the women were thankful just to still have their loved ones with them. However, it seems that any major illness or accident would be a hardship in at least some respects, such as increased workloads or emotional strain. If the women normally take care of their families, their task must be greater when coping with an incapacitated family member. The examples were numerous. Marla (ranch) said, “My husband went through deep, deep depression. In fact, I was afraid I’d have to commit him it was so bad.” Cindy’s (ranch) husband was thrown from a horse and ended up with a brain injury. This accident, even though it was years ago, still affected his memory and ability to do some jobs on the ranch. Deanne (ranch) spoke of her father, who had been kicked in the chest
by a horse, and how even at the time of the interview, a year after the accident, he was functioning at “...about 85% of normal, and they said he’d probably never get back to total normal.” Sue (farm) spoke of her husband’s illness and accident at length. She said

To begin with, he’d had some chest congestion, and so we went through the whole, you know, trying to find out what was wrong there, and then a month later, he fell off this building, and of course, he had to have knee reconstruction as far as bone grafting and stuff. So he was laid up all during spring’s work. He put in a few acres of sunflowers at the end, but otherwise, he didn’t do anything (laugh), so it was, so that’s why I say this spring was rather a tough one, um, because of his health.

She went on to explain that he still tires easily, and is not able to do quite as much as he used to do on the farm. Julie’s (ranch) husband hurt his back, and to get through the winter, they were forced to hire help. Kelly’s (farm/ranch) husband has an elbow injury from childhood that continues to bother him. She said, “Well, he’s got a bad arm, and he’s gonna have to have surgery again on his arm, and I don’t know if they’ll be able to do anything this time.” He has had two surgeries in the past. She said that “He’s had a lot of pain with it, and now this year he can pretty much pick up a coffee cup and have pain with it.” This injury must interfere with his farm and ranch work to some degree. Ida (farm/ranch) was one woman who openly discussed the strain of dealing with a family member’s illness. Her case is a bit unique because of the abusive (her term) nature of her married relationship, but this does not make her words any less valid. Her husband had physical and emotional problems, and she said
It was much better after they finally put him in a nursing home, because we didn’t know what he was going to do. He threatened suicide several times, and of course, now I can tell you all the things you should do or should not do, like don’t have guns around, don’t have knives around, keep your car keys in your pocket and keep the car full of gas, because you gotta watch out for yourself because so often they take you with them when they do it, and so here you, every time you’d hear him moving around you didn’t know what he was doing. He didn’t sleep good at night, so you just didn’t know what was going on. You know, by the end, I’d lost over forty pounds by the time they finally put him in the nursing home.

As mentioned, Ida’s case is an exceptional one, but it does show the extreme conditions to which a person may be exposed when dealing with a sick family member.

All of the aspects discussed above, including lack of money or socializing outlets, lack of time for oneself, caring for others, uncertainty, worry, weather and illness relate to causes of stress in these women’s lives. The second category in this assertion relates to the effects, or results of the stress in the women’s lives. These effects did not emerge in the interviews as frequently as did the causes, but a few did surface as clear themes. The effects discussed included poor family relations, stressful emotions such as frustration and sadness, and the illness of depression.

Family relations are strained due to a number of stress-related triggers. For example, Sue (farm) said that when something goes wrong, like a storm or problems with equipment, it affects "...the mood of the whole household. It really does, you know. In fact, the mood of one person can affect everybody, and I guess that's why, you know, my husband tends to be more negative, and I think maybe it’s just because of the business,
you know, but so maybe I try to be more positive (laugh).” Michelle (farm) said of working off-farm and then coming home and taking care of her family, “Sometimes when you come home you don’t feel like you have much left for anybody else.” Jackie (ranch) discussed how worrying about her children can cause some strain in the family. She said that when she has to go out and help her husband with something, she worries about the kids, and

...that’s somethin’ he never, guys don’t understand so much. You know, they focus on one thing and that’s where their mind is, but us women have to be thinkin’ about all kinds of things when there’s kids around and you’re still havin’ to go out and work cows or change a bearing in the swatter or whatever...So that’s really an emotional strain...because he couldn’t see why—he just didn’t understand where I was at worrying about the kids.

Sally (farm/ranch) also discussed strain in her marriage, and said that

There’s been years where things haven’t gone good that we feel like we’re just angry at each other all the time, and you know, this discussion came up, probably last winter, when things were getting so bad, and it was looking like we may have to just completely leave, or at least not have anything to do with the farming, and both have full-time jobs away from home, and you know, it’s ridiculous, because the reason we always wanted to farm was because we could do it together, and we always enjoyed it. But the last couple years haven’t been that way. We haven’t enjoyed it together. We’ve hollered at each other more than we really had fun doing it, and do you call that enjoyment?
Sally later discussed how her children are affected by the stress present in the household. She said, “Um, it’s sad seeing what our kids have gone through, ‘cause it’s affected them, you know it, it has to.” She also explained that “...if I would keep my mouth shut a little more, I think it would probably keep things a little better, but I’m probably the world’s worst at giving the silent treatment (laugh).” When Ida (farm/ranch) talked of the hardship in her marriage, I eventually asked her if there was anything good about her marriage that she would like to share. She replied, “Hmmm, good (long pause). Well, it was a struggle the whole time.”

Difficulties in the family are only one result of stress. Another is the emotion of frustration. Julie (ranch) said, “It’s not just for us. I’m frustrated for everyone” due to prices and other hardships. Deb (farm) said, “I can’t stand to see my friends when they’re in the same boat that I am. It’s frustrating.” Frustration also results from waiting for things to improve. Sally (farm/ranch) said, “Another most frustrating point would be if we actually have to stop and wait a day or two until we can line up a way to either get credit or get money to buy more fuel or more fertilizer or whatever. That’s probably been as frustrating as anything.” Sally also said of their difficulties,

I don’t call it bitter. I just (pause) hurt by our losses, and I look back and I can think of all the frustration and all of the, I don’t know, it’s hard to come up with a word, but just, we were frustrated for SO [her emphasis] long, and it was hard for me to see it until I stepped away a little bit.

Kate (farm) spoke of a friend whose husband returned to school to learn a different trade, leaving the friend at home to care for their livestock. She said “…and these darn cows are
out all the time... [and] he’s not anywhere close by to even help her.” She concluded, saying, “I’m sure she’s really frustrated.”

Sadness was another emotion that emerged in the interviews. It seemed to result from the increasing pressures of farm and ranch life. For example, Maureen (farm) talked of her sadness due to the fact that “All these people on these farms are independent, and they don’t really have to depend on an outside job, you know, but now it’s gettin’ to be that they do.” She also said that “We’re sad because so many of our neighbors have left already.” Deb (farm) shared similar sentiments when she said, “I know for sure that there are gonna be some families that are gonna be done this year, and that’s really sad, because they’re the people that you always, you know, they aren’t that much different than you are.” Later she said she was sad because “If we’re gonna go down, a lot of other people are gonna go down who are very close to the same situation that we are in, you know.”

Aside from difficulties in the family and emotions such as frustration and sadness, talk of depression among women arose in some interviews, but only Deb (farm) was willing to talk of it openly. She said, “I take anti-depressant medication.” She explained that it began when her mother died, but that “…from there, it just kindof went into the whole farming stuff, and from there I’ve just never gone off of them for more than a few months.” Of other women and depression, Deb said, “There’s a lot, a LOT [her emphasis] of depression right now. There’s REALLY [her emphasis] a concern, the mental health issue, and nobody talks about it, ‘cause it’s still one of those things that nobody feels comfortable about.” Deb’s evidence for her claims is based on discussions with her physician. She explained that
My doctor... she strongly recommends that people need to be seeking help for it [depression] rather than the pulling themselves up by the bootstraps image that people kindof have, and she says that right now, the medication that she’s prescribing in our area more than anything is anti-depressant medication. She said every day she’s writing out new prescriptions for it... and it’s almost all women.

It is possible that Deb’s use of anti-depressant medication was unique in my study, but if her claims are correct, it is clear that many other women involved in farming and ranching are experiencing similar feelings.

The data provided here clearly show that the women in this study experience stress. Some of it also shows that the stress is increasing. The scholarly literature supports this by showing that it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain farms and ranches due to changing markets. The women may not be able to keep going at the rate they are without compromising their psychological health. Some of them have already done so.

Assertion # 3

Despite the physical and psychological hardships discussed in assertions one and two, the women involved in farming and ranching in this study have many reasons to remain on their farms and ranches.

After reading assertions one and two, one may wonder why anyone would remain on a farm or ranch. However, the women in this study discussed many pleasurable aspects of farm and ranch life that make them want to stay and fight for their way of life. The coding process led to eight categories, or themes in relation to positive experiences in farming and ranching. Positive aspects of pride, including pride in their work and who
### Table 3

**Codes and Categories Related to Why Women Remain in Farming and Ranching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>proud of work</td>
<td>hard workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethical</td>
<td>do not expect a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thankful</td>
<td>environmentalists/stewards of land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multi-talented</td>
<td>good people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good values</td>
<td>intelligent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inner strength</td>
<td>country founded on agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feeding the country</td>
<td>strong people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stubborn</td>
<td>will not take help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will not admit failure</td>
<td>keeping up appearances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t admit problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>church</td>
<td>close to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gifts from God</td>
<td>God as center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support from faith</td>
<td>faith as vital</td>
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</table>
Table 3 cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Category</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>values</td>
<td>learning responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time together</td>
<td>working side by side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extended family</td>
<td>work ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seeing new life</td>
<td>less worry about kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family livelihood</td>
<td>working with spouse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>camping overnight</td>
<td>chances to visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buying for themselves</td>
<td>hiring a housekeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swimming with kids</td>
<td>quilting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sewing</td>
<td>kids behaving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seeing kids happy</td>
<td>watching crops grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family vacations</td>
<td>church fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reading</td>
<td>picking berries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flower gardening</td>
<td>watching television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>going for walks</td>
<td>going horse back riding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>movies with friends</td>
<td>Bible study with friends</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Category</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>helping animals</td>
<td>serenity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watching animals</td>
<td>beauty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>own boss</td>
<td>resourcefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control</td>
<td>freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flexible schedules</td>
<td>responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self sufficiency</td>
<td>creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alone time</td>
<td>nobody to answer to</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hope for a good year</td>
<td>hope for better times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hope for nicer home</td>
<td>hope for better prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hope for good crops</td>
<td>hope for good weather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hope for rural America</td>
<td>hope for family farms</td>
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</table>

they are as people, in addition to faith, and family benefits were the dominant themes. However, small luxuries in life, independent living, a love of nature and hope for the future were also frequently discussed by the women. The eighth category, pride-harmful, deals with the concept of pride as an obstacle for getting help or leaving when the women
implied that consideration of those actions may be wise for some farm and ranch families. Each category is discussed in turn as listed in Table 3, except pride-harmful, which is included just after pride-positive, as one flows from the other, even though pride-harmful was not discussed as often as small luxuries, independence, nature and hope.

Pride-positive consists of the pride the women feel about the work they and their families do and who they are as people. If the women are proud of these components in their lives, it becomes difficult to leave farming and ranching, just as it might be difficult for anyone to leave something behind of which she or he is proud.

Part of the pride the women feel comes from knowing they are doing an important job. For example, Cindy (ranch) said, "...we feel that what we're doing is important because we're feeding the country!" She then said it is

...the pride that goes with the work, and the, I don't even know how to put it into words. Um, being able to raise the kind of cattle and the kind of crops that we do and, and um, after twenty years of puttin' into it, feeling like we've done something. We've contributed something we can, um, be proud of, of our place.

Later, Cindy said once again, "I am proud of our ranch...I think farming and ranching and agriculture is a worthwhile occupation and it, ah, is kinda the core of the American family lifestyle." Sue (farm) claimed that other people "...might not guess that we are capable and that we do the many things that we do. I really don't think they realize the amount of work that we do." Sue also said that the smaller farm operations, on which this country was built, are very efficient, and "...once you get bigger—so big—I think you lose a lot of that efficiency." Sue also commented on the pride they take in their own farm. She said, "We've grown from very small to very, what I consider a large operation...I mean, the
operation was very small, and now we have...I have to say we've been successful.” She explained that when she was talking about bigger operations, she meant corporate-style farms and ranches. Jackie (ranch), like some of the other women, spoke of their own place with pride. She said, “Oh, when we got this place, there was NOTHING [her emphasis] here. We put up all these buildings...and cleaned up a lot of old fence. Just miles and miles of it. It was a lot of work.”

Louella (ranch) was another woman who spoke of farm or ranch size, and of her ideas on pride in relation to that. She said

I think the small farms and ranches are, that’s the core of the country, really. Things are gonna, you know it’s gonna take a lot for some people to realize that, but the food chain starts here, you know, I think on small, on family-owned ranches, you get the best care and the best production. The bigger they get, you just work for somebody versus ownin’ your own...bigger just isn’t always better. That’s how I feel. I just don’t think bigger is always better. It just seems like you have more pride if you would own a place and work it than if you were somebody’s man, you know.

Louella, like Cindy earlier, put small farms and ranches at the center of America’s identity. So did Deanne (ranch). She said, “They [others] don’t realize that this country was FOUNDED [her emphasis] on agriculture...But I think they have lost sight of that because they all live in cities out there...It’s like they just don’t realize if you don’t have cattle, you can’t have beef in the stores.” Finally, Bobbi (ranch) said, “Rural America has a lot to offer.” These women clearly feel that their work is important and valuable.
The women are proud of how well they care for the land. Jackie (ranch), for example, said, "...most ranchers are very conscientious about how they do things, and you know, they're environmentalists, you know, moreso than the environmentalists, I think. They want their "...pastures to be good pastures." Julie (ranch) said of the land, 
...just taking care of the land and how much pride you put into that and for people to know that we certainly wouldn't be here if we weren't taking care of the land the best way we know how. And certainly you do see some farmers and ranchers abusing the grasses or the lands. Um, but that's like with anything. You have a few, but the majority aren't, because you can't stay in farming and ranching if you do that. If you don't take care of it, it won't take care of you.

Kate (farm) said that "...farmers out here are just the stewards of the land. They're the ones that take care of the land." Deb (farm) also discussed using the land, and said 
...I think the reason we have outstanding agriculture in the United States is because of the personal conviction of the people that are farming. They care about farming, and they care about producing the grain, and they care about producing as much as they can, but still saving the quality of the soil and of the water. You know, I mean, there's a personal commitment to it. You know, and I think you produce more that way, and you do a better job of it, and the quality is there, but you're not just raping the land. And I think if you have somebody who doesn't have the personal commitment or attachment to it, they're not gonna care. It's a job, and they're just gonna go out and do it.

Her last comments referred to corporate-style farming that may take over if smaller farms and ranches are forced out of business.
The women take pride in their work, and they do not expect a lot in return for it. For example, Deb (farm) said, “We take pride in the fact that we work really hard for everything that we have, and we don’t expect a lot. We just wanna get by. We don’t WANT [her emphasis] everything given to us.” Cindy (ranch) said, “If we were all just a bunch of no goods who weren’t trying and who hadn’t done a good job, and who didn’t have anything to offer or who weren’t making a legitimate contribution to the country, I guess it would be one thing, but we aren’t. We ARE [her emphasis] hardworking people.” She had prefaced this statement with, “Doesn’t anybody care? We’re struggling, and doesn’t anybody care?” Cindy expected people to care.

Aside from being proud of their work, the women are proud of who they are as people. They are proud of their families, of themselves, and of farm and ranch people in general. Deanne (ranch), when discussing how farms and ranches are disappearing, said, “It seems like a shame to me that they [others] would want to take away some of the best people who are left, you know. If you go to these cities and to these places where more people are together, you have more problems with crime and more just everything...[out here] in North Dakota, you can leave your car unlocked and your keys in it, you know, and you don’t have worry about it, because everybody is just, they’re good people here. I think it’s like the last area of good people left, you know, in farming and ranching communities, and in the small towns, you know, and there’s not that many of ‘em anymore.

Cindy (ranch) also spoke of the good people and agriculture. She said, “A lot of people, a lot of good people, got their roots from it, and it’s something that it’s real important that it continue for the good of the country.”
Some of the “goodness” of which the women spoke centers on their families and how they are raised on farms and ranches. For example, although Cindy admitted, “You know, we’re not perfect,” she also said

You know, probably the best thing we do on these places is produce good families, good kids, and good kids with good morals, and just a lot of—the whole family unit is pretty intact. Not that we don’t have divorces and every so often somebody beats their wire. There’s some abuse…but there’s sure a lot of, you know, we’re home with our families and um, they’re not in the house glued to the TV. They’re out learning how to do things with their folks.

She later said, “I am proud of my family…I am proud of our community.” Sue (farm) said, “There’s a lot of pride in our children.” She went on to explain that, “Um, our children are very successful. We’re happy and pleased with them…To me that’s been one of my biggest prides.” She thought that perhaps part of the reason they were successful was because of the work ethic instilled in them on the farm. She said, “I know our children have worked like hired hands, you know, and they always have. Consequently, I think they have in themselves a wonderful work ethic that has been created.” Cindy (ranch) also spoke of this work ethic when she said, “You know we hear how people like to hire people from agriculture and with that background because they’ve got such good ethics. You know, we know how to do things. We’re resourceful people, and we raise resourceful families.”

Deb (farm) discussed some of the specific skills that these resourceful people possess. She said that they must be
...public speaker, banker, financier, you know, I mean all the different things that
go into the responsibility of being a farmer. ALL [her emphasis] the different skills
you have to have. It’s not just whether or not you can start the combine. You
have to be part mechanic, you have to be a really good wheeler-dealer negotiator
to get the best buy on machinery and stuff. You have to understand marketing.
You have to know SO [her emphasis] much, and the responsibility is so great, but
people don’t see it that way, I don’t think. I think they think that you’re out there
digging in the dirt, you know. They don’t realize that you even know how to run a
computer, that you can go online and get market downloads all the time, that you
can go right into the USDA, you know, they don’t even understand that we know
that there’s a USDA website out there where we can get information. You know,
they don’t see that part of it.

Deb spoke of how capable they are and how multi-talented they must be to maintain their
farms.

While most of the women spoke of their families and who they are as farmers and
ranchers in general, a few spoke directly of themselves as women, showing pride in who
they are. For example, Ida (farm/ranch) said that her pastor told her “There isn’t too
many people who could handle what you did.” She later said, “I can do anything.” Cindy
(ranch) said of the women, “…we’re an integral part of these places…I think ranch and
farm women are remarkable women.” Ruth (farm) said, “You know, if the town people
look down on us, that’s their problem. I’m just as good as they are.” She later said,

I think farm women are maybe, I don’t know, a little more Christian, or more
religious. You hear more people thanking God for what we do have, not always
wishing for—I mean, everybody always wants more—but they’re just really glad to have what they have, and that they’re able to get up and go to work like they do every day.

Finally, although a bit tentative, Bobbi (ranch) said, “I think because I’ve had to be so independent, you know, um, I think I feel o.k. about myself.” She also said, “I’m happy to be a woman. I’d hate to try to fill the shoes of a man.”

Although pride often plays a very positive role in the lives of the women, it can also be harmful to them and their families. Most of the harm comes from not admitting problems exist and thus not getting help, even when it is available. For example, in discussing problems in her marriage, Ida (farm) was asked by her pastor why she waited so long to do anything about it. She said, “Because it’s so hard! If it had been easy, it wouldn’t have taken me so long. I just didn’t want to admit that there was a problem.” Deb (farm) spoke of depression in the men, and how they were unlikely to get help. She said,

You know the men are not doing anything about the anxiety and the pressure and the depression that they’re in because of the farming situation, and that’s really scary, I think, because well, men don’t go to doctors. Men don’t ever admit that they’re sick. Men think that if they’re depressed that it has to do with their masculinity and that they’d better just, you know, buckle up, and just face it, you know, and so, all the anxiety and worries that they’re dealing with, I don’t know what they’re doing with it… I think it’s even hard for them to admit to their other farming friends that maybe they’ve had to let their vehicle insurance go, or maybe they’ve had to you know, cut back on this, or maybe the banks are returning their
checks. I mean, they won’t even admit that to each other, ‘cause you just, you just don’t do it. It’s that whole pride thing…this is predominately a traditional area here. It’s very, you know, um, stubborn…and that’s just how they deal with things.

Deb is the woman who, earlier, stated that when the men refuse to take care of themselves, their wives end up doing it for them, and that this becomes a strain on the women.

Kelly (farm/ranch) also discussed covering up problems, or at least refusing to admit them to anyone. She said, “It’s kinda funny, I mean I think people put on fronts a lot and…maybe dress really nice, or drive a nice vehicle, but they’re having trouble payin’ the bills. I think there’s a lot of that, you know…People don’t talk about it.” Kelly’s family is the one that lives on $11,000 a year. She talked about social programs designed to help struggling families. She said,

The programs, we’ve always qualified for the programs. We just, my dad paid all his own bills. Jim’s dad paid all his own bills. We just never were brought up to ever have any help, and neither Jim or I ever thought of getting any help, you know, we just [think] ‘We can do it, we can do it,’ you know. But it’s to the point now where um, I think I am gonna apply to get the kids reduced meals this year.

Later Kelly said, “I’m surprised at how much help is out there, I guess…I just didn’t even know there was, like free school supplies for the kids.” Other women, such as Cindy (ranch), Ida (farm/ranch) and Ann (farm) also discussed being raised in a manner that discourages taking help from anyone.
As far as actually leaving a farm or ranch, some women said pride may be an obstacle to that option, mostly because the men feel like failures if they lose something that may have been in the family for several generations. Kelly (farm/ranch) summed up the women’s sentiments well when she said

Um, you take somebody that’s farmed and owned their place for, you know, fifteen years, or twenty years, and all of a sudden they just can’t make their payments anymore and the banker says, ‘There’s nothin’ you can do...you’re done. Have a sale this fall.’ I think emotional wise, more than anything, that person’s feeling like a failure...It’s the whole pride of it, of doing it on your place, it’s gone. I mean, you’re working for someone now. You’re not your own businessman now.

As discussed in assertion two, many of the women felt that they could leave farming or ranching if they had to, but they said it would be extremely difficult for the men.

Pride, in all its forms, is only one reason the people in this study remained on their farms or ranches. Another dominant factor is faith, mostly discussed by the women as a Christian faith that everything will work itself out in the end. As Marla (ranch) said, “Faith has had a big decision in our whole life. Everything is based on faith...Everybody would be insane if it weren’t for faith!” Many of the women’s statements concerning faith were as straight-forward as Marla’s was. Ida (farm/ranch) said, “If you don’t have a strong faith, you couldn’t handle it. I mean, that’s what gets you through it.” Bobbi (ranch) said, “You know, there’s many days you really need faith to keep you going.” Julie (ranch) said, “I think that’s what we have to stand on, is our faith...If you have a faith to keep you even, you’ll probably be o.k.” Upon being asked if faith played a role in
her life, Ruth (farm) said, “I think it almost has to, farming. You gotta hope that God is
gonna give you what you need.” After being asked the same question, Deanne (ranch)
said, “Oh yea. It’s right up there, kinda leading my life. Jean (farm) said,
I don’t think you could be a farmer’s wife and not have a lot of strength, inner
strength... Your faith plays a big part of it... That makes me happy that there’s a lot
of faith strength, and that it’s a religious, God-based strength, Christian. That’s
important to me, and I don’t know where else it would come from.

Deb (farm) said,
I’ve been really involved in the church in town, and participated and just had a
really good, deep, personal faith. And you know, I just don’t know how you could
farm if you didn’t, ‘cause you have to. I mean, that’s what the whole thing is
based on.

Sue (farm) said, “We live by faith and hope, and that’s kindof how it is from year to year.”

Cindy (ranch) said,
I am a Christian... My faith personally is very important to me. It has seen me
through a really tough thing [husband’s accident], and it’s still what keeps you
going. But I think our faith as a community is pretty important, too... Our church
is a real hub for our community.

Bobbi (ranch) said, “It just seems that the times that you were really down, something just
worked out, you know, it’s like God really did come through. You know, you hear about
it, and missionaries talk about it, and hey, it really does happen!” Of a related nature, Ida
(farm/ranch) spoke of those that do worry a lot and how faith should play a part in that.
She spoke specifically of her husband, and said, “But I thought, ‘What good does it do
you to worry so much?" Well, his whole family, they played at being so religious, but I don’t get the connection. I mean, if you have that much faith, why are you worrying?"

Some women talked specifically about how faith plays a role in dealing with hardship. For example, Jackie (ranch) said, "...maybe the hardship of it, you think about God and you know, He’s helping you out... If we lose the place, or if we aren’t able to stay here, there’s a reason for it, and we might not see it at the time, but sometime we will." Sally (farm/ranch) said

You’re out there working right close with mother nature. I think you’re closer to, I shouldn’t say closer to God, but when you’re out there, you’re very much aware of, um, what God gives and what God takes away. And you can’t help but to say sometimes when you walk out and you look through a wheat field that’s been hailed out, ‘Why?’ You know, ‘How could this happen?’ But yet we’re also very forgiving, you know. We don’t hold it against God. We might question it (laugh), but ah, we’re very forgiving, and we go on. We’re willing to go on.

Sally added some humor to her comments by adding more on why they stay. She said, “Why? That’s a hard one. I don’t know, maybe we’ve got brain damage from the hail stones hittin’ us! (laugh)”

There were many conversations revolving around the women’s faith, but there were five specific stories that seem to capture the feelings of the women, and those are presented here. First, Kate (farm) in discussing her daughter, said, “She had gone out to a hillside that’s just beyond our grain bin... and was just standing around and looking, and she says, ‘It’s just a spiritual experience.’” Next, Deanne (ranch) said, “It would be nice if they [non-farm/ranch people] could get the feeling I get from watching a herd go through...
a fence, you know, through a gate into another pasture. I mean, I sit there and I watch them and it’s just kinda a peaceful feeling...It’s a gift from God, basically.”

Sally (farm/ranch) told the following story:

I’ve gotten, swathing grain, I remember one time, let’s see, it must have been my little girl was with me swathing grain one time, and it was the fall we had the best crop we ever did, and every so often, I’d be goin’ around the field, and I’d get a REALLY [her emphasis] thick spot, and I’d look kinda ahead, and I’d look at the big wind row fallin’ onto the ground, and I’d look behind, and I’d go, ‘Oh, look at that,’ and ‘Oh, thank you God, thank you God!’ I’d have tears in my eyes, and she’d look up at me and say, ‘Mom, why are you crying?’

Sally shared another poignant example, while reflecting on the role faith plays in her life, she said

You can’t get much closer to God, I don’t think, than when you work to get a cow tied up to the back of the pick up out in the pasture and she’s got this calf hangin’ out of her with ah, only one foot and part of the head sticking out, and you know that the other leg is back behind...and you struggle to get that other foot pulled ahead, so that she can have the calf, and the calf lets out a beller when it’s layin’ on the ground, you can’t help but feel pretty close to God. I mean, that helping an animal give birth is one of the greatest pleasures. It’s even more pleasurable when that cow turns around and talks to the calf in that gentle little moo, and you see the look on her face, her eyes and her expression. I mean, you don’t think cows can have expression, but they do when they’re a new mother. They definitely do. They talk to that calf, and the calf gets strong enough to get up there and suck.
Sally cried during our interview as she shared both of those examples. The final example comes from Bobbi (ranch) and it relates to how she came to be on the ranch as a young woman. She said

Even the reason I got out here is, well, that's where faith comes in. You know I was out in a canoe as a canoe guide, and I didn't know if I wanted to teach or not, and I finally decided that I would send out some resumes to teach. I sent out two, and they were both to North Dakota. I'd gone through this whole spiel in my mind thinking you know, 'God, should I teach? What do you have in store for me?' And I finally thought, well, then, alright, I will, 'cause I kinda felt like I was supposed to (laugh). You know, so then, I took it a little further, and you know it says in the Bible, 'Delight thyself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart?' So what does that mean? And I thought, 'Well, the desires of my heart, well, if I were going to teach, what would I want to teach? Well, I would like to teach girls' phy. ed. And coach gymnastics and track.' So that got out there and then I got really brave and I said, 'O.K., Lord, if you want me to do it, you just have somebody call me.' And I got in from the canoe trip...and the superintendent at the high school, he called and he said, 'Well, I have this position, and it's for girls' phy. ed., grades four through twelve, and coaching gymnastics, track and basketball (laugh)....So, that's how I got out here. But you know, it just really helps me to know that, because then I can say, 'Hey, no matter how hard it is, I'm supposed to be out here.' I don't know how else you can look at it, so it was good that it happened that way.
Bobbi met her husband while teaching, and later moved from town to the ranch. Based on these and other stories shared by the women, they clearly feel that God and faith have led them throughout their lives. Their faith is one reason why they are able to continue on as they do amidst hardship and pain.

The third major force that keeps the women going relates to how they benefit as a family by living on a farm or ranch. Many of the women discussed the enjoyment of working with their husbands. For example, when asked about what she liked most in relation to her life on the farm, Kate (farm) said, "Being able to work with Michael." Jackie (ranch), when asked about life with her husband on the ranch, said, "We enjoy working together." Deanne (ranch) said, "I like to check cows with him on horseback. We just like to ride together so much." Another example was when Marla (ranch) said, "I mean, we may work hard and it's stressful, but there's something to be said for working side-by-side with your spouse."

More than working with their husbands, the women commented on how the whole family is able to spend time together. For example, Deb (farm) said, "I guess what I always think of is how I love the fact that the kids and Will and I are together all the time, you know...It's just so family. It's really good for a family. We work together. We play together." Kate (farm) also commented on the enjoyment of "...having the kids work with us. You know, [city] families can't do that 'cause dad goes to that job, mom goes to this job, kids go to the daycare and then to school and then you have to bring it all back together." Ruth (farm) stated, "I like the family time. Um, you know, all of us can go outside and go down to the barn and play with the pigs and to me, I think it's teaching my kids something." Julie (ranch) said, "Raising your family the way you want. That to me is:
a big success.” Deb (farm) also said, “I can’t imagine a better way to raise your kids than in the whole thing of farming. You know, being able to live in the country, being able to work side-by-side with your parents, going through everything as a family. I can’t imagine a better way.” Jean (farm) shared similar ideas when she said, “I think families are much closer in this kind of community…because you work side by side…Families do more together for their livelihood.” Louella (ranch) also commented on the closeness of families. She said, “You stay close to ‘em, and our situation where we’ve stayed on a family place, we’ve also been able to stay close to grandparents and extended family, and so that’s been nice, really, to be close to both families.” Sue (farm) commented,

I think one of the important things is that with the farm operation, you’re always working with your children, you know, and I think that is an important aspect, is that you’re working side by side, you know, no matter what you’re doing, whether it’s um, outside with the fieldwork or working with the cattle.

Several of the women thought working together on a farm or ranch could teach their children important lessons. For example, Michelle (farm) said

We feel very strongly about how what a positive thing being on the farm can be for our family life for our kids. I think, like, um, I think there’s things that we can teach, like values we can teach our children, well, not that you can’t teach them not living on the farm, but I think it’s easier as far as like the chores and learning responsibility here.

Louella (ranch) shared a similar example. She said, “You can start real young with ‘em and give ‘em responsibilities.” Jackie (ranch) said that her children learned how to do small chores when they were very young, such as watering the chickens, so that they could
help and learn responsibility. Maureen (farm/ranch) said of her daughter, “It’s nice to be
with her, and you know, she also gets the experience of you know, having the chickens
and having the sheep and hogs.” Ida (farm) spoke of something other than work when she
said, “I mean, these boys and I have fun! They’re riding horse, and I mean, we have fun!”

Aside from spending time together, some women discussed how living in the
country gives their children a safe and open environment in which to grow and play. Ruth
(farm) said, “I’m in control. I know she’s not riding bike in town. I know where she’s
going to.” Julie (ranch) said it is a privilege to live in the country and to raise children in
that environment. She went on to say, “I guess you hear about gangs in the city and you
hear about different ways kids get in trouble in towns. You don’t have that out here. Um,
your kids are free to run and explore and do MANY [her emphasis] things.”

There were only three instances where the women listed drawbacks for a family
living on a farm or ranch. Maureen (farm/ranch) said that sometimes it is difficult to get
her young daughter out to socialize much because they are fairly isolated. Michelle (farm)
said that family time is very minimal during spring planting and fall harvesting, and that
this can be a strain. Finally, Julie (ranch) said, “You do spend time with your family
working, but not necessarily just when you’re having fun.”

The women in this study did not seem to think their families would have the same
opportunities to spend time together, learn responsibility, and enjoy the outdoors if they
were to leave farming and ranching. Thus, family benefits was a major aspect of why they
remained.

In addition to the major reasons of pride, faith and family benefits, there were four
other themes that emerged in coding that suggested why the women might stay in a
difficult situation. The first of these is what I labeled small luxuries. These were infrequent and quite varied occurrences, but ones that brought the women joy. They differ substantially for each woman, so they are presented in no specific order. Although some of the women talk of luxury in relation to their families, many of them focus on things they do just for themselves. For Kelly (farm/ranch), great enjoyment came from small family trips, which usually consisted of one or two nights away from the farm/ranch. She shared an example of spending one night with relatives for a nephew's graduation and how "...the kids got to play with their cousins, and to them, it was still a vacation." She also discussed camping, and how "We usually try to do that twice a summer, usually just for a night, but sometimes for two." However, they had not had the chance to go when I was there, and summer was almost over. For Jean (farm), it was finding a little extra money to spend. She said, "It's that little bit of money that doesn't come from the farm that I try to hoard for something special." That special something might have been a small vacation, like a weekend at a friend's house in Minneapolis, or a trip to another city for shopping.

Sally (farm/ranch) found great enjoyment in being able to spend money on herself and her family. It did not take much to please her. She said that a new hair clip, lipstick or cologne was something special, or when she could take her kids into a store and let them pick out "...a new pair of jeans and a package of socks." Michelle's (farm) enjoyment came from taking time for herself and doing "...some stamping and quilting, mostly craft type things." Socializing was important to Kelly (farm/ranch). She does most of this at her job in town, which she goes to once a week. Julie (ranch) discussed how much she enjoys the coffee hour at church after the service, because "You get to visit with a lot of farmers and ranchers just like you. You know, both men and women get to visit
and kinda get some of that off their chest.” Cindy (ranch) also discussed the benefits of church, saying, “A lot of things go on at our church besides church. You know, we quilt in there. We have fun in there... We celebrate birthdays, we eat fattening desserts, we laugh, we sew, and we, um, we have fun there. There’s fellowship.” Maureen (farm/ranch) also liked to get out and just “…have some coffee” with her mother or her friends. She also liked to drive places simply to enjoy the scenery. Cindy (ranch) sews to relive stress. She said, “My mom says (laugh) that I do that instead of going to therapy.” Louella (ranch) enjoys walking with friends. For Deanne (ranch), being able to sit down and read a book is a luxury because, as she said, “I LOVE [her emphasis] to read.” Jean (farm), Deb (farm) and Sue (farm) also all find enjoyment in reading. In fact, Jean says she reads “…total nonsense—romances or something, ‘cause I don’t have to think. It’s just brain-dead time.”

Several of the women, such as Jackie (ranch), Michelle (farm), Ruth (farm) and Julie (ranch) said they sometimes get up earlier than everyone else just to have some time alone. They enjoyed the time to have a cup of coffee, or get ready for work in peace. To give herself a little more time, Sue (farm) hired a housekeeper. Granted, the housekeeper only comes in for three hours every other week, but this still gives Sue some time she would otherwise not have. Jackie (ranch) discussed taking her children into town to swim with another woman. She said, “We’ve taken all the kids swimming in town once this summer and that just felt like such a luxury!” Maureen’s (farm/ranch) little girl brings her a bit of luxury “…if she [takes] a nap in the afternoon.” Julie’s (ranch) kids make her happy when she sees them enjoying themselves and doing something like “…making this big mud castle in the backyard.” I saw this mud castle, and it truly did take up most of the
backyard. Sally (farm/ranch) said that “...looking at our children grow, looking at our crops grow, looking at the calf crop, or a nice, healthy litter of pigs” all make her very happy. Ida (farm) liked to “...go to circle and have a couple of neighbors here...Those things get me away from all of this.”

Perhaps Ida’s comment sums up why these small luxuries work to keep the women on the farms and ranches. They all help the women to get away from the ongoing work and stress involved in their lives. However, it is also important to point out that all but one of the women in this study said that they do not have nearly enough time for these types of luxuries.

All of the women, at some time during the interviews, commented on how much they love nature, including the animals, the land, and the freedom to be outside in the peace and quiet. The fact that this type of comment arose in every interview shows that the love of nature may be yet another reason the women remain on their farms and ranches, even if they are struggling. I will begin by discussing their love for animals, and then will move to the love of the land and the outdoors.

Marla (ranch) said

You’re moved and touched in the spring when you see that new little baby calf born and that mom comes over and licks it, or you come out here and you see the new little spring hatch of the chicks, or whatever. It’s just a wonderful thing to be able to live and enjoy that. You take it for granted because you’re around it all the time, but there’s so much of nature that’s just...you see some really wonderful things. It moves you.
Cindy (ranch) shared a similar idea when she said,

You know every spring when the first calf is born, I’m just as moved as I was
when I first saw one born. It’s just a thrill. We beat it out there every year. We
head for the barn or for the corrals. I guess it’s just something that doesn’t
change. It’s kindof like harvest for ranchers, the calving.

Michelle (farm) also said, “It’s fun to see the new-born calves born in the spring and the
girls going out and you know, maybe it’s just the new life that comes with farming.” Ida
(farm/ranch) said “I like the animals... I just like all these little babies in the spring of the
year.” Kelly (farm/ranch), when asked about her favorite part of farm and ranch life, said,
“I like watching babies grow. I mean, that’s my thing, that’s my favorite... The animals
and harvesting.” Julie (ranch) said, “I just really enjoy animals and so it’s just kinda a self
gratification to just go out there and make sure, you know, everything’s coming right with
that calf and that heifer is o.k., and that you’re helping bringing new life into the world.”
Maureen (farm/ranch) said she likes “....the little sheep runnin’ around and the little runty
pigs (laugh), and we usually have our chickens runnin’ around most of the time.” Sally
(farm/ranch) combined helping animals give birth with other elements of nature and shared
the following:

When you’re in the middle of a snow storm, then you probably don’t feel quite as
close to nature. I mean, you feel close, but not in a happy way! And then it’s like,
‘I can’t wait, this cow damn well better take this calf,’ and I am wet and cold and
miserable, and now we gotta get a trailer out here somehow and get it back to the
barn, and hope that it all turns out o.k., because I’m hungry and I’m tired (laugh)
and I’ve already been out here for twelve hours and they didn’t forecast this storm
(laugh). But then at the end of the day, when everything turns out good, even after a long day like that, you come into the house, you’re tired, you’re cold, you’re hungry, but you feel good. It’s a satisfaction.

In addition to the animals, the women discussed their love of nature in general. For example, Julie (ranch) tried to explain what she meant by a “love of the land.” She said, “It is SO [her emphasis] hard to describe... Um, just all the different smells, the sights, the sounds, seeing you know, wildlife born out here. I just sometimes can’t put a word on it.” Bobbi (ranch), in trying to explain her favorite aspect of ranch life, said I guess the country itself. I like the ruralness. I truly do love being part of the land. You know, you take care of it, and you know, when it gets so dry like this, I just sort of hurt for it. You know, you want it to rain so bad (laugh)! And it’s probably because I’ve worked on it a lot in my life. I’ve been on it, and I love to get off the tractor and take my shoes off and run around in the cultivated field, you know, and I’ve picked those darn rocks off of fields like you can’t believe (laugh)!

And harvesting, you know, it’s such a great time, to be able to harvest, and then, it’s realizing, too, that ‘Gol, I’m just one little person that’s gonna walk across this land for thousands of years, you know.’ I mean the land is so awesome, it’s so huge, it’s just, you know, my life span, compared to ITS [her emphasis] life span, you know. How can you not respect it? How can you not have a very humble attitude towards it?

Other women also tried, with some difficulty, to explain their love for the land and nature. Michelle (farm) said, “I’m trying to figure out how to word it. Probably the thing that I like the most, it’s not really a thing, but it’s like, the changing of the seasons.” Deanne
(ranch) said, “I just like the land in general. I don’t even know if it’s this land so much as that I just love land in general...I don’t know. It’s just such a major part of everyone’s life.”

Some women discussed the peacefulness of the country. For example, Sue (farm) said her favorite part of farm life was “...the quiet and serenity of it. You can go outside, and I just LOVE [her emphasis] walking, and just the silence...The beauty of nature, I guess that has to be one of the wonderful aspects about living in rural North Dakota is the quiet and peacefulness.” Julie (ranch) also said she really enjoys the Scenery, the landscape I guess. It’s a peace and tranquility kind of thing. Like, when you come in off the prairie, and the prairie’s kind of flat, and all of a sudden you look out over that big horizon and these big rolling hills, and I never get tired of looking at that. It’s just always refreshing and that’s what I like. That and the animals. That’s a close one (laugh).

Ida (farm/ranch) also said, “It’s quieter than most places. I like the openness of it.” Maureen (farm/ranch) discussed the scenery when she said, “I like the weather. Ever seen a sunset out here? They’re gorgeous.”

Assertions one and two showed that the women may sometimes find nature and the animals frustrating, but, as shown in this assertion, they also find joy in these parts of farming and ranching at least some of the time. As Sally (farm/ranch) said, “Like when you asked me awhile back what my favorite part is, I don’t know if there’s any one thing I can look at. I’ve found enjoyment and frustration in all of ‘em, and there’s risks with every one.”
Aside from the information already discussed, a sense of independence gives farming and ranching families another reason to stay where they are. For example, Louella (ranch) said, "I guess probably the best part of it you learn after so many years, is your independence, I guess, and making your own decisions... You get used to that.” Cindy (ranch) said, “We have good years and bad years that aren’t so good, you know. But we can kinda drop what we’re doing at 3:00 in the afternoon and go to town. We’re our own bosses.” Sue (farm) said, “That’s why we farm, you know, you’re your own boss, and if you lost that, they you’re just working for a big company (laugh).” Maureen (farm/ranch) said she likes that they have been “...self sufficient,” and that “All these people on these farms are independent, and they don’t really have to depend on an outside job, you know.” She added that, unfortunately, “...now it’s gettin’ to be that they do.” Deb (farm) said she liked the fact that “There’s a lot of benefits. You’re your own boss. You’ve got vacation whenever you want it.” Although Deb said this, she also mentioned that they do not often have the chance to vacation due to busy schedules. Jean, (farm) in talking about her husband, said, “It’s pretty laid back, because he can set his own hours, as long as the work gets done, and it does, you know.” Perhaps Marla’s (ranch) example shows this freedom and independence best. She explained that they have

The freedom to wake up in the morning and decide what we should do that morning, you know. I mean, you’re so rushed. There’s always so much to do all the time, but it’s not the same as being employed when you have to get to that job. Here we can say, ‘Oh, it’s raining today. Let’s go to town.’ Or, like Thursday, I think it was, it was beautiful, and we’d planned on hauling hay, and we went and got one load and we came home and my husband said, ‘It’s too nice. We can be in
the cab of the pick up anytime.’ So we changed and we fixed a fence and we moved cattle, you know. I mean, when you’re out here you’ve got that flexibility to just, you know, enjoy the days and make your own decisions. You don’t have somebody else tellin’ you what to do, even though you do. I mean, you’ve got the Forest Service tellin’ you what and where you can run your cattle and you still have Uncle Sam tellin’ you how much you can, you know, you’ve got your creditors and all that, but you’re still your own boss when it comes to what you do in the day time.

One aspect of independence discussed by the women that stood out for me as an interviewer was that most of it seemed to revolve around the males in the household. Most of the women did have some sort of off-farm or off-ranch employment. They did not have quite as much flexibility as the men. Additionally, my data did not clearly indicate who made major decisions about what to do and when to do it.

The final reason the women may stay on their farms or ranches is their hope for a better future. As Sally (farm/ranch) said, they are “...always hoping for that good year.” Or, as Sue (farm) said, “We live by faith and hope.” Kelly (farm/ranch) said,

I hope times get easier, you know, um, financially...I hope some day that we can have a nice farm. I’ve always, you know, I like flowers, but I can’t grow any, ‘cause I can’t water. I hope that changes some day and I can have, like flower beds and stuff around my new house (laugh).

Kelly is the woman who hauls her water from the well in the field because the water in the house is not fit to drink. Kelly went on to explain that
You gotta know that when you get to a certain point, you just aren’t gonna make the payment and so you can’t buy anymore, but the thing is, people aren’t doing that. You know, they’re always lookin’ for next year to be better, and we do that, too. Yea, everybody does, you know, in farming. Everybody thinks, ‘Well, maybe next year will be better and we’ll have a bumper crop and the prices will go up and we’ll be able to make up for what we couldn’t pay last year.’ But it’s not always the case.

Cindy (ranch) shared a similar idea when she said, “People are looking for somebody to do something. You know, they’re looking for the light at the end of the tunnel, ‘cause we wanna stay in this business. We love it….I hope we can be here ten years from now.”

Jackie (ranch) expressed some hope by saying, “I think things’ll come up.” Louella (ranch) said, “We hope that we’re big enough that we can stay, you know, stay a unit.” Jean (farm) expressed hope for farm and ranch people in a broader sense. She said, “I hope that those kinds of people will be able to continue on, and some of them will probably get bigger, but they’re still individuals.” Finally, Bobbi (ranch) said, “I really want rural America to stay alive, and that means people making it on farms [and] people making it on ranches.”

As this discussion of reasons for staying on farms and ranches has shown, there are many positive aspects of the women’s lives that work to keep them where they are. They clearly find joy and strength in the aspects of farm and ranch life discussed here.

This chapter integrated the voices of the women involved in this study into three distinct yet related themes. Each of these themes, those of being extremely busy with physical work, mental exhaustion due to stress, and reasons why the women stay despite
the hardships, came together to show the complexity of the women involved in the study. They also showed how the women shared many similar experiences in their struggles to make their farms, ranches and families successful.
CHAPTER V

RESULTS, BENEFITS, REFLECTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter begins with a summary and discussion of the results of the study. The summary leads into a discussion on how this study may benefit the women involved as well as others. The chapter concludes with my own thoughts and reflections on the process, including my recommendations for further practice and research.

Summary and Discussion of Results

This discussion begins with a brief summary of the study results. It then includes an extended discussion on the women and their unique situations as well as that of farming and ranching as a whole. The specific focus of this analysis considers how we may view their situations in a manner which requires us to listen to their voices in our efforts to serve and work in collaboration with the women through various courses of action.

The data show that the women involved in farming and ranching in this study work very hard at physically-demanding tasks to maintain their chosen lifestyles. Additionally, they are mentally exhausted due to heavy work loads and multiple stressors. The literature shows that demands on farming and ranching families are increasing as they must struggle to make a living from the land. The women in this study seemed willing to do almost anything to keep their farms and ranches actively operating. These factors lead me to conclude that the women’s overall health and well-being may be in jeopardy. If nothing changes, the women may work and worry themselves into poor health, if they have not
already done so. There were only two women in this study whose families did not rely on their farming operations for living expenses, and perhaps these women were the exception to the other stories concerning hard work and mental exhaustion.

Although the women in this study may risk their overall health, they provided thoughtful and understandable reasons for the choices they have made in trying to remain on their farms and ranches. They found great satisfaction in working with the land and the animals. They were very proud of who they were and what they were doing, including how they were able to raise their families because of where they lived and worked. Although they showed despair for current conditions, the women had great faith in God and hope for the future of family-based agriculture in general. As was shown in the second assertion, many of the women questioned whether or not leaving the farm or ranch would be in their family’s best interest. The families, with few exceptions, were clearly struggling, and the decision to stay or leave is always a serious one, but one which must be considered by many of these families if they are to have some security or respite from their many difficulties. Unless their bankers and creditors give them no option, only the women and their families can decide if they must leave.

At the beginning of assertion number three, I stated that one might wonder why the women remain on their farms or ranches. However, asking why they stay forces the burden of choice on the women. Framing our thoughts or questions in this manner seems to blame the women for staying in difficult or unhealthy situations, just as we may ask abused women why they remain in their abusive relationships. Clearly the women in this study do important work and are vital to the success of farms and ranches. Perhaps rather
than asking why the women do not leave, it would be wiser to ask, “What have others
done to force the women involved in this study to consider such difficult choices?” When
the question changes, we can begin to engage in productive discussion and action on
multiple levels designed to serve these women and farming and ranching families in
general. This discussion should be based on the women’s voices.

As the study progressed, it became obvious that the women needed their voices to
be heard by others. They needed to know that somebody was paying attention to their
plight as well as to the generally poor conditions of farming and ranching across the
country. This showed through their comments and their willingness to participate in the
study. The women involved in farming and ranching in this study not only showed that
they want their voices and stories to be heard, but that they should be heard. These
aspects of the study were shown in a variety of ways, and they are discussed in turn.
While some evidence comes from the transcriptions, much of the supporting material for
my claims here comes from my own observations and notes. This is especially true when I
discuss the passion shown during the interviews through the women’s nonverbal behavior.
Thus, this discussion is highly subjective, and relies on nuances, feelings, and hunches in
addition to the actual words of the women. However, subjective measurement is an
integral part of qualitative research, no matter how rigorous one may complete analysis of
the data through coding (see, for example, Fetterman, 1989; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992;
Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Additionally, as mentioned in Chapter I, I have taught speech
communications, including public speaking, for years, and while it was certainly not my
job here to evaluate the women's speaking abilities, my years of practice have helped me
to notice subtleties in verbal and nonverbal behavior.

After reviewing my notes, memos and the coded transcriptions, I was struck by
how much the women seemed to want to be heard by somebody—by anybody. As Julie
(ranch) said, "I just think it's so important that you're doing this...I'm hoping that you're
finding that people are really willing to tell their story, and almost to anyone who will
listen, because it's gotta be told, and people need to hear it. They need to hear what's
really going on out here." She also said, "I would hope...for people like you to tell
people." Deb (farm) said we, "...just want everybody to know that we don't WANT [her
emphasis] everything given to us...We just wanna get by." Additionally, Sue (farm) said,
"I think that maybe that's one of the efforts that through your study is to educate people in
the role that we play."

One of the main reasons I think the women wanted to be heard deals with their
sheer willingness to share information with a virtual stranger. As discussed in Chapter III,
I was told by my initial gatekeeper that I may not be trusted, being an outsider from a
university setting. This may have been true for the women who did not consent to be
interviewed, but two thirds of them did. At one of the meetings, a woman said, "Give me
the paper. Where do I sign up?" Most of the women needed no prodding or
encouragement. They came forth willingly to share their feelings and experiences.

Not only did the women consent to be interviewed, they were willing to share
some very personal information about their lives and their families. The women discussed
depression, losses, hardship, touching moments, personal finances, family relationships and
great concern for all things rural with depth and feeling. At the time of the interviews, they could not know exactly what I would do with the information they were giving to me. This showed trust, but more importantly, it showed how much they wanted their message to get out to others. Additionally, although at the beginning of each interview I reviewed the consent form with them, most of them did not even read it. They signed it immediately, and I had to remind them to take their copy with them at the end of the interviews. Of eighteen women, only two wanted to be certain about anonymity in the final report. The women were more concerned with getting the word out than with protecting their identities.

In assertion number one, I explained how busy the women were. However, their busy schedules did not make the women hesitate to spend an entire morning, afternoon or evening with me to discuss their experiences and to show me their farms and/or ranches. This was further proof of their desire to be heard by someone. For women who often worked from before dawn to well after dusk simply to complete basic tasks related to farm and ranch life, taking between two and four hours of their time to talk to me showed their wish to be heard.

In addition to the actual interviews, most of the women inquired about the results of the study. They were interested in what I concluded based on the interviews. The women wanted to see what would be presented to others concerning their experiences. However, they did not tell me what I should be doing. They trusted me to make sound judgments and to represent them fairly and accurately. This also showed their desire to be heard.
Finally, some of the women did not seem to want these interviews to be the last of our interactions. For example, one woman sent me additional information after I had completed the interviews. She sent me a typed letter that obviously took time and effort. Furthermore, most of the women invited me back into their homes in the future. We discussed other aspects of their lives that could and should be studied, and how these future interactions may lead to a better understanding of the experiences of women involved in farming and ranching. Not only was I invited back for further interviews, I was invited to visit, to be a part of a calf branding day, to ride fence lines, or to walk through fields. These invitations clearly showed a willingness and desire to share their lives with someone who might be able to pass along their stories. A last indication of their desire to be heard beyond the initial interviews came from what I called the interview after the interview. Once the tape recorder was turned off and I was packing up to leave, the women continued to share pertinent information about their lives. At first, this did not surprise me as I thought they may be sharing sensitive information that they did not want recorded. However, this was not always the case. Much of the talk was of ordinary events, and if more personal information was shared, I was often asked to write it down somewhere so I would not forget it.

The women in this study were clearly willing to share their information. This willingness showed a desire to be heard by someone. The women needed to be heard; they needed a way to transport their experiences beyond their own communities to a larger audience. Perhaps my study was one small way in which to accomplish this task.
In addition to wanting to be heard, I have concluded that the women of this study should be heard. Not only should others hear them, but we should listen carefully to what they have to say. As shown in Chapter II, the current experiences of the women in North Dakota involved in farming and ranching are under-represented in the scholarly, qualitative literature. This under-representation in itself should be reason enough to listen to the voices of the women. All humans deserve to be heard in some respect. However, in addition to the under-representation, the women of this study are very passionate, knowledgeable and highly involved in something about which they feel is largely misunderstood by the general public, and which they feel is on the verge of disappearing forever. This something, farming and ranching, is a very important part of the identity of North Dakota and the United States as a whole. Indeed, perhaps part of the reason why the women remain on their farms and ranches, despite the hardships involved, is their desire to preserve a greater good, the good of family-based farms and ranches. People should hear about who the women are and what they are experiencing if we are to more fully understand this segment of the population and that for which they work, speak, and live.

To begin explaining why the women’s voices should be heard, I will discuss some of the passion they feel for their way of life. Jean (farm) said that her brother-in-law had recently asked her, “How’s farming going?” She had replied, “It’s going rotten!...Would you be willing to accept the wages they got in the thirties for doing what you do?...Not a chance!...Who can live on that?” Kate (farm) said, “I’m totally committed to family farm agriculture. But the effect it’s having on my life right now is totally wearing, and I often
wish that we were doing something else, where it was just a nine to five job five days a week.” Cindy (ranch) said, “You know, we were better off ten years ago than we are now…Our indebtedness is higher than it’s ever been.” Ann (farm) said, “Everything we spend is off our operation loan, and we aren’t getting ahead. Every year we’re not going behind so much, but we’re not gettin’ ahead.” Sally (farm/ranch) said

It just seems more bleak now than ever because you’ve got almost every commodity that isn’t bringing what it should to make reasonable profits. You know, it used to be that if livestock was down, grain was up, and if grain was down, then livestock was up. But now it’s been ongoing so long.

In addition to a financially poor outlook, the women also discussed their ideas on agriculture in general with deep feeling. Kate (farm) said,

I think that people need to know that if we don’t keep these family farmers out here, um, the whole rural society is just gonna disappear…[and] I think we’re losing something in our society. Part of our society is going to be missing and I think the whole rest of society is gonna suffer because of that. I think we need to have those roots out here. I think we need that connection with the soil…They need to realize how important we are out here.

Julie (ranch) said

People need to hear it. They need to hear what’s really going on out here, and why it is, and how, just how sad it is to drive through some of these little towns and see that they’re, the businesses are leaving, they’re vacant. What was once a lively community is, is dying now, and I just think that is just so sad.
Julie then explained how when the farming and ranching families leave, the small towns begin to suffer from a lack of business. Cindy (ranch) said, “We should say a lot about what’s happening, and we haven’t said enough for a lot of years, and so, if we have a chance, we should say a lot.” Finally, in their explanations of what is happening in agriculture with the disappearance of small family operations, Julie (ranch) said, “You have to accept change, and yet I don’t believe that’s the right kind of change.”

The women’s passion did not only show in their feelings of negativity on the current situation in farming and ranching; it also showed in the way they discussed their love of, and connection to, the land on which they live and work. Julie (ranch) said

I would really like people outside of farming and ranching to understand why we’re here and how much we love the land and what a struggle it is and... just why you do the things you do on a farm and ranch, and um, just to understand the love of the land and why it’s so hard to quit or get out or um, you know, that it just wouldn’t be that easy for us to get out.

Julie went on to explain why it is difficult to leave when she said,

This is our calling, and it’s not just a business. It’s a way of life. It’s a love of the land. Um, we raise our families IN [her emphasis] our business, where I can’t really say, and I guess I don’t know, but people in other businesses don’t necessarily raise their families right within their business. Here you’re doing and working and playing all within your business on a ranch or farm. Um, it’s very different. It’s hard to describe, but that’s why it’s so hard for people to leave, or have to leave, or sell out because, you know, there’s all those other things in there.
Other women also tried to explain the difficulty of leaving something that is so much a part of them. For example, Sally (farm/ranch) said, “We’ve had bankers tell us, ‘Well, you know, you guys are young. Why don’t you just quit and go get jobs?’ Well, your roots are deep in farming. It’s something you love.” Deanne (ranch) said,

When you lose a farm or a ranch, it’s not just losing your job. It’s losing your life because you live here. It’s not just losing your way of making a living. It’s losing a way of living, you know...And now it’s not that one business is going out of business, but the whole farming and ranching in the United States is dying, you know. There’s land for sale all over the place. It’s just, um, it’s a way of life that’s dying.

Ida (farm/ranch) explained, “Farming is more like a way of, you got your whole house and everything is a part of the farm. Everything is involved. In town, you got your business, but your house is separate.” Jean (farm) said, “It seems like if you’re born onto a farm, you’re born into a farm. The farm is just born into you.” Deb (farm) said, “It isn’t just a nine to five job for us. It’s who we are.” She went on to say, “Farming isn’t the business part of it. It’s the whole way of life, you know, and so that’s why people don’t get it unless they are a part of it.” Finally, Jackie (ranch) said,

This is not only our job. This is our whole life, where, I suppose a business in town...you do have a home away from your job in town, and you probably could pick up and find a job someplace else that related in that same type of business, and maybe you wouldn’t own that business, but you could still get into a job in a related business, similar to what you lost. If we lose our place, some people, this
is all they've known their whole lives... If they lost their place, they lost their house
and everything. We have to start plum over... That's where it comes that people
really don't understand what farming and ranching is all about and what the people
and place are all about.

Many of the women shared their ideas on how people outside farming and
ranching simply did not understand what they were experiencing and why they continue to
do what they do. For example, Sally (farm/ranch) said, "I think people that aren't
involved in agriculture don't realize the stress there is. I had one person tell me one time,
'Well, boy, it must be nice to be a farmer. What you do is go to FHA and get a loan and
buy a place, and away you go.'" She went on to say, "There's so many different issues,
that it's not as easy as it sounds." She gave a specific example and explained

There's people that look at farming that don't farm, and they might say, 'Oh, I
would LOVE [her emphasis] to farm. That would be so neat—such a laid-back
way of life. It would be so neat to just get out there in the hayfield, or take a walk
through the meadow.' There's a lot of time where they wouldn't have time to take
a walk through the meadow, unless the pick up runs out of gas on the north forty!

Cindy (ranch) said,

I think that sometimes people have this, they just don't realize how much goes into
ranching and they think that you just kinda ride and look at your cattle, and never
have to worry about them, and gather them up in the fall. I think they have almost
a romantic idea about it. And it IS [her emphasis] around here during calving and
haying, but it's really pretty darn hard work.
Kate (farm) explained how even some people who work closely with farmers do not understand what they do. She said, “One time one of the bankers said, ‘Well, what you farmers expect? You only work three months out of the year.’” When this came up in the interview, I actually had to ask Kate if the banker was being facetious. She assured me he was not. Sue (farm) said, “I don’t think they have an understanding of our [women’s] role in the farming operation. I really don’t, and the amount of work that we do. [They] probably just think that we stay in the house and cook (laugh).”

Some of the women discussed others’ misperceptions in relation to financial issues. Deb (farm) explained

You know, they [others] say they understand the farm crisis, but they don’t understand that if you get rid of all the family farmers and you put Cargill or Harvest States in charge of everything, you’re gonna be paying $4.00 for a loaf of bread. It might not happen overnight, but you’ll see it before you know it.

Louella (ranch), Julie (ranch), Ann (farm), Ida (farm), Bobbi (ranch), Deanne (ranch), and Kate (farm) all discussed similar issues of how if corporate farming takes over, prices for food will rise in this country. They all explained that big corporations care about the bottom line, which is money, and if they have a large enough monopoly over food production, we will see prices rise in the stores. Kelly (farm/ranch) discussed how people outside farming and ranching do not understand how much producers are being paid in relation to the existing prices in the stores. She explained,

When we sold some sows this winter, we got $28 for our sows, and that same exact week we were shopping and I showed Jim this ham, a tear-drop ham, and
they are expensive anyway, but this ham was $44! We sold a whole sow for $28!

I don't think people are understanding that, either. They just, they just don't GET [her emphasis] it, you know.

Jackie (ranch) also discussed finances, but rather than specific prices, she spoke of government assistance. She said

You're always hearing things on the news, and it makes it sound like farmers and ranchers are just babies just tryin' to make an easy buck from the government, you know, and I think that's what people think of us. I don't think they really know how hard we work to keep our places going and I think that's sad. I think they need to come out and find out what a cow is!

Michelle (farm) discussed finances and the option to sell out in relation to others' misperceptions. She said, "The land means a lot. It's not just something that you buy and sell, like a stock or bond...Everything does not have a price, and people don't get it...People that don't have that mentality about the land, that don't have that bond, it's very different." Bobbi (ranch) talked of how other people should come out and experience some of what the women know so that they might better understand the connection. She said, "I wish everybody could somehow experience the land. It's so wide open, you know (laugh), and what does that mean? Being on the land and nurturing it, harvesting from it. I don't think you would be the same."

Some of the women discussed others' misperceptions in relation to environmental issues. For example, Marla (ranch) said that she wished for "...the environmentalists that are so hard on us to realize that we are environmental, too. We are caretakers of the land
and the animals that are here. We don’t, um, we’re not the enemies they think we are.”

Bobbi (ranch) gave an extended explanation of their role as environmentalists when she said

I feel bad when environmentalists claim the name so quickly. You know, to be a true environmentalist, you have had to live on the land, to be a part of it. You know, it would be like me going in and telling somebody how to run their city, and say, ‘I think you should introduce rats again, ‘cause that was native, that was native to the city sewer system, and look at how much garbage they would eat, you know.’…Introducing more prairie dogs here is like that…about the city, there’s so much pollution. There’s crime. I mean, maybe the cities shouldn’t ever be allowed to get so big. Um, maybe things would run a whole lot better in the cities if you didn’t let them get so big. Or, maybe, you should only be allowed one car, or if you have two cars, you can only drive one or the other, but not both on the same day. I feel like they’re coming out here claiming to be environmentalists, and telling us what we should be doing, when they haven’t even looked in their own backyard as to how they can make their place better.

Bobbi later said, “I think people really need to take a good look at the way things are before they start giving out advice as to how to fix the problem.” Deanne (ranch) shared similar sentiments on the people she labeled environmentalists when she said they seem to think, “I’ll sit here in my little concrete city and save the environment out in Montana, because that’s more important than where I live.” She said this seems to come mainly from her younger generation, and “Everybody’s kinda hypocritical, and I’m ashamed of
that. I'm ashamed of my generation, because the people in it seem to think, 'I'm just gonna do whatever's good for me.'"

If these women's perceptions are accurate, many people outside of farming and ranching do not fully understand who they are, what they do, or why they do it. This is yet another reason why we should listen to their stories.

A final specific reason why we should listen to these women is that they are well-informed about and deeply involved in all issues related to farming and ranching. As discussed in Chapters I and II, many of the current survey studies do not distinguish who in a given household is answering the questions. It is important to understand that the women involved in farming and ranching know the issues, and are capable of adding valuable information to the grand conversation on agriculture. For example, the women, as already shown, could discuss all matters of finance in relation to agriculture. All but a few of them spoke with clarity and understanding of specific pricing issues, world markets, operating loans, government assistance, financial cycles in agriculture over the past decades, foreign trade and its effect on prices, and the major agricultural corporations in the United States.

When asked how they came to be so knowledgeable about such a wide variety of issues, the women listed a multitude of organizations to which they belong, publications they read, or community events that help to keep them well-informed. For example, Julie (ranch) said, "We get a lot of reading publications, a lot of newspapers, so we find out that way. There's some real good ones that we get that I feel are on top of the issues." Some of the women belong to Farmers' Union, or a grazing association, or they get
information from the Extension Service. They listen to news reports on the television or radio. They also learn about pricing issues from the grain elevators. Other women discussed learning about the issues through their jobs in credit unions, government assistance offices, or Extension services. Some get information from the internet. As Cindy (ranch) said, “We’re hooked up to the internet. We get e-mails. I e-mail my senator. I e-mail my representative.” One woman had attended an international conference on women in agriculture in Washington, D.C. In addition to these activities, the women were often the ones in the household responsible for bookwork and getting paperwork ready for meetings at the bank. I think they all would agree with Louella (ranch), who said, “I’m learning all the time.”

The women discussed these parts of farming and ranching along with other hardships and pleasures with deep feeling. My sense of their passion and emotion came from observations made during our interviews as well as from a few of their comments. For example, several of the women shed tears, or had tears in their eyes, when they spoke of their own struggles or those of farming and ranching in general. Most of them did not stop talking when they cried. It was as if they wanted to get the stories out, even if they were painful. The crying went with pained facial expressions, cracked voices, and quiet speaking tones.

Occasionally, one of the women would be sharing a particularly moving or personal story and would ask me to not include it in the study, or to at least turn off the tape recorder. Although I think the women wanted their stories told in general, some were simply too painful, too recent, or would provide too much identifying information in
my study. As was shown in assertion three, these are a proud people. Some of the women did not want their peers to know their specific struggles if the study were to be published in their reading material at a later date.

The women seemed to spend ample time thinking of their answers. They provided me with thoughtful information and poignant examples. As they shared, there were sometimes long pauses and far-off looks. I recall one specific interview where we sat on the deck of the house in the late afternoon drinking lemonade as we talked. It was very windy, warm, and the woman seemed exhausted. Her voice was quiet, she often looked off into the distance with what could only be labeled sad, tired eyes, and told of how she thought we were losing rural America for a variety of reasons.

In addition to the sadness and despair I saw and heard during the interviews, we also shared laughter. The women showed their senses of humor when they discussed some specific experiences they had in relation to farming and ranching. Sometimes there was great vocal variety and excitement in their voices. Their words and voices alternated between quick and slow, or soft and loud. Some words and phrases were slightly mumbled, while others were quite clear.

The expressiveness with which the women spoke showed their passion and sincerity about their experiences. Had they simply consented to the interviews to be polite, or to take some kind of a break from their routines, I doubt I would have seen or heard what I have discussed here. If the women are indeed passionate and sincere about the subject matter, they should be heard by others. We have no way of knowing what
kind of impact they may make on others if we do not take the time and effort necessary to listen to them.

If, indeed, the women want to and should be heard, and if they are, as they say, largely misunderstood by the general public, it is appropriate to include the words they used to describe themselves. Toward the end of each interview, I asked the women to fill in the end of the sentence “I am...” The women’s responses were widely varied, but they seem to capture the spirit of this overlooked population. Their responses are listed below:

Deb (farm): “I think that I’m a wife and a mother and a partner. And probably just a little bit pissed off... If people ask me what my job is, I say farming/ranching, because this takes a lot of time, even if I’m not out on the tractor, it’s still what I do, and so, to think that you can work at that full-time and still have to work somewhere else to just to buy groceries and stuff, it kinda makes you mad. It makes me mad.”

Deanne (ranch): “I am used to responsibility, but not this much.”

Ida (farm): “I was his right hand man... when you fill out these forms, I write farmer. I mean, farmwife, you know what people think of that. It’s somebody who cooks and makes meals, and I don’t just do that. I actually do the stuff, so I write down farmer.”

Jackie (ranch): “Versatile. Open-minded. I think I am very capable of learning whatever needs to be learned.”

Bobbi (ranch): “I am very much a serious advocate for rural America... I am happy to be a woman.”

Sally (farm/ranch): “I’m strong. I mean, not muscle-wise, although I used to be pretty strong that way (laugh). No, I mean strong-willed.”
Sue (farm): “I’m not only a farm wife, but I’m a professional person (laugh). I’m a wife. I’m a mother. I guess I feel good about all the positions that I hold. I’m a leader. I work in the community.”

Julie (ranch): “I am a very lovable person. I am very compassionate and I’m very, um, honest, and very carefree at times.”

Jean (farm): “I am happy—not necessarily...economy-wise, and how my husband feels about farming and stuff, I’m not real content there—but by and large, I’m a happy person...I don’t ask for a lot of things to make me happy.”

Ruth (farm): “I am tired. I have a wonderful husband and family, and I feel that I’m very lucky...We’re intelligent...A lot of farm women have a lot of good qualities, and you just don’t see a lot of it because they’re the ones doing the volunteer jobs. They’re the ones cleaning the churches and cooking and bringing the meal.”

Ann (farm): “I think I’m anxious a lot because I worry about the crops...We’ve been very fortunate through the years.”

Cindy (ranch): “I’m lucky to live where I do. I am tired. I am tired not like one or two nights sleep deprivation tired; I am tired of, of um, tired of the load. Um, I am capable. I am proud of my family. I am proud of our ranch. I am proud of our community. I am a Christian.”

Kelly (farm/ranch): “I am happy to live on a farm. I hope it can keep going.”

Michelle (farm): “I’m thinking, I am tired (laugh). I think that I’m happy, you know.”

Maureen (farm/ranch): “I am an independent farm person...self-sufficient, you know.”
Louella (ranch): “I think I am learning all the time...I’m generally happy with my lifestyle, it’s just, I am worried about what’s gonna come in the future, you know. It’s kinda hard right now.”

Kate (farm): “I am totally committed to family farm agriculture, but the effect it’s having on my life right now is, is totally wearing, and I often wish that we were doing something else, where it was just a nine to five job five days a week.”

Marla (ranch): “I’m a very lucky person to have a very loving husband who’s a Christian so that we raised our children in a Christian home and three wonderful daughters who have married Christian people—two of ‘em have anyway, and they are going the right way. I guess I can feel that I’m rich that way. I mean, even though we’ve had a lot of hard times, um, sometimes the struggles make you closer, and stronger people, than you would be if you hadn’t had troubles.”

Because the women’s voices need to and should be heard, it is especially important to realize that they have been overlooked and under-represented in the qualitative literature on their current experiences in North Dakota. When this occurs, we do them and others a disservice as they are an integral part of North Dakota’s core identity. Additionally, we continue to operate in a traditionally patriarchal manner by ignoring women in our scholarly efforts. The women of this study had much to say, and they said it passionately, intelligently, and thoughtfully. For all of these reasons, their voices deserve to be heard, and we should try to understand them.

If the women need to and should be heard, this study should serve the women involved, as well as all under-represented women. It shows, even if in a small way, that
they are worth listening to, and what they have to say is important. Hill (1991) wrote that "Farm women have a far more exciting and important agenda defined for themselves than helping academics acquire Ph.D.s and earn tenure." This is clearly true of the women in this study, but perhaps my work can somehow help them achieve their goals simply by recognizing them as valuable humans without whom agriculture would be markedly different. When we listen to their voices, we can begin to take action for and with the women involved in this study as well as farm and ranch women and their families in general.

After much thought and reflection, I found that the women's stories suggest several courses of action for others. First, I should meet with the women who participated in the study in the near future to obtain their reactions to my interpretations. Indeed, my initial gatekeeper from the social services organization has offered to help organize a weekend conference with the women within the following year. An interactive meeting would further clarify the issues most important to these women. This is especially important if the women, as previously discussed, feel that others seem to largely misunderstand them and their way of life. Additionally, if the women are the focus of this study, perhaps they should be the ones who recommend at least some courses of actions for others designed to serve and aid them and family farms and ranches in general.

Although the women are the focus of the study, it is possible, with appropriate outlets for the information, that this study could benefit the women through various organizations working to serve them. For example, North Dakota State University is a land-grant university. Part of the school's mission is to serve the people of the state.
Through an increased understanding of the population represented here, the university may better serve, educate, and communicate with the women through courses, extension work, and various campus services. The same could be said for social service organizations, government agencies, and health-care organizations. Communication is key here, for without direct communication with the women, we can not accurately understand their needs and desires. The communication could be formal, through scholarly studies, planned conferences or other meetings. It could also be informal, in that we take the time to get to know the women from farms and ranches we meet in various organizations.

This discussion considered viewing the women and their stories in such a way that we feel compelled to take action with and for them on a variety of levels. The women need to, and should be, heard by others in a thoughtful and careful manner so that we might work with them in our efforts to create better futures for them, as well as for farming and ranching families in general.

Benefits of the Study

There are three major benefits of this study. First, some might argue that all of the results presented here demonstrated that the women represented the basic human condition, meaning they felt, thought and experienced what all humans experience at some time, such as hardship, stress, exhaustion, hope, despair, and happiness. However, the women studied here experienced these things under the unique circumstances of farming and ranching as they are progressing through great changes which may alter the face of agriculture forever. This study showed one aspect of one group of people in North Dakota involved in this atmosphere of change. However, studying even this small
population of women leads to increased understanding which may show in the greater body of literature on the subject. It may add only a small piece to the grand puzzle, but it does add a piece. Perhaps my results will be contradicted, expanded upon, or reiterated in other studies, but this does not make these results any less useful. Thus, it may be a starting point for other researchers as they explore this topic.

Next, we can see, through the discussion of the results, that research focused on participants may work to serve them as well as other researchers and the scholarly community. Research aimed at understanding people through qualitative methods such as interviewing may further our understanding of those who allow us into their lives in some manner. This understanding may lead to productive courses of action for the participants and others.

Finally, women are benefited on a larger scale when we work to understand and share their under-represented lives. We can create more space for them in all conversations and courses of action by respecting them through our willingness to listen and learn from them.

**Personal Thoughts and Reflections**

I found this study to be challenging, humbling, enlightening, moving, sad, joyous and troubling. It was challenging, humbling and enlightening in that I am a novice researcher, who knew virtually nothing about agriculture or large research projects up until three years ago. I had a lot to learn, and I still do. Perhaps one of the greatest personal lessons was the humbling effect the experience had on me. I was humbled by my lack of expertise as well as by the women involved in the study. They continually amazed
and surprised me by their various skills, schedules, and ability to communicate their stories in the manner they did.

The stories shared by the women were moving, sad and joyous, so much so that I found the entire research process a bit troubling. I had difficulty separating myself enough from the women and the issues in order to write about them clearly and accurately. I understand that in all research, the perspective of the analyst shows through in some form or another. However, I was surprised by how much the entire process affected me. When I wrote of the women crying, laughing or looking far off into the distance, I was often doing the same. I found that I had to step back and take some time away from the data to be able to write about it with any accuracy or clarity.

Even with my efforts to step away from the study to some degree, I know that the women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota are extremely complex individuals with feelings and experiences that I could never fully understand. For this reason, I know that in some ways, I have failed them. Perhaps I missed something, or reason, I know that in some ways, I have failed them. Perhaps I missed something, or read too deeply into certain responses. No matter how I tried, I could not get into their heads. I could only do my best to represent them fairly and accurately. I hope I have done my job well.

Recommendations for Further Research

Although recommendations for further study could be endless, four are presented here based on my specific experiences. First, this topic and population should be revisited often by scholars and others as the changes in agriculture are occurring at an extremely rapid pace. For example, some of the information presented in Chapter II is already
outdated. Furthermore, although I claimed in Chapter II that qualitative studies on the current conditions of women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota are scarce, there is a growing body of literature on the topic coming from various perspectives and disciplines. For example, Green and Coomber (2000) did an interview study with farmers and ranchers in North Dakota for their book *Unwanted bread: The challenge of farming and ranching*. It is a pictorial, with accompanying text. While the study differs slightly from mine in that it did not focus on women specifically, it does add to the body of literature on the topic. Recent studies and the resulting literature may create a better understanding of the women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota.

This leads to the second recommendation that this type of study should be repeated by others simply to gain another perspective on the issue. Even if another researcher interviewed women from the same geographical locations that I did, she or he would likely come to slightly, or even dramatically, different conclusions. Such is the nature of qualitative study. It is no less rigorous than other forms of research, but its subjective nature, which makes it so rich, personal, and detail-oriented, also makes it vary greatly from one analyst to another. Even if similar conclusions were reached, the method of presentation could differ, thus rendering slightly varied results.

My third recommendation emerges from the limitation discussed in Chapter III concerning the existing literature on farms and ranches. Very little of the existing literature seems to focus specifically on current experiences of ranch life. It is possible that those studying farming and agriculture in general have included ranches, but this is not clear in the literature. While the women of this study shared similar feelings and
experiences regardless of their specific farm or ranch operations, it is possible that a study on the women only in ranching in North Dakota would yield slightly different results. The ranchers may face different long-term issues or trends than the farmers. We do not know based on the existing literature. Thus, more research is needed in this area.

Finally, studies similar to this one should be done, but with more specific foci. I began this study without knowing exactly what to look for or to ask of the women. While this is common in qualitative research, had I focused on even one broad-scale topic, such as work load, feeling misunderstood, stress, or happiness, I may have gained a deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon discussed in Chapter IV. Although my work provides a good basis from which to move forward, it is fairly general. Thus, myself and others should explore specific topics to gain a better understanding of the women and their experiences.

Much can be learned about and from the women involved in farming and ranching in North Dakota. I hope that we all continue our efforts to work for and with them, and to understand and represent them fairly and accurately both within and outside the realm of academia. The women are an important part of who we are as human beings, and they deserve our careful attention.
APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANTS

Ann: Ann is in her late fifties, and has three grown children. She lives and works on a farm with her husband and son, who helps run the farm. They farm mostly wheat and sunflowers. Ann has a teaching certificate, but does not hold employment outside the home. She is responsible for all household work as well as other jobs such as running errands and bringing meals to the field or hauling equipment when necessary.

Michelle: Michelle is in her thirties and has two young children. She lives on a farm with her husband, made up mostly of grain crops, but it does include some cow/calf pairs as well. Michelle does not participate much in any outside farm work. She has a four-year college degree, and is employed full-time by the state.

Ida: Ida is in her sixties, is married, and has three grown children. She lives on a farm that includes grain and livestock operations. Due to health reasons, Ida’s husband is no longer able to work on the farm, so Ida runs the farm with help by grown children. Ida does her own outside farm work, including haying, butchering, and feeding. She also does all the house and yard work, and runs her own small business on the side.

Jackie: Jackie is in her late thirties, is married and has four young children. She and her family live on a ranch with an average sized cow/calf operation. She has two years of
post-secondary education. Jackie does day care in her home, takes care of all housework, and also works in the fields or with the cattle when she can.

Deanne: Deanne is in her twenties, is newly married, and lives on a cattle ranch with her husband, who is a hired hand there. Deanne is finishing her undergraduate degree. She and her husband would like to continue ranching on their own in the near future. When available, Deanne helps with any outside work on the ranch. She is also responsible for all domestic work.

Bobbi: Bobbi is in her early forties, is married and has three children, two of whom are teenagers, and one who is a bit younger. She lives on a large horse and bison ranch with her family. Bobbi helps with all outside work and is also responsible for all domestic work. She has a four-year degree, but is not currently employed outside of the home.

Cindy: Cindy is in her mid-forties, is married, and has two college-aged children. She lives on a large cattle ranch and is responsible for all housework as well as much of the outside work. Cindy has some post-secondary education, and has occasionally held employment outside the home, but is not currently doing so.

Julie: Julie is in her mid-thirties, is married and has three children, two of whom are teenagers and one who is a bit younger. Julie and her family live and work on a fairly
large cattle ranch. Julie has a little post-secondary training, and holds a part-time job with the state. Julie does all the housework as well as a lot of the outside work.

Louella: Louella is in her early forties, is married, and has three teenage children. She and her family live on a fairly large cattle ranch. Louella has some post-secondary training and holds a paid position outside of the home. She is responsible for the housework, and helps with all outside jobs as well.

Kelly: Kelly is in her early thirties, is married, and has three children, ranging from a teenager to a toddler. Kelly lives and works on a combination farm/ranch, working mostly with grains and sheep. Kelly has no post-secondary training, and holds two part-time jobs outside of the home. She is also responsible for all housework, and does all outside farm/ranch tasks with her husband.

Maureen: Maureen is in her early thirties, is married, has one small child, and lives on an average-sized farm/ranch with her husband. Maureen has very little post-secondary training, and has always, up until now, held a paid position outside of the home. She is currently looking for work. Maureen used to help with outside jobs more, but currently spends most of her time raising her small child. She is also responsible for all housework.

Ruth: Ruth is in her early thirties, is married, and has two small children. She lives with her family on a small farm that includes grains and a few cows and hogs. Ruth is
responsible for most housework and also is employed full-time outside the home. She has some post-secondary training. Before her children were born, she helped out more with outside farm tasks, but now focuses on her children, the house, and her outside job.

Jean: Jean is in her late thirties, is married, and has three teenage children. She lives on an average-sized grain farm with her family. She has some post-secondary training, is responsible for most of the housework, and holds a full-time paid position outside of the home. Jean does virtually none of the outside farm work.

Deb: Deb is in her early forties, is married, and has two teenage children. They live on a large farm which includes mostly grains, although they also raise some cattle. Deb has a four-year college degree and works full-time outside of the home. She is responsible for the housework, and does little of the outside farm work, other than taking care of the yard.

Sue: Sue is in her early fifties, is married, and has three grown children. She and her husband live on a fairly large grain farm that also includes a small livestock operation. Sue has a four-year college degree and has always worked at least part-time outside of the home. She helps with all outside farm tasks when she can, and is also responsible for all housework.
Kate: Kate is in her early fifties, is married, and has three grown children, some of whom are in college. She and her husband farm an average-sized operation, focusing mostly on small grain crops. Kate has some post-secondary training, and has held various paid positions over the years. She is not currently working outside the home, but is very active in community and regional functions. Kate works with her husband on the outside farm tasks and is also responsible for all housework.

Marla: Marla is in her mid-forties, is married, and has three grown children. She and her husband live and work on a large ranch. Marla has some post-secondary training, and has always held some sort of off-ranch employment until just recently. She is responsible for all housework, and also helps out with many of the outside ranch tasks.

Sally: Sally is in her late thirties, is married, and has three children, two of whom are teenagers and one who is just beginning school. She and her family live and work on a small combination farm/ranch. Sally has some post-secondary training and works part-time outside of the home. She is responsible for almost all housework and also does all outside farm/ranch tasks with her husband.
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROMPT WORDS

Questions:

1. Describe the background/history of this farm/ranch.
2. How did you come to be here? Your background?
3. Describe the activities that occur on the farm/ranch.
4. Describe a typical summer/planting/calving/harvest/winter day on the farm/ranch.
5. What kinds of things do you do on the farm/ranch?
6. What kinds of things do you do off the farm/ranch?
7. What do you think the future holds for this farm/ranch? For farming/ranching in general?
8. What do you hope the future holds for this farm/ranch? For you and the farm/ranch?
9. If you wanted to learn more/get more information on farm/ranch-related issues, where would you look/go? For more information on women like yourself?
10. The think I like most about my life in relation to the farm/ranch is ____________.
11. The think I dislike most about farm/ranch life is ____________.
12. Describe the ideal farm/ranch wife situation.
13. How do you think other people view you and what you do?
14. Do you think their perceptions are accurate? Why or why not?
15. If you had to complete the following statement, how would you do it? I am _______. (Use as many words/phrases/sentences as you like).
moved/touched
angry
frustrated
happy
lost something
success
future
sad
torn between
anxious/worried
strong conviction
important to me
You are invited to participate in a study of North Dakota women who are involved in farming in some way being conducted by me, Heidi Dyrstad, a doctoral student in the department of education at the University of North Dakota. Through this study, I hope to better understand the experiences of women involved in farming in North Dakota. Specifically, I hope to understand some of the current stresses and joys associated with farming and the women involved in it.

To understand your experiences, I am asking you to participate in interviews with me. The interviews are taking place during June, July and August of 1999, and they will each last approximately one hour. I may ask you for a follow-up interview to clarify information given in the first interview. I will tape record the interviews unless you are uncomfortable with this procedure. You may request that an interview be discontinued at any time during collection of the information.

Because it is possible that some information you give me could be sensitive, measures will be taken to protect your identity. Specifically, reporting of the data will be done in a manner that does not identify you. Because identifying characteristics will not be used, readers of the study should not know who you are. Any notes or audio tapes used during the interviews will be stored in a locked cabinet in my home. You are free to withdraw from this study without prejudice at any time until data collection is complete.

It is my hope that the study will contribute to a general knowledge base on North Dakota women involved in farming. Very little research has been conducted on the current experiences of women like you. This research may help people at local, regional, state, and perhaps national levels better understand your experiences as active members of our farming communities.

I am available to answer any questions you may have in relation to this study. Additionally, you are encouraged to ask any questions that may arise in the future. Questions may be asked by calling me at (701) 298 – 9847. You may also direct questions to my major advisor, Dr. Mary Ruth Laycock, at (701) 777-3146.

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your own records. If you agree to participate in this study, please read and sign the following:

I have read all the above information and willingly agree to participate in this study explained to me by Heidi Dyrstad. All of my questions have been answered, and I have been encouraged to ask any questions concerning this study that may arise in the future.

(Participant’s Signature / Date)
APPENDIX D
CODING EXAMPLE

The raw data were first broken down into codes, which were eventually organized into categories. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fishing</td>
<td>meal preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meal transportation</td>
<td>childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child transportation</td>
<td>sorting cows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community service</td>
<td>housecleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gardening/canning</td>
<td>outside employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parts running</td>
<td>errands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haying</td>
<td>kinkeeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rounding up cattle</td>
<td>branding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>driving combines/other equipment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paperwork/bookwork</td>
<td>laundry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grocery shopping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The categories were then broken down into properties and dimensions:

“Properties” are things that apply to jobs/tasks, regardless of specifics incidents studied, such as When? Frequency? Duration? Why? Difficulty? Who?)

“Dimensions” deal with continuums related to the properties, using specific data references as guidelines. For example, the dimensions for jobs/tasks were:
If I was unsure about where to place items on the continuum, I went to subcategories of jobs/tasks for properties and dimensions.

As I moved through this process, I referred continuously to the data to make constant comparisons to find out if aspects of dimensions agreed or disagreed with each other in different contexts. If they all agreed, with perhaps minimal variation, I then worked on patterns for the data.

**Sample Patterns for the Category of Tasks/Jobs**

1. With very few exceptions, and allowing for differences in “farm” and “ranch” tasks, these tasks are consistently done by the women.
2. The tasks vary in time consumption (haying all day vs. laundry, for example).
3. The women neither love nor hate the tasks, for the most part. They just do them, or are resolved to them as part of this lifestyle.
4. There is no (perceived) choice in the tasks.
5. The tasks vary in difficulty—some are very physically demanding—but as none of them are “new,” they become routine, or perhaps even mundane.
6. The demands made on the women were physically exhausting.
7. While a few women (2) did not do any field or livestock work, most (16) did all of these tasks at least some of the time (allowing for “farm” and “ranch” differences).

The patterns can lead to assertions, but I did not make any assertions beyond pure description until all descriptive patterns were listed for the categories involved.

This general process was followed for all categories and some included diagrams. Then they were integrated, compared and contrasted to discover a theoretical framework revolving around the core concept of farm and ranch living. Thus, as shown in Chapter IV, four total categories came together to form one final descriptive assertion, and the process detailed above was completed for each category.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


Shortall, S. (1994). Farm women’s groups: Feminist or farming or community groups, or new social movements? Sociology, 28(1), 279-291.


