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The Decoupling of Farm and Household: Differential Consequences of Capitalist Development on Southern Illinois and Third World Family Farms

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The literature on women's role in economic development in the third world indicates that as agrarian societies industrialize, women tend to take on ever greater responsibility for agricultural production, in addition to their reproductive and household duties, as working age men and, in some cases, women seek wage labor to supplement insufficient farm production (Boserup 1970:80–81; Bossen 1984; Deere and León de Leal 1981; Ward 1984).

In contrast, since World War II in the United States, farm women have tended to become increasingly removed from farm production, their reproductive and household tasks have diminished greatly, and they have entered the nonfarm labor force in large numbers.

What accounts for the different consequences of industrial development on women in different areas? The problem is both historical and analytical; it requires examination of broader issues of agricultural development.

In order to explain the differential consequences of development as they have occurred in the United States, I will first describe the attributes of peasant and quasi-peasant agriculture, then indicate, using a rural Illinois county as a case study, the ways in which these terms are applicable to pre–World War II U.S. agriculture and some of the ways in which U.S. farming, as industrialization occurred, appeared to parallel the dynamics now occurring

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in many third world nations. I will then sketch the unique coincidence of economic forces and social policies that have led to the virtually complete integration of U.S. farms into the capitalist economy as petty commodity producers, with the decoupling of the U.S. farm household from agricultural production. Finally, I will describe the consequences of this decoupling.

PEASANT VERSUS COMMERCIAL CAPITALIST AGRICULTURE

In an idealized agrarian economy (see, for example, Chayanov 1977; Wolf 1966), the unit of production (the farm, in U.S. agriculture) is either itself self-sufficing or able to reproduce itself through interchange with other similar units. Materials of production (land, tools, seeds, building materials, breeding stock, and so forth), consumption goods, and labor are obtained either through the activities of the production unit itself or in concert with others of like kind. Use values, rather than exchange values, regulate production. The major dynamic in this system is demographic—family life-cycle at the unit level, and population growth at the population level. Nonagricultural elites are supported by ''skimming off'' a surplus through historically specific, nonmarket systems (taxes, tribute, corvée labor, rents), which do not directly affect the internal processes of the peasant economy, although they may impoverish people and force them to intensify production.

According to orthodox Marxist analysis, the development of capitalism will transform peasant economy through the development of wage labor as the dominant relation of production in agriculture (Banaji 1980; Cox 1983; Harrison 1979). Agricultural production not organized through capitalist relations of production is considered to be, by definition, not capitalist (Janvry 1980; Mann and Dickenson 1978). Using wage labor as the diagnostic criterion, commercial family farms and peasant farms are structurally identical. However, as much research shows, agriculture is being integrated into capitalist economies as family-operated enterprises (Goodman and Redclift 1981; Lehmann 1986). Further, the dynamism of the capitalist transformation of agriculture is located more in the purpose toward which production is turned—for commodity exchange or for direct use—than in the direct relations of production. U.S. family farmers and an increasing number of third world farmers are what Friedmann (1980, 1978a, 1978b) terms ''simple commodity producers'':

> ''simple commodity production'' identifies a class of combined labourers and property owners within a capitalist economy, and the circuits of reproduction of simple commodity production intersect with those of commodity, landowning, and banking capital, and with markets in labour power, in abstractly determined relations. ''Peasant'' household reproduction involves important communal and/or class relations which limit the penetration of commodity relations into the productive process (Friedmann 1980:162).

Friedmann points to a key difference between simple commodity producers and peasants: Simple commodity producers are bound by the same economic rationality as are other small businessmen operating in a competitive economic system. Success is based on ability to lower the costs of production earlier than do other producers of the same commodity. This is done primarily by adopting technical (including organizational) innovations which permit increased volume and increased output per unit of input (see, for example, Herbst 1976; U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment 1986). Since in a developed capitalist economy the most critical input is labor power, increased profitability can be obtained in the short run by decreasing direct labor costs, but since there is a fixed wage below which labor (own or hired) is not available, this provides no long-term solution to the need to reduce production costs. Technical innovation is therefore promoted.

In contrast, partial integration characteristic of developing capitalist economies tends to *reinforce* the technically static aspects of peasant organization and leads to the development of a three-tier agriculture. On the one side, a highly capitalized industrial agriculture producing largely for export tends to expand, transforming haciendas and/or displacing small peasant farmers. In some areas, some small peasant producers expand and capitalize their production, producing largely for commercial markets, relying largely on family labor. Finally, an impoverished semi-self-sufficing peasant agriculture continues to exist, even proliferate, on the agriculturally marginal lands; what Lehmann (1986) terms an "involuted" form of agricultural production. While retaining communal ties, these small farmers generally sell any excess products on regional or national markets and sell their labor to other agricultural and industrial enterprises, becoming, in effect, a reserve labor pool (Bossen 1984; Janvry 1980; Lappé and Collins 1977; Goodman and Redclift 1981). It is these farm women whose labor is greatly intensified by the processes of capitalist development.

Not only do these quasi-peasant farmers supply low-wage labor to capitalist enterprises, they provide the "social security system" for many part- and full-time workers. Dependent capitalist states lack the resources to sustain the labor force fully, that is, to cover all the costs involved in sustaining a working family from birth to death. Small-scale peasant agriculture adds the necessary sustenance for part-time, low-wage labor. Meillassoux (1981:97) observes, "By this process, contradictory in essence, the domestic mode is simultaneously maintained and destroyed—maintained as a means of social organization which produces value from which imperialism benefits, and destroyed because it is deprived in the end of its means of reproduction, under the impact of exploitation."

In contrast, under fully developed capitalism the costs involved in sustaining workers throughout their lifetime can be socialized, largely through the agency of the state, as with educational and social welfare programs, and through fringe benefits won by workers' unions. The benefits of retaining a class of self-provisioning farmers as a source of "primitive accumulation" are therefore removed.

The retention of a large class of self-provisioning farmers is a key distinction between the development of agriculture in the United States and in the third world. Until World War II, agriculture in the United States appeared structurally similar to that in modern third world nations. However, during the past half century, U.S. agriculture has become heavily capitalized and fully commercialized, with virtually all household (farm) production converted into cash and almost all consumption—both for productive consumption and for personal consumption—purchased with cash. Since World War II, farm tenancy has virtually disappeared, and agricultural labor has declined dramatically.[1] Very-small-scale farms oriented toward family provisioning have nearly disappeared.

The virtually complete transformation of a nation's agriculture from a quasi-peasant form of production to fully commoditized production is the result of historical events that may be unique to some advanced capitalist societies. In the United States a specific coincidence of economic forces and social policies occurred, beginning with the New Deal, that transformed U.S. agriculture from a mixed capitalist–quasi-peasant agriculture to a specialized commodity form of production characterized by virtually complete integration within the nation's capitalist economy. The great political struggles unleashed by the crisis of the Great Depression impelled the state and industry to cover more of the social costs of production and played a part in the larger transformation of the U.S. economy that reached deep into agriculture. Without these or similar conditions, policies by third world nations to replicate the U.S. experience will be thwarted.

UNION COUNTY, ILLINOIS

Union County is a completely rural county in the hill region of extreme southern Illinois. In part because of its diversified geography, its agriculture is the most diversified in Illinois. Fruit and vegetable production has dominated the rugged but fertile central region, which was connected to markets in Chicago and the deep South by two rail lines (one was closed in the early 1970s). In the broad Mississippi flood plain cash grain production now prevails, while in the hilly and relatively infertile eastern zone mixed farming has predominated. Despite profound changes in the structure of agricultural pro-

[1] This has been particularly pronounced for land-extensive, long-season field crops. Starting in the 1950s, livestock production, beginning with poultry, has been produced on an increasingly industrialized basis. Vegetable and orchard production, while increasing in scale and mechanizing, has remained heavily dependent on wage labor and has become increasingly fully capitalist.

duction, these geographic divisions have remained significant since the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The number of farms has fallen from a peak of 2,309 in 1910 to 650 in 1982. Union County has lost proportionally more farms than Illinois in general—the 1982 census indicated that Illinois farms were 41 percent of the number in 1910, while Union County contained only 28 percent of the number of farms in 1910. More significant even than the sharp drop in the number of farms is the decrease in the number of farms that can be considered self-supporting. By 1982, a farm generally needed to have $40,000 or more in gross sales to be economically viable (U.S.D.A., Economic, Statistics, and Cooperative Service 1979). Only 17 percent of Union County farms met this criteria, while one fourth sold less than $2,500 of farm products. By contrast, in Illinois as a whole, 46.6 percent of farms sold over $40,000, and in the United States as a whole the proportion was 28.4 percent. The contrast with the state and nation is due in part to the region's hilly terrain, which has made agriculture less profitable under new technologies and marketing systems, and in part to the county's proximity to a major state university and its desirability for retirement, which has supported the development of many "hobby" farms.

Despite these unique characteristics, Union County has shared the general developments of U.S. agriculture. Farms have grown in size and amount of capital investment as farmers have adopted new technologies; most farmers specialize in specific commercial crops that are sold on national and international markets; and growing numbers of farm men and women work off the farm. Tenancy has virtually disappeared, and the hiring of farm labor has dropped dramatically. In order to understand how these changes have transformed farm life from "the pursuit of livelihood" (Pearse 1975) to a specialized business operation, it is necessary to look at the relations and organization of production within the farm household itself. Transformations at the level of the "unit of production" (Chayanov 1977, 1966) or the "household" (Netting, Wilk and Arnould 1984; Rothstein 1986) reveal the differences between a farm organized by the logic of production for use and the logic of production for exchange (Fink 1983, 1986; Matthaei 1982). Significantly differential impacts on farm men and women can be explained by examining the different productive domains each controlled under the "traditional" form of household production.

Pre-War Farm Organization

Prior to World War II, the household was inextricably integrated with the entire farm operation. The house, its associated outbuildings, yards, and pens, and the barns, with their associated outbuildings, yards, and pens, formed the core of the farm. The house served as dormitory and mess hall, workshop and warehouse for the people who provided labor to the farm. The barns served similar functions for the livestock, particularly the draft animals.

While every household member utilized virtually every part of the farm to carry out their tasks, the house and its environs were largely the women's domain, while the barns, their environs, and fields and forests were largely the men's domain. Within each of these domains, the adult woman or man (generally a parent) organized and oversaw ("bossed") the labor of children and hired hands. Because this paper focuses on the detachment of the household from the rest of the farm operation, it is worthwhile to examine more closely the functions the house and environs fulfilled in this quasi-peasant form of production.

A typical farm house was a one-and-a-half- or two-story rectangular frame structure. Downstairs was a living room, one or two bedrooms, and perhaps a parlor. An elongated kitchel el, often with a washhouse attached or nearby, extended from the main house, separating the hot cook stove from the rest of the house. The el, with its associated porches and cellar, was the workplace for most food processing, preparation, and storage, including separating cream and churning it into butter, and cleaning and storing eggs for market. In most cases the well or cistern was located close to a door to the kitchen, or within the house itself, although in some cases the water supply was some distance from the house. Some homes had springhouses in which dairy products and other perishables were stored.

The cellar, reached from an outside entrance, stored canned goods and roots, while in an upstairs room (sometimes also used as a bedroom) sweet potatoes, flour, and other provisions were stored. Alternatively, a more or less permanent root cellar—a pit dug into a hillside in which roots and barrels of apples were stored beneath a roof of dirt and straw—and heated outbuildings might serve as warehouses for provisions. Large supplies of wood, provided by the men and boys, were stacked near the kitchen. Some households owned copper kettles for boiling down apple butter—a neighborhood affair run by the women, as making sorghum was by men. Temporary platforms and scaffolding were generally set up in the house yard for hog butchering. Butchering, salting, and smoking the pork—also generally organized on a neighborhood basis—was men's work, while the women cleaned the gut, prepared sausage, rendered lard, and processed and canned the meats.

A large garden was generally located on one side of the house. Vegetables from the garden were used fresh and preserved for winter use. A small orchard, with pears, apples, peaches, apricots, plums, and pecans, might be located close to the house as well, with the fruit dried or otherwise preserved.

On the other side of the house, generally not far from the back door, was the poultry house, with a brooder house nearby. The chickens not only provided eggs and meat for home use but, like butter and cream, were sold to provide cash for household use. These sources of cash income were vital to the sustenance of the farm household. Few farms were productive enough to provide for the cash needs of both the farm and household. Most women traded the eggs, poultry, cream, and butter regularly with merchants who served as middlemen for urban distributors, but some women shipped directly to dealers in Chicago or St. Louis and/or developed egg and butter routes, provisioning town households directly. In addition, some women raised specialized poultry, such as geese and ducks.

By the beginning of the twentieth century three major technological advances had occurred that removed some production from household to industry and somewhat lightened women's work. In the decades following the Civil War, manufactured cloth from eastern mills virtually replaced homespun, eliminating the many activities associated with growing, processing, and weaving fibers into cloth (Strasser 1982:129). The sewing machine, developed in the late 1840s, made sewing easier and quicker. Manufactured clothing gradually replaced homemade, although women continued to sew a large portion of children's and women's clothing until at least the 1950s. Free-standing cook stoves, widely adopted by the 1870s, considerably lightened the tasks of cooking and cleaning (compare, for example, Beecher 1970, and Beecher and Stowe 1975). Women had also entered commodity markets through the production of poultry and dairy products.

Nonetheless, in the early decades of the twentieth century oral accounts indicate that, on most farms, nearly all household needs, from soap to stockings, were supplied from women's production. The bulk of the needs were met through farm-produced goods, but women also earned substantial amounts of income through their own money-making enterprises. Poultry, eggs, and cream were the mainstays of the cash needs of the household economy, but some women sold other goods, such as baked goods, or were seamstresses, or grew and sold flowers.[2] Many women also took in boarders, particularly the rural school teacher. In 1929 22 farms reported income from this source. In 1930 approximately 15 percent of farm receipts in Union County were from sales of poultry, eggs, and dairy products typically produced in the household, or women's, domain (Census of Agriculture 1930, County Table 3).

For many families, these sources of provisioning were not sufficient to satisfy household needs. Many farm women and children, as well as men,[3]

[2] In at least one such case the flower operation became a relatively large scale business enterprise, completely controlled by the woman. She specialized in daffodils, but raised some other flowers as well, supplying Woolworth stores throughout the middle west with Easter flowers. She recruited and organized the sizeable crew needed to pick and package the buds, arranged complicated railway express schedules, and handled the orders and billing. As railroad lines were removed and railway express declined, she was no longer able to make rapid deliveries and had to retire from the business.

[3] Neither the censuses of agriculture nor of population asked farmers to provide information on labor contributed by family members prior to 1940. In 1929, 30 percent of farm operators reported working off the farm. However, only 3 percent of farm operators reported working 250 days or more, while more than half of those working, 16.2 percent, worked less than 50 days (Census of Agriculture 1930:Table IV).

worked off the farm for wages, usually in seasonally available agricultural jobs. Union County was a major fruit and vegetable producing area, and local workers were heavily used. Tenants living on growers' farms provided a reliable year-round labor source, but townspeople and local tenant and farm-owning families were recruited at periods of peak labor demand. Women tended to work in the packing sheds, while young people and men worked in the fields. Nonlandowning families tended to do the more menial field work, and some landowning men reported that they did not allow "their women" to work in the fields, although they would hire women to do those jobs.

Women's production, identified as it was with the household, was almost entirely oriented toward self-provisioning, or the production of use values, even when they entered commodity and labor markets. Their labor was differentially valued at approximately half that of a man's for field labor, indicating the cultural bias that devalued women's contributions. Atkeson (1924:112) notes the importance of income from women's businesses, which "has saved the farm mortgage from foreclosure . . . and sent the children through college." Such instances were rare, however, for women's opportunities to earn such large amounts of money were limited and most earnings were turned immediately to household use.

Clear strains sometimes existed between the needs of the farm operation, particularly its labor needs for which the household and therefore the women were responsible, and the resources made available to the household.[4] Farm wives responding to a United States Department of Agriculture questionnaire (U.S.D.A. 1915) had two major complaints: the housing and caring for hired men in the home and the lack of good domestic help to assist with such heavy jobs as laundry and cleaning. Wealthier farms could often support domestic servants and provide quarters for hired hands, but most farm women did not have sufficient resources. An elderly woman who had housed hired hands for many years expressed intense dissatisfaction with the arrangement. Her husband paid the men less if she fed them, did their laundry, and cleaned their rooms, but she received no additional household allowance. When she finally prevailed on him to build housing for laborers, she began to take in boarders, but in this case she retained the rental payments.

Women frequently left their household work in order to help out in the fields. Not only were they responsible for household duties, including income-producing activities, but they were emergency hands. In contrast, if a woman were incapacitated, a female relative or hired girl almost invariably took over her duties.

[4] This characterization of the locus of conflict is somewhat different from Bennett and Kohl's (1982) treatment of what they term the "complementary system" embodied in the agrifamily unit. While their analysis does not contradict the analysis in this paper, they stress the differential demands on the agrifamily's resources arising from differential meshing of household and enterprise development cycles.

Quality of housing was another source of strain between women and men. Investment in the home was frequently a low priority. For example, an elderly woman, whose father was a tenant farmer but at the same time saved enough to invest in a threshing outfit, recounted that they had little household furniture. "I can sit on a nail keg as easy as a chair," he said. Another man, widely cited as having one of the most carefully tended farms in the county, let his house fall into ruins. Women sometimes resorted to extreme action to improve their lot. One woman told me about her mother, who had wanted a new house for a long time. Her husband procrastinated until one day, her patience gone, she took an axe to the house while her husband was in town. He returned to find one wall demolished. She got her house.

A farm woman's ability to call on farm-generated resources was dependent on the husband's good will, not on institutional or legal requirements. Her only leverage, if it were needed, was the threat to withdraw her labor power or other forms of direct action (Hedley 1981). Salamon and Keim's (1979) work in a central Illinois county indicates that women's ownership of land, obtained through inheritance, could also give a woman, particularly a widow, some leverage in getting improvements. In many cases the marriage relationship appeared to be a fairly equitable partnership, where the structural imbalance was mitigated by normative factors.

The agricultural side of the operation was more integrated into the larger economy through the production of agricultural commodities. Although individual farms differed significantly in the amount of produce they sold on the market, most men, since the "farm" was their domain, were generally engaged both in fully commercial commodity production and in production of use values. The farm itself was able to provide most of the materials needed for the operation. Timber for buildings and fences generally came off the farm and was hewn or sawed into planks and beams by portable saw mills that were frequently hauled onto the farm by the owner. An estimated one third of the crop was fed to the draft stock. Breeding stock was generally maintained on the farm, or was obtained in informal swaps with neighbors. Seeds were carried over from year to year. Most supplies were obtained and repaired locally, with the exception of major pieces of machinery, which might be purchased by mail order or bought at a farm auction. In 1930, approximately 15 percent of the value of agricultural production was estimated to be used on the farm (Census of Agriculture, 1930:Table III). Further, cooperative work teams, with tasks divided by gender, were organized to carry out hog butchering and other food preparation tasks for domestic consumption, and for some aspects of commodity productions, as with threshing and pooling for manure purchased and shipped in from stables in cities or mines.

Clear class divisions (although extremely fuzzy at the boundaries) separated capitalist from self-sufficing farmers, although the majority of farmers appear to have had characteristics of both types. A class of capitalist farmers, largely merchants and industrialists who lived in area towns, worked their extensive holdings with tenants and seasonal labor. Oral reports, biographical sketches in county histories (Perrin 1883; Smith 1912), and county records of the officers of grower cooperatives (County Corporate Records) indicate these farmers were the major technical innovators, particularly in developing purebred livestock and better horticultural and fruit varieties, as well as growing techniques. Further, tenant-operated farms were on average larger than were owner-operated farms, indicating that tenant farms were more generally commercial enterprises than were owner-operated farms. Tenant families provisioned themselves largely from their share of the farm's production and the women's household production, which was generally not shared with the landlord, along with wages from day labor (Green's Grocery Ledgers n.d.). Class positions were not fixed; a farmer or, in some instances, a tenant, could by shrewd investments become owner of working capital stock like a threshing outfit, saw mill, or other enterprise. Most Union County farmers, however, appeared satisfied to sustain their households, expanding only enough to give their children acreage to begin farming.

Farmers were not only to a considerable extent self-sufficing; they were also only tenuously incorporated into the rationality of capitalist production. This is indicated by the stagnation of agriculture during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first third of this one. Prior to the Civil War, a number of mechanical inventions allowed the replacement of human labor with animal and, to a lesser extent, steam labor. Advances in productivity based on these inventions had been largely realized by the turn of the century.

Significant technological innovations occurred in the early years of the twentieth century, particularly electricity, with the great variety of tools electricity made possible, the modern tractor, development of fertilizers, development of more productive purebred livestock and grain varieties, and the development of a vaccine against hog cholera (Cochrane 1979:108–9). However, farmers were slow to adopt new agricultural methods and technologies. An organizer of a Missouri Farmers' Institute, a predecessor of the Agricultural Extension Service, in 1889, is probably representative: "The chief obstacle to the complete success of Farmers' Institute work is the lack of appreciation on the part of farmers of their need for more information which will enable them to produce greater yields . . . at less cost" (Scott 1970:101). Productivity in general did not increase during the early years of the twentieth century. Cochrane (1979:109–10) observed, "The first decade of twentieth century was a highly prosperous time for American farmers, but not because the average, or representative, farmer was greatly expanding his production. . . . In fact, the index of farm productivity, output per unit of input, actually declined in the period 1900–1910." The sluggish rate of technological innovation continued through the next decade and was only slightly stimulated by the depression of the 1920s, when farmers began to apply fertilizers and practice crop rotations more than in previous decades. Nonetheless, this represented no significant replacement of labor with capital, nor the development of efficient business practices at the level of the firm.

Union County Extension Service records indicate that farmers were responsive to attempts to form marketing cooperatives but were less successful in forming cooperatives to enhance productivity, such as breeding associations to pool the purchase price and use of purebred bulls. Despite Extension Service efforts to promote good record keeping, in 1919 only 121 farmers attended four farm management schools. Interest in financial management decreased as the agricultural depression deepened in the 1920s; in 1924 only nine farmers completed farm account books; in 1925 the number fell to four. Few farmers invested in tractors. By 1925, only 11.3 percent had made this investment; the proportion rose to only 18.2 percent by 1930. The greatest majority of farmers, that is, continued to rely on farm-provisioned labor power, in the form of draft stock and household labor.

As the U.S. and world economy disintegrated during the 1930s, thousands of people whose industrial jobs were eliminated went back to rural communities. In Union County the number of farms, which had been declining from the peak in 1910, rose by 231, or 13 percent, between 1930 and 1935, and county population rose above that of 1910 (although still below the peak reached in 1900). The farming community was serving the function of a "safety net" for those the faltering economy could not sustain. This is congruent with similar patterns in third world nations, in which farming communities produce labor without cost to the capitalist sector and maintain that labor when the economy is unable to sustain it.

In a further parallel to third world economies, in Union County, as national markets disintegrated, farmers focused increased energy on production for local markets through direct marketing (peddling) and for self-provisioning. The proportion of farms with small numbers of livestock used for self-provisioning—milk cows, poultry, and hogs—increased during the Depression (Adams 1987:132–43). "Farmers were the fattest people going to the poor house," one farm woman observed of the Depression era. Family labor, as one would expect in a peasant household economy, was used more intensively, both for household and market production.

As noted above, by the 1930s many of the major technological discoveries that dramatically increased labor productivity in agriculture and greatly eased the burdens of housework had been made. These were slow to be adopted, however. It took major social and economic changes to revolutionize the production of agricultural products and the farm household.

The Capitalization of Agriculture

The New Deal marked a watershed in the degree to which the federal government participated in the shaping of economic policy. Government explicitly undertook to equalize rural and urban income, not only through agricultural adjustment programs that attempted to bring individual farm incomes in line with those of urban workers, but also by developing the social infrastructure so that many of the amenities of life, such as good roads, electricity, good education, and health care, would be available to rural people. In some cases private enterprise, such as electric utilities, had deliberately refused to invest in rural areas because of the costs involved. In others, state and local governments had failed to make services, such as good roads and education, available. Although beyond the scope of this paper, the importance of the labor movement and agrarian discontent as expressed, for example, in the Farm Holiday Movement and the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, must be acknowledged. Without these strong popular movements, American business and government would undoubtedly not have accepted the costs of the "externalities" and made the major reforms of the period.

In order to raise depressed commodity prices, the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 established production controls to overcome the persistent imbalance between supply and demand. In 1938, the new Adjustment Act instituted marketing as well as production controls. At the same time, the government established the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) to loan money to farmers at harvest, using their crops as collateral. The rate at which the CCC valued crops effectively established a floor under the market price of these commodities, thereby raising their prices to a level established through public policy. These loans had the added effect of removing some of the disincentives for capital investment in agriculture, since the government assumed the costs of having capital tied up in grain storage and freed individual farmers to invest the loan moneys (see Mann and Dickinson 1978:476). The government assumed other costs of production through its conservation programs, begun in 1936, which paid farmers to hold land out of production and for undertaking conservation practices, and through government crop insurance to compensate for unavoidable crop losses. The government also established new channels for farm credit through the Agricultural Adjustment Act, later the Farmers' Home Administration, and the Farm Credit System (which absorbed and recapitalized the pre-existing Federal Land Bank), thereby infusing large amounts of capital into enterprises deemed too risky or affording too low a return for bankers and other lenders.

The government also took partial responsibility for getting rid of surplus commodities outside of normal market channels. During the 1930s food relief was made available to millions of destitute people. In one village in Union County, a government cannery was set up to process local tomatoes. Some of the canned tomatoes were returned to the growers for their own use, while the rest were distributed in relief orders.

These programs stimulated a significant increase in productivity, particularly in corn where hybrid seeds were widely adopted (Rasmussen and Baker

1979:14). This process lagged in Union County, where it was not until after World War II that many elements of the new agricultural toolkit, including electricity, mechanization, and hybrids, were adopted.

These programs appear to have had significantly different effects on different farmers, leading to the development of a two-tier agriculture that seems to have been similar to developments in some third world countries (for example, Mayer 1981). On the one side were "progressive" and industrial farmers who had enough land and initiative to take advantage of the government programs and increase the productivity of their land and labor. On the other side were land-poor farmers, who got few benefits from the programs, who were increasingly unable to compete, and who became increasingly impoverished and restricted to subsistence production (Fite 1981).

However, in the succeeding two decades the very small self-provisioning farms virtually disappeared. Two distinct processes occurred that not only led to the demise of self-sufficing agriculture, but also promoted the industrialization of some agricultural commodities, and led to the full commercialization of remaining family farms. The first of these processes involved bitterly debated national agricultural policies. In the 1950s government policy shifted sharply from a theory of government intervention to promote equity to one of government intervention to promote the "free market." The solution to "the farm problem" was deemed to be removal of large numbers of farmers from the land so that those remaining could operate as profitable businesses. As the Marshall Plan wound down and Europe rebuilt its shattered economy, agricultural surpluses mounted. The new "free market" policies adopted in 1954 allowed commodity prices to decline, with a concomitant sharp drop in farm income. Only the larger, technically more advanced farmers with large volume and increasing production could survive as farm prices fell.

It is possible that the millions of farmers who were unable to convert from semisubsistence to full commodity production would have sunk into abject poverty, wringing a meager living off a few acres of marginal land, such as is occurring in some parts of the third world. However, other economic processes were at work. Changes in the larger economy gave them an opportunity to find relatively high wage work in other sectors of the economy. During World War II, millions of farm people left the farms to enter the military and work in the factories that were producing at maximum capacity (Fink 1986). Many stayed, or followed older relatives to these relatively high-wage jobs in the years that followed.

In a further development of industrial organization, made possible by the availability of large amounts of investment capital and a ready market for consumer goods, the process of removing productive tasks from the farm proceeded. This was not a new process; as noted above, weaving had long been removed from household production. Quaintance (1984:35), in 1904, noted that "one after another, functions which formerly were considered as belonging to agriculture have been differentiated from it and removed from the farm, until the farming business of today appears as a remnant of its former self.'' Perry (1982:687) observes, ''to a large extent, the ultimate effect of rationalization [industrialization] on hired and family farm workers is to decompose their occupations and replace them with industrial workers.'' This process accelerated sharply during the second half of the twentieth century; it effectively allowed government farm policies to move farmers from the land into the industrial and service sectors of the economy. Union County, with its hilly terrain increasingly marginal under new technologies, emptied out. Population in Union County fell sharply, particularly between 1950 and 1970, while rural farm population decreased every census period after 1940, declining by 36 percent between 1940 and 1950, by an additional 46 percent in the next 10 years, and by 35 percent between 1960 and 1970. The rate of decline, which had leveled off somewhat during the decade of the 1970s, is once again falling sharply due to the depressed farm economy. In 1900, there were nearly 20,000 rural residents, virtually all of whom were farmers; by 1980 only 1,875 people remained on farms (see Table 3).[5]

At the same time, those agricultural commodities that could be easily industrialized were removed from family to factory farms (Friedland 1980; Mann and Dickenson 1978; MacLennan and Walker 1980; Marion 1986). Particularly important in consequences for Union County were the massive produce farms—''factories in the fields''—that developed in California, Florida and Texas. Coupled with new refrigeration and transportation capabilities, and with increasingly centralized marketing systems, these factory farms undercut Union County horticultural production and virtually eliminated this as a major branch of farming, thereby also removing a major source of seasonal labor. Poultry and egg production was also rapidly industrialized and concentrated in the deep South (Fink 1986; Sachs 1983:39–42; U.S.D.A. 1967).

The process of rapid industrialization, in a strongly unionized environment, had the effect of making labor extremely scarce and expensive. Not only did millions of farmers leave the land for urban jobs, but those farmers remaining found it extremely advantageous to mechanize, since technologies were cheaper than labor, and capital was available to make major investments.

This historic conjuncture—of government programs that infused capital into rural areas and into agriculture, government policies that lowered the price of agricultural commodities, expanding industrial production that attracted labor from agriculture and made labor increasingly expensive, and the industrialization of many aspects of farm and household production—transformed the organization of agricultural production. The productive domains

[5] In 1900, rural farm and rural nonfarm residents were not distinguished, indicating that virtually all rural residents were employed in agriculture.

under the purview of women and men changed dramatically, and in different directions. For those families left on the farm, by the 1980s the farm household had become virtually isolated from the farming operation.

The Uncoupling of Farm and Home

Until the "great transformation" of the post-War period, the household, although structurally and often in practice subordinate to the farm operation, was nonetheless tightly integrated with it. A single man could no more manage all the varied duties required to sustain daily life than could a single woman. But this necessary linkage has been removed by the development of full commodity production.

The single most important link that has been removed is labor. Prior to the adoption of tractors, high-yield seeds, fertilizers, and electrical appliances, farms required large amounts of manual labor. Most of this labor was borne and raised on the farm by the wife. Large families were the rule; many women spent ten to twenty of their productive years being pregnant and nursing babies, while managing the complex activities needed to provision a household that potentially included elderly dependents, hired men, and orphans, and might number ten to fifteen people on a daily basis, with more to feed at peak labor periods. In 1900, the average Union County farm family numbered 9.2 people; this declined during the Depression decades to 5.5 people per farm family, and then fell to 3.7 in 1950, 3.1 in 1960, and appeared to stabilize at 2.5 in 1970 (see also Figure 1). Farm women's fertility rates fell as the need for farm labor declined; by 1980, Union County farm women had fertility rates *below* those of all other categories of women (Adams 1987:187).

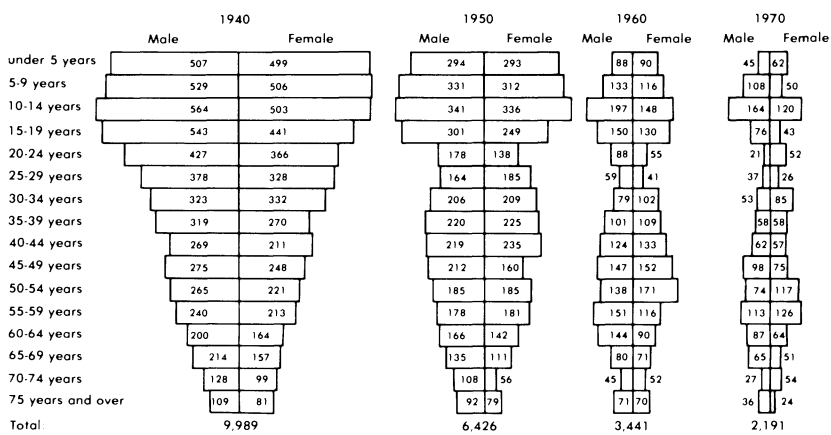

FIGURE 1. Rural farm population by age, 1940–1970, Union County. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of the Population.

As noted above, both agricultural and household tasks were being replaced by industrially produced goods, a process which accelerated in the 1950s (see Tables 1 and 2). Electricity, in particular, brought the potential to rework women's domestic chores. In 1940, only 12 percent of the farms had electricity; by 1950 this had risen to 82 percent, and by 1960 the census bureau had ceased to ask for that information.

Washing machines were among the first purchases made when electricity was finally brought to rural areas: In 1945 only 532 farms had electricity; five years later, with 1,256 farms with electricity, 1,110, or nearly 88 percent, reported electric washing machines. Wells and cisterns that had proved adequate before were often inadequate for the new demands, but self-service laundromats quickly developed in the town (made possible by government-funded water and sewer projects), extending the benefits of electric washers to those homes lacking enough water. By the early 1950s most farm women were relieved of the heavy work of hauling water, heating it, rubbing the clothes, and boiling, rinsing, and wringing the weekly wash, the most onerous regular household task.

Refrigeration, especially with the introduction of deep freezers, changed short- and long-term food storage techniques. Along with washing machines, farm families quickly purchased refrigerators—1,175 by 1950 (''Mechanical'' refrigerators, including gas-powered; see Census of Housing, Table 33)—and, more gradually, purchased deep freezers; by 1959 nearly half of all farm households had a home freezer. Electric stoves were also quickly adopted, removing the constant task of supplying fire wood from the household.

Nonetheless, the availability of electricity did not automatically bring about the introduction of other labor-saving devices: in 1950, with 82 percent of the houses wired to electricity, only 25.5 percent had running water inside, and only 14.8 percent had both hot and cold running water. By 1960 only 64 percent had run plumbing into the house, and nearly 10 percent of these had cold water only. More than half of all farm houses lacked a bathtub or shower and still used a privy. Rental housing was less likely to have all plumbing installed. In 1960, 79 percent of all rented farm housing—236 units—lacked some plumbing. Many farm owners were also slow in modernizing their homes, with 408 lacking some or all facilities, or nearly 39 percent of all owner-occupied units (Census of Population 1960:Illinois, Table 33). Oral reports indicate that decisions to install plumbing and undertake other remodeling tasks were largely controlled by the men. Not only did some women resort to the drastic actions noted above, but in a number of cases, upon the death of a husband, the widow immediately added modern plumbing and other household amenities.

Meanwhile, farmers, using newly available credit, were investing in expensive farm machinery: the proportion of farms with tractors rose from 35.5

TABLE 1

Housing Data—Rural Farm

	1940		1950		1960		1970	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Total farm dwelling units	2,649		1,866		1,147		840	
Running water inside	101	3.8	476	25.5	733	63.9	766	91.2
Hot and cold	[a]		277	14.8	624	54.4	736	87.6
Cold only	[a]		199	10.7	109	9.5	30	3.6
Hand pump inside	194	7.3	[a]		[a]		[a]	
Running water w/in 50 ft	236	8.9	174[b]	9.3	9[b]		[a]	
No piped running water	[a]		1,180	63.2	405	35.3	74	6.5
Other water supply w/in 50 ft	1,783	67.3	[a]		[a]		[a]	
No water supply w/in 50 ft	212	8.0	[a]		[a]		[a]	
Not reporting water supply	123	4.6	36	1.9	[a]		[a]	
Flush toilet inside	78	2.9	266	14.3	537	46.8	703	83.7
Non-flush toilet inside	3		[a]		[a]		[a]	
Outside toilet or privy	2,330	88.0	1,554	83.3	610[c]	53.2	[a]	
No toilet or privy	113	4.3	15	0.8	[a]		[a]	
Not reporting toilet fac.	125		31		[a]		[a]	
Bathtub or shower	81	3.1	320	17.5	533	46.5	724	86.2
None	2,429	91.7	1,504	80.6	614	53.5	116	13.8
Not reporting	139		42		[a]		[a]	

[a]Category not given indicated census year.
[b]Category reads "Piped running water outside structure" in 1950 and 1960 census.
[c]Category reads "Other toilet facilities or none" in 1960 census.
SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1940 Census of Housing, Illinois, Table 23, 847; 1950 Census of Housing, Illinois, Table 33, 13–125; 1960 Census of Housing, Illinois, Table 33, 15–72 (data based on sample); 1970 Census of Housing, Illinois, Table 60, 15–292 (data based on sample).

TABLE 2

Union County Rural Farm and Home Equipment

	1945		1950		1954		1959		1964	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Number of farms	1,683		1,535		1,196		1,149		953	
Telephone	525	31.2	556	36.2	425	35.5	502	43.7	745	78.2
Electricity	532	31.6	1,256	81.8	1,135	94.9	[a]		[a]	
Home freezer	[a]		105	6.8	275	23.0	572	49.8	618	64.8
Electric washing machine	[a]		1,110	72.3	[a]					
Milking machine	[a]		85	7.1[b]	100	12.5[b]			52	26.7[b]
Grain combines, farms with	[a]		190	12.4	231	19.3			234	30.8
Number of combines	[a]		190		246				274	
Corn pickers, farms with	[a]		110	7.2	231	19.3			294	30.8
Number of corn pickers	[a]		125		246				313	
Pick-up hay balers, farms with	[a]		60	3.9	95	7.9	168	14.6	199	20.9
Number of balers	[a]		60		95		178		199	
Automobiles, farms with	1,061	63.0	961	62.6	701	58.6	826	71.9	747	78.4
Number of automobiles	1,188		1,083		801		917		944	
Motortrucks, farms with	436	25.9	676	44.0	676	56.5	774	67.4	671	70.4
Number of trucks	470		754		691		897		843	
Tractors, farms with	598	35.5	766	49.9	891	74.5	879	76.5	852	89.4
Number of tractors	671		933		1,282		1,373		1,467	

[a]Category not given.
[b]Farms with dairy only.

Note: No household items listed after 1964. In 1930, 94 farms had electricity; 19 an electric water pump, 1,109 an automobile, 267 a truck, and 319 a tractor. In 1925, 225 farms had a tractor and 65 radios. No other equipment is listed.

SOURCES, except as otherwise noted: For 1925, Census of Agriculture, Illinois, Table II; for 1930, Census of Agriculture, Illinois, Table XII; 1945 and 1950: 1950 Census of Agriculture, Illinois, Table 3; for 1954: 1954 Census of Agriculture, Illinois, County Table 5; for 1959 and 1964: Census of Agriculture, Illinois, Statistics for Counties, Table 8.

percent in 1945 to 50 percent in 1950 and 76.5 percent in 1959. By 1964 90 percent, or virtually all farms that had any use for them, had at least one tractor. Similarly, grain combines, which were not counted in 1945, were owned by 12.4 percent of farms in 1950; by 1954, nearly 20 percent owned them. Corn pickers, also not counted in 1945, went from 7.2 percent in 1950 to nearly 20 percent in 1955.

The adoption of these new technologies eliminated the need for both household and farm labor, and greatly increased the need for cash income. Women's ability to earn cash from their production fell at the same time that markets for major agricultural commodities were expanding.

Figures 2 and 3 graphically demonstrate the decline of the number of farm households with dairy cattle and poultry. In 1935, the high point for self-sufficing farms in this century, nearly 87 percent of all farms had milk cows, but they milked only an average of three per day. By 1964 only 20.5 percent of farms still had dairy cows, and by 1978 only 6 percent of farms raised milk cows, milking an average of 17 cows per herd.

The decline is equally dramatic with chickens. In 1935 more than 93 percent of farms raised poultry. By 1964 only one third of all farms reported

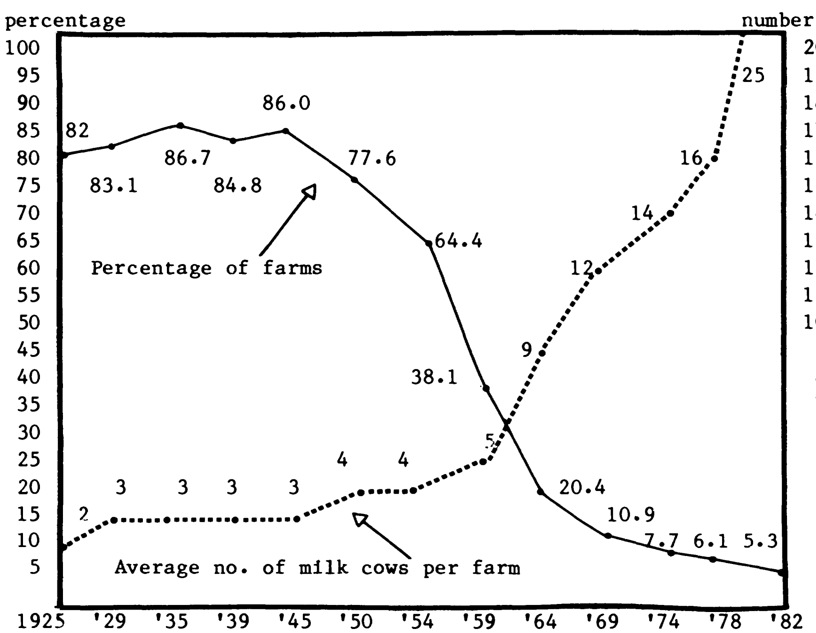

FIGURE 2. Percentage of farms with dairy cows and average number of cows per farm, 1925–1982. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Agriculture.

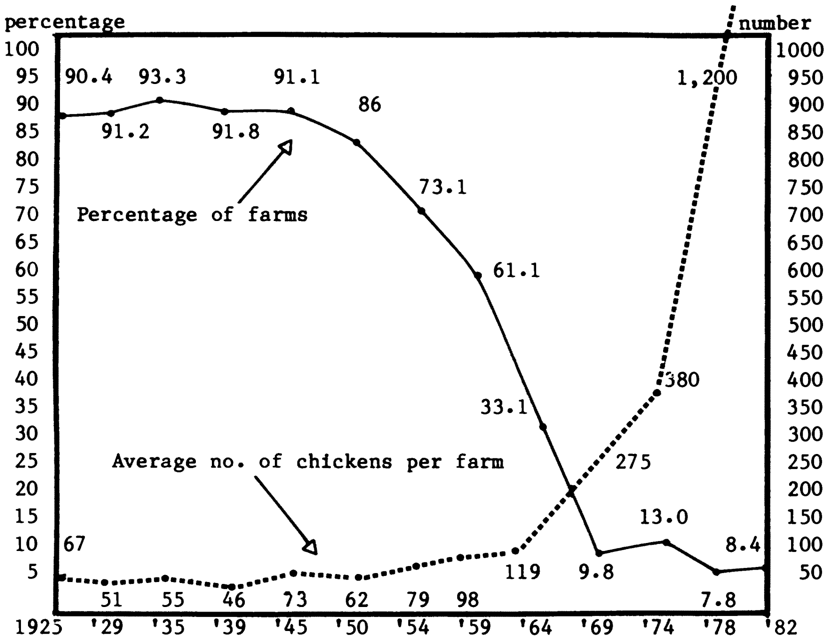

FIGURE 3. Percentage of farms with chickens and average number of chickens per farm, 1925–1982. *Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Agriculture.

raising chickens. At the same time the number of chickens per farm rose from about 55 in 1935 to 79 in 1955 and 119 in 1964. By 1978 only 7.8 percent, or 57 farms, reported chickens, but the average number per farm was 1,199.

Competition from large-scale poultry and dairy producers made women's relatively small-scale home production uneconomic. Many women desired to continue a once-thriving poultry operation, and in a number of cases continued to raise layers long after they ceased to make money—in fact, despite evidence that the farm operation was subsidizing their egg route. By at least the early- to mid-1960s household production of poultry and dairy products could no longer provide significant income to farm women. Congruent with national trends reported by Fink (1986), data collected in open-ended interviews suggests that after World War II Union County men began to develop commercial poultry operations and to expand commercial dairy operations on those few farms that maintained commercial poultry and dairy production. A few women persisted with what might be termed "hobby" flocks and a cow or two to supply a few personal customers and the home, while commercial operations moved out of the domain of the household.

School consolidation removed another source of income for farm women, as teachers no longer needed to board in farm homes. Domestic labor, also, declined as the farm household required fewer hands. At the same time, opportunities for earning money through seasonal wage labor declined.

It can be seen, then, that the farm household became ever more divorced from the farm operation as the need for agricultural labor declined, and as household tasks were mechanized and their labor requirements reduced. Household production, like comparable self-sufficing farms, became increasingly untenable. Rather than contributing to the overall farm economy, such production often drained resources from the commercial side of the operation. As the farm became ever more deeply engaged in highly capitalized commodity production, women's economic contribution, which remained organized around the production of use values, became increasingly attenuated.

Those farmers who remained moved ever more into commodity production and specialization, in which competition spurred and rewarded technical innovation, while the household became ever more a consuming unit, stripped of its productive functions and reliant on the enterprise or off-farm wage labor for its maintenance. Commentators of the period pointed to the increased importance of consumption, and women's domestic tasks were increasingly defined in these terms by advertisers, educators, and extension agents (for example, Friedan 1963; Fink 1986; Lloyd 1975; Strasser 1982). By the 1980s, Bennett and Kohl (1982:129–32, 163) could describe what they term the "agrifamily unit" as composed of "the Nuclear Family Household" and "the Enterprise," with "the man as the responsible manager of the production system" in which "any contribution that women might make to production is viewed as an informal, personal service." Women's role was primarily "homemaking" centered on "expressive tasks."

This division of functional roles was not new—the concept of home management was developed with the rise of industrial production in the United States in the early 1800s (Strasser 1982:203), and people concerned with "elevating" rural populations promoted such a division of labor (see, for example, Atkeson 1924; U.S. Commission on Country Life 1944 [1911]). When most of the production process remained on the farm, however, women's productive tasks were crucial to sustaining and expanding the farm operation. The inclusion of some items of household equipment (washing machine, home freezer, hot water heater) in the agricultural census indicates the practical recognition of the interrelationship. By 1969, all household items were dropped from the agricultural census.

The increasing superfluity of women's prior productive contributions to the farm operation required a reworking of their function within the increasingly separate enterprise and household. Many women gradually relinquished their role in farm and household production, taking up a "middle-class" life-style

TABLE 3

Union County Farm Women and Men, Employment 1930–1980

	1930	*1940*	*1950*	*1960*	*1970*	*1980*
Total population	19,883	21,528	20,500	17,645	16,071	16,851
Number of farms	1,752	1,724	1,535	1,097	867	712
Urban population	3,436	4,092	4,380	4,280	4,865	4,494
Other village population	3,570	3,926	4,004	3,736	3,997	5,043
Rural farm population	9,659	9,989	6,426	3,441	2,191	1,875
% of total population	48.6	46.4	31.3	19.5	13.6	11.1
Male	5,135	5,290	3,330	1,795	1,124	993
Female	5,105	4,699	3,096	1,646	1,067	882
Rural non-farm population[l]	3,218	3,521	5,690	6,118	5,119	5,439
% of rural population	25.0	26.1	47.0	64.0	70.0	74.4
Rural farm population of working age[a]						
Male		3,807	2,427	1,421	794	697
Female		3,292	2,215	1,332	830	655
Rural farm population in labor force, with % of total rural farm population of working age (includes unemployed)						
Male number		2,999	1,940	1,116	670	511
Male percentage		78.8	79.9	78.5	84.4	73.3
Female number		306	282	326	243	235
Female percentage		9.3	12.7	24.5	29.3	35.9
Rural farm population in non-farm labor force, with % of total labor force participation (includes unemployed)						
Male number		984	456	458	344	287
Male percentage		32.8	23.5	41.0	51.3	56.2
Female number		283	221	278	221	207
Female percentage		92.5	78.4	85.3	90.9	88.1
Rural farm female employed		228	266	306	226	223
Professional workers[b f]		35	36	27	36	55
Farmers & farm managers		11	22	22	17	23
Proprietors, managers, & officials, except farm		2	6	5	5	[g]
Clerical, sales, & kindred workers[c]		24	39	36	67	86
Craftsmen, foremen, & kindred workers[i]		1	1	4	[g]	7
Operatives & kindred workers[j]		61	54	107	61	11
Domestic service workers[d]		39	13	4	—	[g]

TABLE 3 (*cont.*)

	1940	*1950*	*1960*	*1970*	*1980*
Service workers, except domestics[e]	19	33	66	33	36
Farm laborers (wage workers) and farm foremen[k]	3	15	11	5	5
Farm laborers, unpaid family workers	9	24	15	—	[g]
Laborers, except farm	15	—	5	2[h]	[g]
Occupation not reported	9	—	4	[g]	[g]
Male employed	2,402	1,911	1,052	623	452
Professional workers[b f]	31	17	33	16	21
Farmers & farm managers	1,365	1,184	467	248	165
Proprietors, managers, & officials, except farm	34	27	16	25	[g]
Clerical, sales, & kindred workers[c]	26	31	35	43	28
Craftsmen, foremen, & kindred workers	64	115	78	59	82
Operatives & kindred workers[j]	85	98	121	63	57
Domestic service workers[d]	—	3	—	[g]	[g]
Service workers, except domestics[e]	24	27	41	44	40
Farm laborers (wage workers) and farm foremen[k]	428	183	149	70	59
Farm laborers, unpaid family workers	222	117	42	8	[g]
Laborers, except farm	94	72	55	47	[g]
Occupation not reported	29	37	15	[g]	[g]

[a]Employable age varies. In 1930, 15 years and older; 1940, 1950, 1960, 14 years; 1970, 1980, 16 years.
[b]Includes "semiprofessional workers" from 1940 census.
[c]1950–1970 censuses list "Clerical and kindred workers" and "Sales" in separate categories. They are combined here. 1980 census lists "Technical, sales, and administrative support occupations, . . . including clerical."
[d]1950 and subsequent censuses list category as "Private household workers."
[e]1950 and subsequent censuses list category as "Service workers, except private household." 1970 census, male employed, lists category as "Service workers, including private household."
[f]1960 census lists "Professional, techn'l, & kindred wkrs."
[g]Category does not appear in 1970 census.
[h]1970 census lists category as "Other blue-collar workers."
[i]1980 census lists category as "Precision production, craft, and repair occupations."
[j]1980 census lists category as "Operators, fabricators, and laborers."
[k]1980 census lists category as "Farm occupations, except managerial."
[l]Rural nonfarm is census category "Rural nonfarm" minus "Other village population."
SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1930 Census of the Population, Illinois, Table 14, 627; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1940 Census of the Population, Illinois, Table 27, 558; 1950 Census of the Population, Illinois, Table 49, 13–197; 1960 Census of the Population, Illinois, Table 93, 15–452; 1970 Census of the Population, Illinois, Table 137, 15–820 (data based on sample); 1980 Census of the Population, Illinois, Table 191, 15–845.

attentive to aesthetic and personal development, seen in such indicators as the content of home extension programs, as well as the increase in fancy needle work and other crafts. A considerable number of farm women continue to participate in farm production as working partners with their husbands or, possibly, operating the farm while their husband works. Alternatively, some women assumed new roles in the farm enterprise, particularly as bookkeepers for the increasingly important record-keeping aspect of modern farm management (see, for example, Blood 1958; Boulding 1980; Kohl and Bennett 1982; Rendleman 1978; Rosenfeld 1985; Wilkening and Bharadwaj 1968).

In addition, farm women have moved strongly into the nonfarm labor force.[6] Table 3 compares farm men's and women's participation in the nonfarm labor force. The proportion of farm men in Union County considered to be in the labor force who hold nonagricultural jobs rose from a low of 18.8 percent in 1950 to a high of 43.3 percent in 1970, and fell to 41.2 percent in 1980. The proportion of farm women in the nonfarm labor force rose from 8.5 percent in 1940 to 31.6 percent in 1980, reflecting what appears to be a national trend (Bokemeier, Sachs and Keith 1983; Flora and Johnson 1978). Their economic contributions are significant, particularly on those farms where the husband is not employed off the farm. Rosenfeld (1985:173) reports that in 1979, on those U.S. farms where only the wife had off-farm income, women contributed 54 percent of the family income. As farm incomes have fallen in the 1980s women's contributions have probably been increasingly important in maintaining not only the household but also the farm.

As research concerning task involvement indicates (for example, Boulding 1980; Kohl and Bennett 1982; Rendleman 1978; Rosenfeld 1985; Wilkening and Bharadwaj 1968), farm families still differ significantly from their urban counterparts due to the family-based organization of agricultural production. However, the development of highly capitalized specialized commodity production and the elaboration of the "forward and backward linkages" in the production processes have reduced the range of functions once fulfilled by the

[6] Accurate data concerning the women's on-farm labor in Union County are not available. Statistics on farm labor used are extremely unreliable; for women's work they are even less accurate. For example, the U.S. Bureau of Census listed "Farm laborers, unpaid family workers" in some census years. In 1940 only nine women were entered in this category, and only five in 1960. The figures are little better for men, with only eight unpaid male family workers listed in 1970. Wage workers are equally underreported: only three women were reported as farm wage workers in 1940, and so forth. Full time employment in other categories is probably more accurately reported, although there is bound to be considerable room for error on units as small as a county, given sampling procedures (see introductory materials in Census volumes). I worked for two years as an enumerator for the Illinois Crop Reporting Service, including several surveys of farm labor. Women's contribution to farm work, which frequently takes the form of errand runner and pinch-hitter, was consistently not reported or at best under-reported, even when the operator acknowledged the importance of the wife's activities. For further criticism of available census data, see Boulding (1980) and Rosenfeld (1985:35–38).

farm household, greatly reducing women's reproductive and productive roles along with their potential to earn income from their household production. Farm women's potential economic dependence on their husbands has been mitigated, however, by their large-scale movement into the labor force and into full-scale partnership with their husbands in which they frequently assume responsibility for overseeing marketing and investment strategies and in organizing the factors of production, as well as participating in some of the production work itself (Rendleman 1978; Rosenfeld 1985).

During the 1970s the number of small farms increased. These were, however, no longer the self-sufficing, peasant-type farms of the pre-War period. Rather, they were retirement or hobby farms, operated by people with other major sources of income (Fliegel, Harper and van Es 1981).

The coincidence of multiple, mutually reinforcing forces has led to the development of an American agriculture that is far different from that developing in the third world. The unique post-War conjuncture of technological capability, expansive industrialization, and concerted government policies of making massive social investments and promoting commercial agriculture allowed (or forced) farm families to eliminate self-provisioning, to decrease labor demands, and to find off-farm wage labor to replace prior productive activity. In the process millions of farms were eliminated nationwide, many agricultural processes were industrialized and removed from most farms, those commercial farms remaining grew in size and capital investment, and both ex-farmers and commercial farmers, particularly women living on commercial farms, entered the nonfarm labor force. The differential impact of these developments on household and farm—on women's and men's domains respectively—led to the elimination of most of women's traditional productive activities and to the full commercialization of commodities that fell under men's traditional domain.

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