FEMINISM FROM THE FARM:
RURAL AND FARM WOMEN'S AUTHORSHIP AND THE FUTURE OF RURAL AMERICA, 1920-1929

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the rhetoric of predominantly white U.S. rural and farm women from the 1920s and argues that their public arguments crafted a particular idea of feminism that is both grounded in and enabled by their experiences as rural and farm women. Turning to women's rhetorical practices as they manifested in two major print and public speaking contexts — *The Farmer's Wife* magazine and the first national conference of rural and farm women — this study considers how women's interactions in those spaces enabled certain modes of agency and rhetorical expression. As rural and farm women embraced existing and emerging opportunities for personal and public engagement, they embraced also the possibility that their rhetorical labor could transform understandings of their identities, relationships, and individual and collective futures.

This dissertation understands rural and farm women's written and spoken words by situating them in the broader context of how public figures and private citizens talked about rural and farm people throughout the history of the republic. While the idea of agrarianism held up rural people, especially farmers, as ideal in the American imaginary, post-World War I economic uncertainties and material realities generated a shift in how the public talked about its rural and farm people. The chapters in this project analyze how rural and farm women talked about their identities, relationships, and responsibilities during this era of uncertainty and transformation. In *The Farmer's Wife*, rural and farm women's letters interrupted gendered notions of rural womanhood by dissociating the woman from the home and repositioning her in and beyond the fields. At the national conference, rural and farm women's conversations functioned as instances of consciousness raising that enabled the women to achieve an improved perspective of themselves and rural and farm women across the country. As the conference participants

discussed issues including economics and community work, they developed an adapted agrarianism that imagined women as central to the future of rural and farm life.

As rural and farm women interacted with each other in print and in public speaking contexts, their rhetorical strategies of dissociation, *phantasia*, and consciousness raising enabled the women to see, through language, who they were and who they could become. Overall, the project forwards the notion of rhetorical agency as authorship: the process of crafting with language and the product of that craft. The forms of that authorship vary across the chapters, but overall, the women's rhetorics function to authorize the women who invented them, and the women who would follow them, as subjects whose knowledge and experiences position them to make arguments about the future of rural America.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures xii

Chapter One: Searching for Rural and Farm Women 1

Chapter Two: Locating Rural and Farm Women 31

Chapter Three: Defining the Modern Rural and Farm Woman: *The Farmer's Wife* and Interruptive Rhetorical Agency 56

Chapter Four: Adapting Agrarianism: Rural and Farm Women's Consciousness Raising Discourses at the First National Farm Woman's Conference 101

Conclusion: Recognizing the Rhetorical Agency of Rural and Farm Women 150

Notes 161

Bibliography 192

Appendix A: List of Conference Participants and Attendees 219

List of Figures

1. Cover of *The Farmer's Wife*, August 1914……………………………………….…….…94

2. Cover of *The Farmer's Wife*, September 1927…………………………………..…..95

3. "News from Washington"……………………………………………………..…..96

4. Master Farm Homemakers……………………………………………………......97

5. Composite Portrait of Master Farm Homemakers……………………………..…….98

6. Congoleum Gold-Seal Art Rugs Advertisement……………………………..……...99

7. Letters in the Sally Sod Exchange……………………………………..…………100

8. Chicago Conference Participants………………………………………...……….148

9. Chicago Conference Participants, Cropped……………………………...………..149

Chapter One:

Searching for Rural and Farm Women

On October 19, 1921, *The Nation* magazine published the "Farm Women's Declaration of Independence," written and circulated by a collective of farm women from Nebraska. Included as part of an editorial titled "Feminism on the Farm," the short declaration articulated distinct conditions that were necessary for gender equality among America's rural and farm population. Instead of defining feminism based on rights connected to political participation, an association that urban arguments animated regarding the recent passage of the nineteenth amendment that granted woman suffrage, these conditions advanced an alternative notion of feminism: "A power washing-machine for the house for every tractor bought for the farm….Running water in the kitchen for every riding-plow for the fields….Our share of the farm income."[1] Modest yet meaningful, these terms envisioned technological and economic justice within the farm family as the index of equality for the women who authored them. If feminism meant "short hair and knickerbockers" or "babies and jobs" in New York City and Chicago, within the Great Plains states and across America's rural and farm landscape, feminism, according to the editorial, meant "something else."[2]

Nebraska's farm women were not the first to appropriate one of the United States' most significant political documents to garner public attention for rural and farm issues. In July 1873, Illinois farmers drafted their own "Farmer's Declaration of Independence" that identified railroad monopolists as tyrants and called for an end to the "licentious extravagance" that characterized the Gilded Age.[3] Yet the Nebraska farm women's efforts were noteworthy because they gestured toward a broader pattern of writing, thinking, and speaking that was developing among certain rural and farm women during the early twentieth century. As these women

leveraged particular modes of rhetorical engagement in service to their concerns and those of their communities, the inventional practices of writing, thinking, and speaking – and the texts, ideas, and spoken words that were their products – nurtured for these women a process of becoming. In other words, as rural and farm women embraced existing and emerging opportunities for personal and public engagement, they embraced also the possibility that their rhetorical labor could transform understandings of their identities, relationships, and individual and collective futures.

This dissertation examines the rhetoric of predominantly white U.S. rural and farm women from the 1920s and argues that their public arguments crafted a particular idea of feminism that is both grounded in and enabled by their experiences as rural and farm women. While feminism is generally regarded as an individual and collective mission to achieve the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes, the idea and practice of a feminist politics assumes alternative elements in rural and farm contexts, where patriarchy has long governed and structured its people, their relationships, and their possibilities. Jenny Barker Devine argues that during the second half of the twentieth century, rural and farm women mobilized a "politics of dependence" to gain access to public and political spaces. According to Devine, this strategy required that women appeal to their gendered roles as wives and mothers to authorize their entrance into male-dominated places and conversations.[4] While I agree with Devine that rural and farm women have often relied upon conventional gendered logics to maintain the norm of female subordination within agrarian ideology *even as* they strategically maneuvered to become public and political actors, I argue that we can benefit from understanding other modes of feminist advocacy among rural and farm women beyond those associated with women's presence in traditionally masculine spaces.

Hearing the Nebraska women who stated so clearly the conditions of their feminist vision — equal technology, equal income, equal value — I argue that when we turn to rural and farm women's words, we can see how those women enacted a feminism that was borne out of their everyday experiences and that encouraged themselves and others to recognize their value to rural and farm life. Neither anchored to the task of achieving public office nor premised upon the idea that political spaces are the stages for feminism's performance, the feminism that rural and farm women developed posited that the women's perspectives, knowledge, and identities mattered within their personal and public lives. The goal of this project is to reveal the intricacies of that rural and farm feminism. How did rural and farm women author themselves into existing and emerging ideas of agrarianism? What rhetorical strategies did women mobilize as they individually and collectively reimagined different meanings of "rural" and "rural womanhood"? And what does rural and farm women's rhetorical invention reveal about the problems of and potentials for navigating the rhetorically gendered American culture of rural and farm life? Turning to *rhetorical agency* as a conceptual framework through which to engage these questions, this dissertation considers how rural and farm women's discourses enabled certain modes of rhetorical performance during the 1920s in a major women's magazine and a national conference. As women interacted with each other in these two rhetorical venues, they authored themselves into public discussions regarding the future of rural America, and they authorized other women to mobilize their experiences as knowledge fit for future public arguments. The women's rhetorical strategies of dissociation, *phantasia*, and consciousness raising enabled the women to see, through language, who they were and who they could become. First, we need to understand why rural and farm people matter, why the early twentieth century marked a pivotal moment for rural and farm people, and what it means to study rural and farm women as historical

and rhetorical subjects. I engage those inquiries throughout the remainder of this chapter as I situate the project in rhetorical studies and justify its contributions to women's rhetorical history, agrarian and rural rhetorics, and rhetorical agency.

Justification of the Project: Contributions to Rhetorical Studies of Agrarian and Rural Rhetorics, Rhetorical Agency, and Women's Rhetorical History

Since antiquity, various cultures have turned to farmers as notable embodiments of themselves, their values, and their ideals for civic life.[5] In Book 6 of the *Politics*, Aristotle declared, "For the best material of democracy is an agricultural population; there is no difficulty in forming a democracy where the mass of the people live by agriculture or tending of cattle."[6] Although different ideas of agrarianism have emerged throughout space and time, those ideas, James A. Montmarquet argues, are united by the common ideological thread "that agriculture and those whose occupation involves agriculture are especially important and valuable elements of society."[7] In the United States, rural and farm people are consistently consecrated as ideal in the public imagination because of their actual and perceived characteristics: sovereignty, authenticity, virility, and morality.[8] According to David B. Danbom, agrarianism is particularly persuasive to Americans because it provides an escape from the realities of contemporary life: "It appeals to that very American notion that the individual can escape the constraints of society and recapture a lost innocence, that he or she can reclaim a lost freedom in a lost Eden, a paradise almost always associated with nature and almost never with civilization."[9] Following the 2016 presidential election of Donald J. Trump, rural voters have fascinated, frustrated, and confused academics, the press, and professional writers. In attempting to find the answers as to why rural people supported now-President Trump, a man whose biography aligns more with the nineteenth

century railroad monopolists than the Illinois farmers who sought independence, it seems like everyone now has their eyes and ears open to rural America.[10]

Despite this contemporary situation, only certain rural and farm people have attracted much attention throughout history. Rural and farm women occupy a tenuous presence in cultural narratives about and popular conceptions of rural life. As Lu Ann Jones notes, these women "have remained hidden in plain sight."[11] The meanings of "rural" that circulate in public discourse contribute to this concealment: "rural" is commonly associated with "agriculture," which is overwhelmingly associated with "male farmer." Consequently, these rhetorical constructions make invisible rural and farm women and their contributions to rural and farm life. The irony of this discursive work is that it belies the reality that farming and other rural labor has always been "a collective endeavor" that men and women share.[12] Today, women are challenging stereotypical perceptions of who can claim "rural" or "farmer" identities through public campaigns that visualize rural women's labor.[13] Yet this rhetorical work of redefining "rural" to account for women's experiences began much earlier than the contemporary moment. It has roots in the early twentieth century, as women across the U.S. faced the prospect of rural and farm jeopardy and transformation. This dissertation studies two contexts in the 1920s, a major women's magazine and a national conference, to understand better how rural and farm women worked within existing conceptions of farmers and agrarian lifestyles as they carved out spaces for their own rhetorical invention. To accomplish this, the project recovers and foregrounds rural and farm women's voices and discourses because, as Melissa Walker argues, "The best way to understand the women's lives is to read their words."[14]

Rhetoric scholars generally consider rural and farm issues as they relate to mythology, literacy, and individual and collective identity. Kim Donehower, Charlotte Hogg, and Eileen E.

Schell's edited volume *Reclaiming the Rural: Essays on Literacy, Rhetoric, and Pedagogy* offers a substantial contribution to the field by providing a collection of essays of historical and contemporary studies related to how rural identities are rhetorically forged, fractured, and maintained.[15] Other scholars investigate the relationships among farmers, environmentalism, and democratic public culture. Tarla Rai Peterson's work explores the intersection of the agrarian myth and the frontier myth, the consequences of farmers resisting conservation knowledge and practices, and the difficulties of connecting farmers' individual will to collective action during the American Dust Bowl.[16] Leroy G. Dorsey's work on the frontier myth reveals that the yeoman farmer was the ideal rhetorical figure through which President Theodore Roosevelt could introduce to the American public the idea of conservation. According to Dorsey, Roosevelt understood that yeoman farmers embodied distinctly American qualities, and their "wise use of the environment" toward productive ends made the yeoman farmer a persuasive figure through which to push a national conservation agenda.[17] Jeff Motter's analysis of country lifers' early twentieth century rhetoric demonstrates that those invested in rural and farm politics invented an alternative mode of democracy that drew its power from local citizens.[18] Other scholars including Thomas R. Burkholder, Ross Singer, Annie R. Specht, Tracy Rutherford, and Stephanie Houston Grey illuminate the agrarian myth's historical and contemporary presence within suffrage arguments, visual culture, and regional food movements.[19]

Despite this work, questions remain about how agrarianism provided to ordinary rural and farm women resources for their rhetorical invention at the same time that it restricted their possibilities for transcending the gender norms upon which agrarianism has always rested. As recently as 2012, Jeff Motter and Ross Singer called for scholars to cultivate a "rhetoric of agrarianism" that, through criticism and historiography, would consider more fully "how the

land, its bounty, its inhabitants, and its symbolic configurations articulate with *mythoi* of the past as well as discourses of the present."[20] This project responds to Motter and Singer's call, and it does so through a close examination of rural and farm women's public arguments about their identities during a transitional time for America's rural and farm culture. David B. Danbom suggests that the agrarian myth is so grounded in the national psyche that it seems natural, rather than socially constructed.[21] The rhetorical associations among rural-agriculture-male produce a similar blindness. If "rural" and "farmer" exist in public discourse as a code for masculinity and as a way of organizing and perpetuating gender norms, then this project allows us to see how rural and farm women drew upon these vocabularies as they affirmed, contested, and reimagined meanings of rurality and rural womanhood.

To recognize how rural and farm women performed this rhetorical work, I identify rhetorical agency as a conceptual resource through which we can see the complexities of women's arguments. Within rhetorical studies, rhetorical agency generates debate and, at times, contention, as scholars make meaning of rhetorical performances and their effects. As an inquiry invested in understanding the possibilities and limits of rhetorical action, rhetorical agency stimulates philosophical inquiries regarding individual actors and collective bodies, material and symbolic structures, identities and subjectivities, and intentions and effects.[22] This project is invested in notions of rhetorical agency as they developed in two major types of rural and farm women's discourses: letters to *The Farmer's Wife* magazine and conversations at the first national farm women's conference. In chapter three, we will see readers of *The Farmer's Wife* become contributors as they send letters to the magazine that perform both immediate and gradual functions. In the immediate sense, the women address each other as they debate meanings of success for the rural and farm woman living in the later 1920s. Mobilizing their

experiences of living on the land and maintaining homes and, sometimes, families, these women vividly argue against a monolithic vision of the successful "farmer's wife." As their letters accumulate into longer and recurring forums, the women's words co-construct an alternative vision of "the farmer's wife" that pivots away from the sanctioned image that the magazine promotes: a woman who is happiest kept in place, in her home, where she enjoys the increasing trappings of modernity, consumer culture, and middle-class domesticity. The women's alternative vision, which manifests through their letters to each other, interrupts the magazine's ideal woman by revealing that the successful rural and farm woman does not need to be tethered to her home; instead, she might also work outdoors or live child-free. These two facets trouble long-held assumptions and attitudes about gender in rural and farm culture and women's places and responsibilities within that culture. Thus, as women write into *The Farmer's Wife* to talk to each other, they also construct the agency of "the farmer's wife" as an idea and ideal. By revealing realities of rural and farm life that counter those that the magazine promotes, the women who write letters also author an alternative vision of who the farmer's wife is and who she might become. In chapter four, we will hear rural and farm women from across the United States (and Canada) talk with each other at a national conference about the future of rural America. During their four-day conversations, agency develops as the women confide in each other about their hopes and fears, brainstorm potential solutions to current problems, and strategize how to improve their communities after the conference ends. In this sense, agency arises as the women interact in a shared space and open themselves up to the possibility that their participation might change themselves and others. Carolyn Miller notes that rhetorical agency arises neither entirely from the individual agent (and her intentions) nor from the results of the agent's actions (effects); instead, agency is "the *kinetic energy* of rhetorical performance" that

emerges and exists during a rhetorical interaction.[23] As a kinetic energy, rhetorical agency "must be a property of the rhetorical event or performance itself."[24] In this chapter, I consider how rhetorical agency occupies the middle space between intention and effect as the women think and speak together about their possibilities for future independent and collective action. As the conference participants discuss issues including economics, community development, and citizenship, they allow themselves to be stirred and persuaded by each other's arguments; the movement throughout their conversations becomes an indicator of agency as the women allow the rhetoric to shape their time together and point their discussions in various directions. Overall, the project forwards the notion of rhetorical agency as authorship. By authorship, I mean both the process of crafting with language and the product of that craft. Whether the women write letters to each other, or co-construct a vision that challenges an editorial ideal, or speak to each other and create plans for their future work, they author themselves into public conversations about rural America. The forms of that authorship vary across the chapters, but overall, the women's rhetorics function to authorize the women who invented them, and the women who will follow them, as subjects whose knowledge and experiences position them to make arguments about the future of rural America.

While I acknowledge the women in this dissertation as human subjects whose choices led them to write and speak, I am less interested in studying *who* possessed agency and instead find it more productive to examine what modes of rhetorical agency manifested during rural and farm women's rhetorical encounters. This is not to suggest that the individual women that I write about lack the capacity to make choices in their day-to-day lives; they certainly do. The women in this project chose to engage with each other in *The Farmer's Wife*. The women in this project also chose to accept an invitation to participate in a national conference. Nor do I interpret the

women as autonomous beings who move consciously through their worlds, unhampered by the materials and symbolic structures that condition their existence. Instead, I analyze how the women's rhetorics authorize certain worldviews, patterns of argument, forms of evidence, and interpretive possibilities for those women and those who encounter their discourses. The women in this project valued their roles as farmers, mothers, wives, economic contributors, and community members; they mobilized conversation in letters and in person as a key mode of communication; they leveraged personal stories, vivid examples, and experiences to support their claims in their conversations; and they co-created the conditions under which the women themselves and those who read or heard their discourses could understand differently their value, identities, and future prospects. As will become clearer throughout the project, the modes of agency that rural and farm women's rhetorical participation enabled suggest that the very presence of rural and farm women in certain rhetorical spaces is a fruitful ground from which to consider the prospects and limitations of rhetorical agency.

I concentrate on *The Farmer's Wife* magazine and proceedings from the national farm woman's conference as venues of rhetorical practice for a few reasons. First, although many other agricultural magazines existed during the early twentieth century and sometimes included a page or recurring column that addressed "women's issues" and/or that a woman hired by the magazine authored or curated, no other agricultural magazine during this time exclusively named women as its primary audience. In *The Farmer's Wife* (hereafter, *TFW*), every single editorial, article, and report addressed issues critical to its readership's present circumstances and future possibilities; it also provided to women, who may have been isolated, an opportunity for mindful escape from their everyday lives through "feel-good" stories about the positive qualities of rural and farm life. "Men's columns" that spoke to "men's issues" were not featured in this magazine,

which makes it a significant text in which to see how rural and farm women were represented in print culture throughout the early twentieth century. Second, this magazine not only aimed to represent its readership — it also allowed its readership to contribute to and shape it. Directing Editor Dan A. Wallace argued that *TFW* served as "the mouthpiece for rural womanhood of the United States" because it represented the words and visions of rural and farm women from across the country.[25] By writing letters to each other and the editors, and by arguing for (and sometimes demanding) the introduction or termination of certain features, women had the opportunity, at times, to represent themselves in *TFW*. This magazine was also quite popular. Unlike contemporaneous agricultural magazines that addressed regional audiences, *TFW* attracted a national readership of women and it boasted over one million subscribers by 1930.[26] Although some of the women who read the magazine arguably enjoyed a particular class privilege in being able to purchase a few issues or an entire subscription, in speaking to and for women across the entire United States, *TFW* made present a variety of voices and issues that collapsed geographic space and brought together rural and farm women as a broader collective.

My choice to analyze the "What Do the Farm Women Want?" conference in Chicago is related to my reasons for engaging *TFW*. That is, while rural and farm women spoke at other national conferences during the same time period (and we will hear briefly from a few of those women later in the project), they often appeared as sole representatives for all rural and farm women at conferences designed with men as their target audiences. For example, annual National Country Life conferences typically allowed just one woman to address their attendees about issues related to the farm home and children. By contrast, the Chicago conference was designed entirely for rural and farm women to contribute as speakers; while a few men sat in the room and listened to the women's conversations, their tasks were to remain silent and to absorb

the ideas of the women speakers. Furthermore, this conference proceeded with a democratic spirit — the women voted on the topics they most wanted to deliberate about with each other, and the conference's conversations adapted accordingly. Therefore, this conference is an event where we can hear not just one, but sixteen, women inhabit the roles of speakers and audience members, and we can understand better the types of topics and issues beyond the home and children that they identified as crucial to their lives and communities.

The two studies that I take up in this project — *The Farmer's Wife* magazine and the "What Do the Farm Women Want?" conference — share connections with the Wallace family of Des Moines, Iowa. Henry Wallace, Sr. edited *Wallaces' Farmer*, a popular early twentieth century Midwestern agricultural magazine, and served as a commissioner on President Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission, a federal investigative body that worked to improve rural and farm life from 1907-1908. One of his sons, Dan A. Wallace, began working for Minnesota-based Webb Publishing Company in 1903 and by 1905, was Directing Editor of one of the company's publications, *The Farmer*. In 1919, Wallace became Directing Editor of *The Farme*r's "sister" Webb publication, *The Farmer's Wife*, and served in that capacity until March 1935. Dan Wallace and *The Farmer's Wife* are present in both case studies. In chapter three, *TFW* is the text from which I draw rural and farm women's letters and the magazine's Master Farm Homemaker contest, and the years that I engage (primarily 1926-1929, although I incorporate elements from throughout the 1920s to illustrate *TFW*'s various forms, functions, and argumentative patterns) fall during Dan Wallace's tenure as Directing Editor. *TFW* co-sponsored with the American Country Life Association the Chicago conference that I examine in chapter four. Prior to the March 1926 event, the magazine published articles about the conference to generate readers' interests, and *TFW* also reported highlights from the conference as early as

April 1926. Dan Wallace was also one of the two men who attended the conference and listened to the participants' four days of conversations. The Wallaces were active in multiple generations of "country life" inquiries, and directly oversaw and helped to shape popular agricultural magazines that circulated contemporaneously. Throughout the project, I read my primary materials while keeping in mind that the Wallaces are, to some extent, always present. Whether Henry Wallace, Sr., looms in the background as a public servant who co-wrote the report that influenced how lawmakers interpreted and argued for policies on behalf of rural and farm people, or Dan A. Wallace directly responds to the women who write letters into his magazine, these men inhabit and, at times, co-construct the various rhetorical spaces that constitute the two case studies.

Understanding Rural and Farm Women as Historical and Rhetorical Subjects

Rhetorical studies locates its roots in the ancient Grecian and Roman cultures that excluded women from the official places of rhetorical speech and instruction, even as some women engaged privately in their own rhetorical practices. The history of rhetoric is one of gender, for it relied upon, bolstered, and sustained notions of masculinity and femininity at the same time that it functioned to cultivate ethical public citizens. (We can perhaps best see this claim in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, which defined the ideal public citizen as a "good man speaking well.")[27] Taught as an agonistic encounter for males, rhetoric – as pedagogy, product, practice – elevated hierarchical struggles and consequently excluded certain individuals from being recognized as capable of rhetorical expression. Feminist rhetorical scholars including Cheryl Glenn, Susan Jarratt, and Rory Ong, make visible these exclusions through projects that write women back into histories of rhetoric and that reveal their contributions to ancient

rhetorical theory and culture.[28] Molly Meijer Wertheimer notes that as scholars have "developed the will to know about women and have expanded what they are willing to examine as evidence, more and more rhetorically significant women are coming to the fore."[29] Yet some scholars emphasize that "adding in" women to the rhetorical canon is not enough. As Barbara A. Biesecker argues, scholars pursuing feminist inquiries should recover feminist discourses *and* exercise self-reflexivity about how those recoveries create absences even as they make present new voices, arguments, and histories.[30] Put differently, recuperating unheard voices is one thing, and understanding the systems of power that constrained the capacities of those voices to be heard is another.

I locate this project at the intersection of these tasks, for as I offer to the field the discourses of rhetors to whom we have not paid much attention, I simultaneously seek to make sense of their claims through careful contextualization that illuminates why those claims might have gone unheard for so long. This approach brings rhetorical subjects into the field of rhetorical studies and requires that we consider also how those subjects constructed and inhabited their rhetorical worlds. Therefore, this dissertation is both a recovery project and a rhetorical analysis. To understand how rural and farm women crafted public arguments about their identities, I analyze letters, articles, and editorials that appeared in *The Farmer's Wife*, the singular agricultural periodical devoted exclusively to rural and farm women during the early twentieth century. To recognize how rural and farm women collectively imagined their responsibilities and possibilities, I turn to the first national conference of rural and farm women in 1926 and study the women's conversations as instances of consciousness raising that enabled its female participants and male audience members to recognize rural and farm women in a new agrarian vision. While throughout the project I consider how those invested in improving rural

and farm life talked about the women they encountered in these rhetorical spaces, I primarily focus on how rural and farm women talked about themselves individually and collectively.

Studying rhetorical constructions of gender assumes additional layers of complexity when rural and farm women are moved to the center of analysis because of the unique ways that gender shapes rural and farm life. Historically, gender ideologies like the nineteenth century's cult of true womanhood policed the binary boundaries of masculinity and femininity by promoting the idea that non-rural, Victorian, white women required shelter from the precarious public and elevation in the home.[31] Rural and farm life demanded something different of women. Maintaining the family farm often required children's labor, and women were expected to bear and raise "crops" of children to help sustain the family enterprise. In this regard, women's labor was reproductive. Yet family prosperity also depended upon women's productive labor: rural and farm women raised animals, maintained gardens, and created handicrafts that they sold at local curb markets.[32] These efforts both supplemented the family income and enabled women to see themselves and their productive labor valued within their local rural economies.[33] Furthermore, the demands of rural and farm life often required women to work the land alongside their husbands, male relatives, and hired men. "Their labor was essential," Marilyn Irvin Holt notes of rural and farm women, "and they knew it."[34] Yet because field labor tended to be equated with men's labor, the fact that women regularly traversed that gendered spatial boundary – especially during busy times like harvest season – is noteworthy in scholarly discussions of gender even as it was commonplace in rural and farm women's lived experiences.[35] In other words, what might appear extraordinary to those unfamiliar with rural and farm culture was often a regular, necessary condition for women living and working on the land.

Just as labor demands distinct modes of interpreting and understanding rural and farm women's lives, so too does space require a different analytical posture for the scholar studying gender and rural life. Whereas notions of space have tended to function as a metric for assessing women's rhetorical accomplishments, the public/private distinction is not quite representative of rural and farm women's realities.[36] As Charlotte Hogg argues, conventional spatial constructions become troubled in rural and farm contexts where the "public" and "private" constantly overlap with one another.[37] As rural and farm geographies often constrained women from traveling to town and interacting with other women face-to-face, they also forced women to foster other forms of rhetorical connection. Indeed, rural and farm women's isolation necessitated alternative modes of publicity, for what was considered "public" address emerged from "private" contexts as women, whose responsibilities often confined them to the farm or home property, participated in rhetorical communities *from where they could*. For early twentieth century rural and farm women who often lacked the social luxury of proximity, texts that they encountered in print materials – fiction and nonfiction stories, reports on local and national rural and agricultural affairs, and letters from other women – functioned as conduits through which the individual rural and farm woman could engage with, and develop, a larger collectivity of rural and farm women. Chapter three deals more closely with one virtual space, *The Farmer's Wife* magazine, where I show how print culture enabled and sustained rural and farm women's opportunities for personal engagement and public expression.

Considering Women's Conservative Arguments about Gender

Scholars over the past few decades have situated women in the history of rhetoric, indicated feminist rhetorical strategies that function to achieve gender justice, and exercised self-

reflexivity about the vocabulary that guides and names their work.[38] While scholars who recover women's and feminist rhetorics and reveal how those rhetorics negotiate systems of power help us to understand gender as a rhetorical construction, we can also benefit from studies that examine women's conservative arguments about gender. By "conservative," I do not mean individuals and discourses associated with contemporary political parties. Instead, I use "conservative" to mean those individuals and discourses that affirm, maintain, and perpetuate traditional ideas about women and gender. More than fifteen years ago in her work on the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Carol Mattingly engaged these issues regarding how scholars label women's rhetorical practices. While some interpreted the WCTU as conservative because of its religious roots, Mattingly argued that WCTU women developed radical and sophisticated reform arguments that achieved better living conditions for women and families.[39] Mattingly's work authorized a heuristic that informed how feminist rhetorical scholars talk about women's and/or feminist rhetoric — that is, that sanctioned frameworks invite (and perhaps condition) scholars to interpret women's rhetorical practices as feminist, and/or radical, and/or emancipatory. What about women's or feminist rhetorics that diverge from those authorized definitions and narratives?

This question is gaining traction. Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch offer "strategic contemplation" as a reading and reflecting posture for the feminist rhetorical scholar. This practice asks the scholar "to render meaningfully, respectfully, honorably the words and works of those whom we study, even when we find ourselves disagreeing with some of their values, beliefs, or worldviews."[40] Relatedly, Hui Wu stresses the importance of understanding women's rhetorics within their own historical and gendered contexts, for arguments that contemporary scholars could dismiss as anti-feminist actually might have challenged the gender

norms of their time.[41] Charlotte Hogg has recently challenged scholars to see differently and study more meaningfully women's rhetorics that do not reject, but rather function within, systems of power. As Hogg asks, "What can be learned from rhetorical practices that don't forward the kind of radical women's agendas that have permeated our scholarship?"[42] To approach this question, Hogg invites us to return to the principle of inclusivity that undergirds feminist scholarship. That principle should catalyze scholars to study those who "fall outside our feminist frameworks" – those who do not identify as feminists or who do not engage in rhetorical practices that work to dismantle gendered power structures.[43] Conservative women are no more monolithic than their "radical" contemporaries, and taking seriously their claims and rhetorical strategies can "illuminate the rhetorical moves created within and perpetuating dominant ideologies, providing productive insights central to a feminist mission of analyzing structures – from the systemic to the daily – that influence power in a variety of ways."[44]

These principles are critical to this project. As I discovered, even as rural and farm women drew upon existing notions of womanhood within agrarianism to authorize their own rhetorical invention, their arguments often upheld gender norms even as they carved out space for these women's presence in rhetorical contexts. The women in this project participated in ways that arguably benefitted those women. For instance, those in chapter three saw their letters published in a major magazine, while those at the conference, by virtue of being selected to speak, enjoyed a level of stature and recognition that most of their rural and farm women contemporaries lacked. In these and other ways, the women had opportunities that many other rural and farm women did not; those opportunities afforded the women who contributed their texts, ideas, and words the prospect of prestige and self-transformation. But these women, I argue, worked within conventional notions of gender and did not try to radically change the

system—they positioned themselves and worked from within it. Although these women and their discourses did not effect measurable change within the patriarchal culture that structures and governs rural and farm life, I acknowledge the complexities and tensions that manifest throughout their public arguments. Perhaps they offer alternative ways of imagining the idea of gender justice within and beyond rural and farm contexts than arguments connected to women's presence in political or traditionally masculine spaces.

Scholarship on Early Twentieth Century Country Life Reform

Before we see rural and farm women's rhetorics in practice, we first need to understand what other scholars have said about the histories in question. While my analysis concentrates on rural and farm women's rhetorics of the 1920s, those rhetorics developed from a broader historical and rhetorical context in which public figures and private citizens aimed to help rural and farm people transition from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century. This section reviews key scholarly narratives about country life reform.

The era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought fundamental changes to the United States in ways social, political, and cultural. Robert H. Wiebe argues that as the U.S. transformed from a primarily agricultural society to an industrial society following the turn of the twentieth century, politicians, public figures, and private citizens worried that rural and life and its traditions would be left behind in the nineteenth century.[45] Richard Hofstadter declares that this was a disturbing prospect because rural people – especially farmers – were believed to embody the most praiseworthy American values and principles: moral fortitude, a strong work ethic, and independence.[46] William Bowers argues that urban-located reformers often marshaled the agrarian myth to authorize efforts to assist rural and farm people; still, even

as those reformers clung to traditional ideas about farmers, they also recognized that farmers needed to adjust to modern life. According to Bowers, reformers "did hope that farmers might hold fast to the social and political virtues of the agrarian past while accepting the material benefits of industrial changes."[47] The challenge for farmers involved negotiating tradition and change as modernity spread across the U.S. landscape.[48]

Public expressions of agrarianism became increasingly forceful during the early twentieth century as the United States transitioned from an agricultural society into a modern industrial powerhouse. With new modes of labor, transportation, and commerce, it seemed like the small family farmer did not fit into this new world. Country life reform emerged out of this context. In 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt established a Country Life Commission (CLC) and charged its commissioners with investigating the current conditions of rural and farm life and providing recommendations for how to improve it. This initiative drew its principles from the spirit of the Progressive Era, as the CLC embraced the notion that the government, institutions, and policies were best suited to assist rural and farm people.[49] Although the CLC produced a report that documented key issues of rural and farm life, the collective did not exist in its original state beyond Roosevelt's presidency. Still, Clayton Ellsworth regards the CLC as an "ultimate victory" because it inspired policies that aimed to improve the quality of life for rural and farm people, legitimized the academic discipline of rural sociology, and established a place in national conversations for rural and farm concerns.[50] Edith Ziegler affirms the significance of the CLC's work and argues that its report "probably had more influence on the rural life of the United States than any other document."[51]

One of the CLC's immediate influences was the creation of the Country Life Movement (CLM), a national program that aimed to implement the CLC's solutions by making rural life as

attractive, rewarding, and up-to-date as urban life. While "Country Lifers" wanted to make rural America more satisfying, their positions as middle-class academics, businessmen, and politicians somewhat alienated them from concerns on the ground. William L. Bowers notes that while the CLM did aspire to improve the lives of rural and farm citizens so that they would remain on the land, it was actually riddled with numerous objectives. "The movement," he explains, "was in reality a complex mixture of rural nostalgia, the desire to make agriculture more efficient and profitable, humanitarianism, and economic self-interest."[52] Some scholars study the CLC and the CLM as one entity, but Scott Peters and Paul Morgan insist that the two were separate entities designed to achieve different goals.[53]

When scholars assess the efficacy of country life reform programs and policies, they tend to attribute fault according to how reformers organized and executed particular programs. Bowers argues that most of the white, educated, middle-class, male reformers could not connect with those they aimed to assist. As a result, the reformers' "sentimental subscription to the agrarian dream caused them to identify the farmer as an abstraction; having no contact with real conditions on the farm, the reformers had no rapport with farmers."[54] David B. Danbom asserts that country life reform was too top-down because urban reformers "attempted to impose [their] values and notions" on the rural and farm population in a paternalistic manner that discounted rural and farm practices and traditions.[55] Because the reformers did not live the lives they were attempting to improve, their vision of rural uplift was often premised on sentimental notions of rural people rather than actual material conditions.[56]

Although these works contribute to knowledge about country life reform during and following the Progressive Era, these and other histories tend to reflect the perspectives of the reformers or other authorities.[57] By contrast, this project elevates the voices and discourses of

rural and farm women and reveals that they were not passive objects upon whom the state and other authorities could thrust their "uplift" strategies. Rather, they were active participants in shaping the rhetorical cultures around them and sustaining modes of rhetorical engagement among rural and farm women across the country. As neglected infrastructure, the rise of corporate agribusiness, and the temptation of city life pushed rural and farm people out of the countryside and rendered uncertain the future of rural and farm life, public figures increasingly turned to women to reinvigorate the desire among their families and communities to remain in the countryside. This project engages the outgrowth of country life reform as it manifested in women's rhetorical practices during the 1920s, an era marked with economic, social, and political uncertainty for rural and farm America. "Change was perhaps the only constant in the lives of rural women in the twentieth century," Melissa Walker suggests.[58] As we will see, rural and farm women frequently encountered and authored arguments for changes to their personal, professional, and public lives, particularly regarding their current and future roles as rural and farm women.

Methodological Assumptions Grounding the Dissertation

Throughout this project, I engage my research questions by combining archival research with textual analysis of letters, magazine and newspaper articles, speeches, and reports to understand how rural and farm women wrote, spoke, and learned about their individual and collective identities within and beyond rural and farm life. I take an intertextual approach to situate my primary units of analysis in their larger discursive contexts to understand how rhetorical dimensions beyond those texts shape them and give them meaning.[59] As I offer arguments about rural and farm women and rhetorical agency, I do so by folding their discourses

into the discursive contexts around which ideas about rural and farm women circulated and to which rural and farm women participated, however discreetly or purposefully. Sarah Hallenbeck points out that intertextuality helps the critic to trace the “trends, discrepancies, or transformations in the ways that gender norms or differences are enacted.”[60] In this project, my reading of *The Farmer’s Wife* and the Chicago conference is enriched as I consider other rhetorical arguments that circulated alongside these materials and that collectively contributed to how people talked about, interpreted, and worked on behalf of rural and farm women. As I engage the project’s primary source materials and other sources that contextualize them, I keep in mind that intertextuality brings particular challenges to the rhetorical critic who aims to trace the direct and subtle influences that rhetorical discourse manifests in public life. As John M. Murphy argues, intertextuality is tricky because it “crafts a kind of shadow text, one that can infuse and unify, but one that can also haunt and divide the rhetorical performance.”[61] Knowing this, I analyze the materials in this project with a critical, if not skeptical, eye toward the interpretations that the materials seem to obviously be authorizing, and toward the less apparent interpretations that emerge through an engagement with other circulating discourses that can challenge those sanctioned readings.

As a feminist scholar of public address, I incorporate the resources of rhetorical theory to illuminate how public arguments about gender are invented, circulated, and tested throughout space and time. Michaela Meyers suggests that gender is a valuable perspective through which to perform rhetorical criticism because it “tells us something about our objects of study that other categories cannot.”[62] My goal in this project is to recognize how individual experiences, social relations, and systemic forces interact to produce, reproduce, maintain, and challenge identity constructions within and beyond manhood and womanhood. I understand gender as an unstable

social construction that symbolic action and public argument constantly challenge, defend, negotiate, and transform.[63] Analyzing public discourse through the lens of gender requires that I consider how masculinities and femininities interact in public discourse, influence the construction of gendered identities, and enable and constrain acts of power.[64] Therefore, I study how discourses mostly by, but sometimes about, rural and farm women shaped public attitudes about rural womanhood, enabled and constrained identity formation among rural and farm women, and influenced power relations within rural and farm women's lived experiences.

As I have learned throughout this project, "rural" carries numerous meanings that both activate and resist common perceptions, stereotypes, and attitudes among those who call themselves rural and those who talk about them. One hundred years ago, the U.S. Census Bureau defined "rural" as a geographical space that contained fewer than 2,500 residents.[65] Today, the Bureau identifies rural "as what is not urban — that is, after defining individual urban areas, rural is what is left."[66] Yet defining "rural" based on what it is not negates the intricacies, complexities, and challenges that constitute rural life as we currently know it; demography and data only get us so far. Today, people tend to regard rural America as a forgotten place that bears the trappings of outmoded labors and lifestyles; farms, coal mines, factory towns, abandoned storefronts, former small-town main streets, and modest homes where American flags proudly fly are typical markings of contemporary rural America. In the early twentieth century, "rural" connoted certain facets of one's character. Rural people often understood themselves as simple, authentic, independent, connected to the land, and loyal to their families and tight-knit communities. As Kim Donehower, Charlotte Hogg, and Eileen E. Schell note, "The word *rural* functions for many as a marker of identity, regardless of demographic criteria or current location."[67] Unhampered by urban artifice and metropolitan politics, rural life provided to its

people opportunities for intimacy and connection with their neighbors and fellow townspeople. Rural life was *real* life.

Yet when people identified themselves or others as "rural," they often entered into a particular habit of expression that drew associations among people, places, and lifestyles that sometimes muddied their individual elements. In the early twentieth century, "rural" often signified "farm," "farmer," and "agriculture." However, not all rural people, neither then nor now, are connected to farming. Throughout this dissertation, I use the term "rural and farm people" to keep present the notion that rural America is more than farmers, for it also includes other people who live in rural areas and who interpret themselves as possessing the qualities connected to rural life. While I acknowledge that this may get repetitive for the reader, in using the language "rural and farm people," my goals are to resist monolithic understandings of rural Americans, to keep at the surface the complexities and conflations of rural America, and to challenge us to see better when these terms become blurry and when they become more clear.

Chapter Preview

Chapter two situates the project in the context of early twentieth century. As adolescents abandoned rural life, immigrants arrived in cities and countrysides, and farmers struggled to stay competitive in the capitalist marketplace, it was uncertain whether the nation's "best" citizens would continue to exist as a moral influence in public life. I concentrate on President Roosevelt and his Country Life Commission as a significant lens through which we can see how public figures channeled their concerns about rural and farm life into research and investigations that would influence later rural and farm initiatives and policies. Although Roosevelt was arguably the president who was most invested in improving country life for those who lived it, he was not

the first president to influence how the public interpreted the nation's farmers and rural citizens. The roots of American agrarianism stretch back to the early republic; to understand this cultural narrative and mythic framework, I examine how President Thomas Jefferson crafted a particular national story about the tillers of the soil that carved out in the public imagination a special place for farmers at the same time that it circumscribed the type of person most fit to represent the nation's agricultural labor. Recognizing the contours of the agrarian myth and how it celebrated certain people as it simultaneously concealed others will allow us to see how rural and farm women worked within this heuristic to develop their own strategies of rhetorical invention.

Chapter three examines two recurring features during 1926-1928 in *The Farmer's Wife*, "the sole agricultural periodical pitched entirely to farm women" during the early twentieth century.[68] This magazine is fully digitized and available through the University of Illinois Digital Newspaper Collection. The features that I analyze represented competing definitions of success. For the first feature, a "Master Farm Homemaker" contest that the magazine sponsored, I study articles that the magazine's editors and staff writers published regarding the contest; I also connect these texts to photographs and other visual material that the magazine provided to visualize its ideal "master farm homemaker." For the second feature, the "Sally Sod" debate, I study letters that rural and farm women submitted to *TFW* as they deliberated about the rural and farm woman's proper role and place. The women, although they sent their letters to the magazine, addressed their fellow female readers as their primary audience throughout the Sally Sod exchange. This feature existed from the publication of Sod's first letter in January 1927 through April 1929, when *TFW* published its final forum in the debate. While the contest awarded those farm women who performed a sanctioned femininity that was marked with the trappings of home professionalism and expertise and that aligned with the domestic science and

home economics movements, women's letters to the Sally Sod debate interrupted *TFW*'s vision of successful rural womanhood by troubling gendered ideas about field labor and motherhood. Although one editor privately lamented that women "with neither writing ability nor imagination" submitted letters to *TFW*, I contend that rural and farm women's letters constituted a counter femininity and demonstrated rural and farm women's capacities for rhetorical expression and public argument when those in authority sometimes believed they had neither.[69]

As rural and farm women were engaging each other in print culture, others were meeting face-to-face and discussing how to improve rural and farm life. Chapter four turns to one of these instances: the "What Do the Farm Women Want?" conference held at Chicago's Edgewater Beach Hotel from March 8-11, 1926. Co-sponsored by *TFW* and the American Country Life Association, this conference united sixteen women from across the U.S. who debated the very question that Roosevelt's CLC investigated twenty years prior: "Is farm life completely satisfying to the farm family?"[70] My primary texts for analysis in this chapter are drawn from the printed conference proceedings of the "What Do the Farm Women Want?" conference, which are archived at the Minnesota Historical Society. I study the conference as a scene of consciousness raising and analyze its proceedings to learn how rural and farm women articulated their individual and collective desires for the future of rural life. As their conversations unfolded throughout the four-day event, the participants mobilized elements of the feminine style as they nurtured an adapted agrarianism. They appealed to romantic agrarian principles including stewardship, sovereignty, and middle-class privilege, yet invented new possibilities for rural and farm women regarding their roles as homemakers, their capacities for collective action, and their identities as sources of prosperity.

In the conclusion, I consider how the seemingly negligible results of rural and farm women's letters and conference conversations actually provide a way of thinking productively about the relationship between rhetorical agency and effects. Arguing that the documentation and preservation of these women's words signals their rhetorical significance, I suggest that the women's engagement with each other as they author themselves into public discussion about rural life and their roles within it signifies the presence of rhetorical agency. I also identify further inquiries that scholars might pursue regarding agrarian and rural rhetorics, and reflect more broadly on how my experience with this project performs the elements of rhetorical agency that the project forwards.

The rhetorical events that I engage in chapters three and four are chronologically distinct from each other. Chapter four's Chicago conference, held March 8-11, 1926, occurred first. Sally Sod's initial letter to *TFW* appeared in January 1927, and one month later, Dan Wallace announced in the magazine's February 1927 issue that *TFW* would soon stage its Master Farm Homemaker contest. The contest call appeared in April 1927, two months into the debate that Sally Sod's letter ignited among rural and farm women. The Sally Sod debate persisted throughout 1927 and 1928 (although it was most prominent in 1927), and *TFW* published its inaugural Master Farm Homemaker winners in its April 1928 issue, around the time that the women's debate was tapering off. The Master Farm Homemaker contest and general vocabulary continued into 1929, and the final letter engaging the Sally Sod debate appeared in the April 1929 issue. Therefore, there is some overlap between when *TFW* was soliciting Master Farm Homemaker applicants and when it was publishing women's textual contributions to the Sally Sod exchange. But, for the most part, we can think of the debate occurring prior to the Master Farm Homemaker feature. Together, the timeline of the rhetorical events in chapters three and

four proceeds as conference, then Sally Sod debate, then Master Farm Homemakers. However, the order of my analysis proceeds as Master Farm Homemakers, then Sally Sod debate, then conference. My choice to order the chapters as such arises from my commitments in this project; that is, I am less interested in narrating a historical timeline of events and focus instead on the types of agency that the various rhetorical events and discourses make possible.

Overall, this project argues that by turning to rural and farm women's rhetorical practices as they manifested in print and oratorical spaces during the 1920s, we can learn about how the women's interactions in those spaces enabled certain modes of agency and rhetorical expression. In so doing, it suggests that we can understand what facilitated and constrained rural and farm women's rhetorical invention as they wrote and spoke about their identities as rural and farm women, their attitudes about rural and farm change, and their hopes for the future of rural America. This project does not account for the voices of all rural and farm women across the United States and within all available rural and farm organizations during the 1920s. Nor does this project attempt to trace the rhetorical histories of agrarianism from the early republic to the contemporary moment. Instead, this project narrows its focus and concentrates on particular patterns of argument that emerged in the 1920s among rural and farm women who could access and chose to write to *The Farmer's Wife*, who were invited to participate at the Chicago conference, and whose literacy and relative leisure enabled their presence in and contributions to those spaces. These items of critical analysis are arguably more monumental than mundane, which reflects a facet of rural and farm women's history.[71] "Most rural women left no written records for posterity," Nancy Grey Osterud explains. "Farm women often lacked the literacy, leisure, and sense of self-importance that prompt people to record their experiences."[72] To be clear, there certainly exist rural and farm women's materials that were meaningful in those

women's everyday lives – their diaries, their account books, their recipes. In this project, I focus on the more organized instances of rural and farm women's rhetorical performances as opposed to materials that I consider fragmented (e.g., women's club materials). The discourses that evidence these women's claims are documented texts of women's written and spoken words. The women's forms of engagement — print and speech — are traditional within rhetorical studies. While my choices as a critic narrow the types of evidence that I engage to study public argument, I maintain that turning to rural and farm women's written and spoken words reveals productive insights into women's rhetorical history and rhetorical agency. Do I think that the women in this project would identify themselves as feminists? I do not. But with an understanding of the gender norms of rural and farm culture, I recognize their individual and collective practices of making their ideas, visions, and identities matter as making strides, however intentionally or indiscreetly, toward gender justice. If the Nebraska women declared independence as a feminism attuned to the issues *on* the farm, then the women in this project extended those boundaries as they imagined broader modes of rhetorical participation through which they could engage each other about the matters critical to their lives and futures. Theirs was a feminism *from* the farm.

Chapter Two:
Locating Rural and Farm Women

In January 1909, Charlotte Perkins Gilman revealed to *Good Housekeeping* magazine's readers that the federal government had recently launched a national project that aimed to learn about the status of rural and farm life. "The female relatives of farmers," Gilman explained, "are being inquired about and looked after by a presidential commission."[73] The group that Gilman alluded to was the Country Life Commission (CLC), President Roosevelt's recent invention. On February 9, 1909, one month following Gilman's article, Roosevelt penned a letter to Congress and explained the mission of the CLC: "The object of the Commission on Country Life therefore is not to help the farmer raise better crops, but to call his attention to the opportunities for better business and better living on the farm."[74] Although Roosevelt declared these improvements were "especially important" to "prepare country children for life on the farm" and to make rural life "more attractive for the mothers, wives, and daughters of farmers," his commission was comprised entirely of men.[75] Gilman noticed this curious formation and raised a simple, yet sharp, question about Roosevelt's assemblage: "Why are there no women on this commission?"[76]

Within its early twentieth century context, Gilman's query called attention to a glaring absence within Roosevelt's group of researchers and advisers. To be clear, the commissioners did pursue written and spoken testimony from women. They also answered women's questions about the CLC's intentions. On October 17, 1908, Liberty Hyde Bailey, the Dean of the New York State College of Agriculture and Roosevelt's hand-picked CLC Chair, replied to Mrs. H. B. Rose's earlier letter and explained, "What we want to do is to let the country people see exactly the shape they are in."[77] But the CLC was not always hospitable to women's voices and

perspectives. In a letter to James Eaton Tower, *Good Housekeeping*'s editor during the CLC's early stages, one unnamed farm woman described her experience of attending a local meeting: "The bulk of the time…was taken up by ministers and professors, and it would seem that the ones they [the commissioners] were trying to help were the ones they did not wish to hear from."[78] Gilman recognized the limitations of the CLC's design and execution; she parsed the absence of rural and farm women as such: "What we in general, and our most earnest President in particular, fail to see in this connection, is that the women of this class constitute its full half, in numbers and importance, and must be appealed to direct, as responsible citizens; not studied into and recommended about as if they were part of the live stock [*sic*]."[79] In making these discrepancies known to the public, Gilman nurtured the grounds on which rural and farm women would stand during the coming decades as they asserted themselves as authorities on rural and farm matters. In asking why there existed no women on the president's commission, she envisioned a context in which rural and farm women's voices, perspectives, and knowledge would be valuable.

This chapter situates rural and farm women's rhetorical practices of the 1920s within the broader context of the early twentieth century and discusses the political, ideological, and rhetorical climates that shaped and were shaped by rural and farm Americans and those who talked about rural and farm Americans. During the twentieth century's first two decades, rural and farm people left the land to such an extent that by 1920, the nation confronted its new reality: for the first time in American history, less than half of the population was "rural."[80] This was extremely troubling news to politicians and other cultural elites who interpreted rural and farm people as embodying the romantic qualities of agrarianism. Their task was to prepare the rural and farm population for the modern world. Caught within this temporal tension of gazing

simultaneously backward and ahead, authorities first appealed to rural and farm women in a private capacity: as mothers, they could help maintain a healthy rural and farm population. As time passed, they adjusted their approach and recognized rural and farm women as participants who could enrich public conversations regarding rural and farm life. In rhetorical spaces including periodicals and public speaking contexts, rural and farm women transformed from objects that needed to be "looked after" to subjects who rhetorically challenged the nation – and themselves – to understand differently the meanings and possibilities of rural and farm womanhood.

In this chapter, I begin with an overview of agrarianism and republicanism as ideologies that informed popular understandings of farmers and rural people from the nation's founding through the early twentieth century. Then, I turn to President Roosevelt's Country Life Commission as the crucible wherein we can witness how authorities struggled to save the "best" of rural and farm life and remedy that which did not meet modern standards. After I discuss the CLC's work and trace some of its effects across the American political landscape, I situate rural and farm women within these narratives of modernity and social change. Although Roosevelt expressed care for certain rural and farm women – those who were white, middle-class mothers – rural and farm women tested his vision as they became evermore active in community, print, and political contexts. With decades of rural social movement and farm organization activities to draw upon, rural and farm women were poised at the start of the 1920s to speak on behalf of what was best for rural America.

Agrarianism and the American Imagination

Political histories and philosophical traditions sustain particular ways of thinking about the relationships among farmers, democratic ideals, and the state.[81] As modest, upright stewards of the land, farmers represent favorable principles in popular thought, including prudence, morality, and strength. Yet Thomas Jefferson's public and private musings fomented an American agrarianism that consecrated farmers as special in both secular and sacred terms.[82] In an August 23, 1785 letter to U.S. Secretary of Foreign Affairs John Jay, Jefferson famously asserted: "Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country, and wedded to its liberty and interests, by the most lasting bonds."[83] Jefferson associated the republic's appealing qualities – strength, independence, virtue, and loyalty – with the male citizens who worked its lands. He echoed these ideas in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* when he cited farmers as a "chosen" people. This time, however, he ascribed to them a holy property: "Those who labour the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. It is the focus in which he keeps alive that sacred fire, which otherwise might escape from the face of the earth."[84] Here, Jefferson declared that farmers were blessed from above as exceptional humans who embodied "substantial and genuine virtue." Absent its farmers, American public life would also lack its virtue.

Farmers also embodied the virtues associated with republicanism, a political philosophy rooted in ancient Grecian and Roman governance that vilified corruption, greed, and monarchy, and advocated individual sacrifice for the common good.[85] Some of America's founders provided insight into republican principles and how those principles shaped the early nation. James Madison argued in *Federalist* 10 that republics, not democracies, were best suited to

prevent the "mischiefs of faction" from enabling individual passions and interests to threaten the overall good of the community.[86] In contrast to pure democracies that became weaker as they grew larger, Madison argued that republics strengthened as they grew larger because they could send more representatives to Congress, represent more issues, and allow power to remain dispersed across the nation.[87] In this way, republicanism preserved popular sovereignty yet also enabled virtuous men with "the most attractive merit and the most diffusive and established characters" to represent districts in national politics.[88] It was a mode of preserving individual autonomy at the same time that it invited individuals to work on behalf of their communities. These republican principles reflected many farmers' experiences: they were sovereign, self-sufficient laborers scattered across the land yet united in the understanding that they were free from an overbearing state.[89] While Alexander Hamilton advocated for an industrial republic of wealthy manufacturers, Madison argued for a republic sustained by agriculture because the farmers' qualities would ensure a healthy citizenry.[90] According to Madison, the farmer represented "the most truly independent and happy" citizen, and agriculture supplied "health, virtue, intelligence and competency," as well as liberty and safety, to the greatest number of citizens.[91] Therefore, some of the nation's founding documents and figures fostered romantic notions of farmers that connected to political questions regarding land, public character, and the state.

Yet only certain bodies could perform the divine occupation of working the land. Accordingly, only certain individuals could claim the characteristics associated with Jefferson's agrarianism. First, Jefferson envisioned an American landscape of independent family farmers who owned the land they worked.[92] In the early days of the republic, this often translated to a white male body. Even as Jefferson viewed agriculture "not primarily [as] a source of wealth but

of human virtues and traits most congenial to popular self-government," the bodies of white landowners were those that inhabited those virtues and traits because capital and character were intimately connected.[93] Even as Jefferson benefitted from a slave economy, the black bodies that were forced to provide his agricultural labor prohibited those individuals from performing "proper" principles of agrarianism.

Second, Jefferson's agrarianism did not recognize women as farmers. Instead, women were domestic laborers whose responsibilities were isolated in the home. While farmers were expected to cultivate crops and travel to town to participate in community affairs, women were expected to rear the crops of children who would become the next generation of farmers.[94] As a result, Jeffersonian agrarianism "demanded a subordinate woman, usually concealed and peripheral."[95] In failing to recognize women as farmers, Jefferson denied women the possibility of being associated with the admirable qualities of agrarianism that he ascribed to his yeoman heroes: strength, independence, virtue, and loyalty. Overall, these ideological absences created material consequences for female farmers, non-white farmers, and poor farmers, for in offering a rigid definition of the American farmer, Jefferson established who should and should not benefit from praise, prosperity, and protection. As we will see, these restrictions would not disappear in the coming centuries. Rather, they would take shape in different ways that still preserved a normative vision of the ideal American rural and farm citizen.

Envisioning Improvement: Early Twentieth Century Rural and Farm Initiatives

Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission

For more than a century, Jeffersonian agricultural associations circulated throughout American public life and influenced how Americans imagined farmers as unique contributors to

the nation. As the twentieth century began, the future of farming in particular and rural life in general was uncertain. President Roosevelt recognized this and believed that rural and farm people were paragons of American democracy:

> I warn my countrymen that the great recent progress made in city life is not a full measure of our civilization; for our civilization rests at bottom on the wholesomeness, the attractiveness, and the completeness, as well as the prosperity, of life in the country. The men and women on the farms stand for what is fundamentally best and most needed in our American life.[96]

Situating his modern appeal in the broader tradition of agrarianism, Roosevelt asserted that national prosperity depended upon rural and farm people. Consistent with the principles of progressivism, the president envisioned the government as rural America's best ally. Like Jefferson, Roosevelt desired a national constituency of middle-class farmers who owned their land and controlled the means of production. The October 11, 1907 issue of *Wallaces' Farmer* printed Roosevelt's preference: "Nothing is more important to this country than the perpetuation of our system of medium sized farms worked by their owners."[97] Yet transformations in land prices, rural populations, and racial demographics threatened the likelihood that Roosevelt's vision would become actualized. For instance, the eleventh U.S. census in 1890 indicated that the frontier was officially closed and revealed that American land was limited.[98] Settlers justified westward expansion and the theft of native lands as "manifest destiny," the idea that going west and bringing progress was an unavoidable divine mission. As settlers seized lands and tamed them into civilization, commercial farming replaced subsistence farming as people became increasingly rooted to singular areas. Between 1890 and 1900, the number of people whose occupations were "agricultural pursuits" jumped from 8,565,926 to 10,381,765.[99] But a smaller supply of land amounted to higher land prices that made it difficult for farmhands to afford their own farms; as a result, tenant farmers went to areas with cheaper rent or abandoned farming

entirely.[100] This "exodus of farmers," *Wallaces' Farmer* reported in September 1908, revealed that "apparently the richer the country, the more anxious the farmer is to get away."[101]

Other factors contributed to what Bailey called "a new species of rural drainage."[102] The "whirl of urban life" seduced some rural and farm people because cities reduced isolation, offered safer roads, and provided better schools and community centers.[103] In many ways, city life offered rural and farm people greater opportunities and safer alternatives to living and working on the land; it provided better educational, religious, and social resources that the countryside lacked. Rural people and authorities were particularly concerned that rural America's next generation of young leaders would work on behalf of urban, not rural, interests.[104] The "drainage" also was a problem for farmers as a class; as rural and farm people left the land, it became difficult for those who remained to organize and influence local and national politics.[105]

Importantly, authorities feared rural drainage insofar as it depleted the white rural and farm population. The absence of white farmers, coupled with the presence of poor white and non-white laborers in idealized rural spaces, ignited racism within those who recognized the "proper" farmer as white and middle-class. William Rossiter, chief clerk of the U.S. Census Office and President Roosevelt's friend, lamented in 1906 that when "the sturdy men and women" opted for city life, "foreigners of all nationalities" moved in and labored the land.[106] This demographic prospect was threatening to Rossiter and others because those they called "foreigners" were "not at present in harmony with the spirit of the institutions created by the native stock."[107] In this way, the Progressive Era's coded racialized language ("native stock") assisted elites in perpetuating the vision of the white middle-class American as the quintessential farmer and rural citizen.[108]

To save the idea of rural America as white, middle-class, moral, and industrious, Roosevelt initiated a national program that would have immediate and long-term influence over rural and farm policies and politics. On August 10, 1908, Roosevelt composed a letter to Liberty Hyde Bailey, then the Dean of the New York State College of Agriculture, and requested that he "serve upon a Commission of Country Life."[109] Agricultural productivity was not the issue; as Roosevelt acknowledged, "the farmers in general are better off today than they ever were before."[110] According to Roosevelt, the greater problem was that "the social and economic institutions of the open country are not keeping pace with the development of the Nation as a whole."[111] The Commission's task was to investigate, in person and in print, the current living conditions of rural citizens and to suggest how the federal government might provide aid. Bailey initially declined the president's invitation to chair the CLC because his demanding academic commitments conflicted with the travel and attention that a national country life inquiry would require. Roosevelt persisted and, in a separate letter dated August 14, 1908, told Bailey: "I certainly expect that you will serve, you owe it to me."[112] Bailey immediately responded. In a letter the very next day, he expressed to Roosevelt, "I want to help you."[113] In addition to Bailey, Roosevelt requested the service of four other men acquainted with rural, farm, and conservation issues: Kenyon Butterfield, President of the Massachusetts Agricultural College; Henry Wallace, editor of *Wallaces' Farmer*; Gifford Pinchot, Chief of the U.S. Forest Service; and Walter Page, editor of *World's Work* magazine and co-founder of the Doubleday, Page, and Co. publishers.[114]

Over the next two months, the CLC mailed 500,000 twelve-question circulars to families that lived along rural free delivery routes and encouraged recipients to submit supplementary letters to the CLC. The commissioners received 115,000 completed circulars along with 200 sets of notes from community meetings at which farmers discussed their responses to the circulars.[115]

But Roosevelt wanted more. On November 9, 1908, he wrote to Bailey again and encouraged the CLC to attend local meetings within rural school districts so that they could hear directly from "all men and women whose lifework is done either on the farm or in connection with the life work of those who are on the farm."[116] The commissioners complied and spent the remainder of 1908 meeting people out in the country and collecting what Roosevelt later described as "a valuable body of first-hand knowledge" that supplemented the CLC's existing data.[117]

By January 23, 1909, the CLC considered its findings, drafted its suggestions for country life improvement, and submitted its 52-page report to the president. This "Report of the Country Life Commission" addressed country life's current problems, including land speculation, sanitation, and transportation, and offered solutions including better education, cooperation, and local leadership. Although the report revealed that agriculture was "prosperous commercially," it also affirmed Roosevelt's earlier anxieties: "that the social conditions in the open country are far short of their possibilities."[118] Roosevelt attached to the report his own letter to Congress. His February 9, 1909 missive not only defended the CLC's findings – it argued for the immediate creation of a Department of Country Life within the U.S. Department of Agriculture and a $25,000 appropriation so that the commission could collect additional data.[119]

Congress did not share Roosevelt's enthusiasm for more research. When Roosevelt submitted the CLC's report to Congress on February 10, 1909, the Senate "received [it] with open amusement" and the House adjourned without considering it.[120] Less than one month later, on March 3, 1909, the House "laughingly discredited" the CLC's work and "overwhelmingly disagreed to" honor Roosevelt's $25,000 request.[121] Moreover, it advised Roosevelt and the CLC to terminate future efforts to learn about rural life. While the Chamber of Commerce in Seattle, Washington, eventually printed and circulated the CLC's report, much of the CLC's actual data

remained hidden from public vision and was later destroyed.[122] Secretary of Agriculture David F. Houston, under the Taft Administration, ordered the circulars to be burned; the irony of this command is that, as we will see, Houston initiated his own rural life inquiry during his term. Perhaps most unfortunate, however, was the fact that the testimony the CLC had expended such effort to acquire was hardly incorporated into its final report. As Bailey noted in a January 1909 letter to U.S. Census Bureau director S. N. D. North, the CLC felt "constrained to make our report as short as possible" and did not have adequate time to consider all of the data it had acquired.[123] Additionally, the commission's abridged assessment of rural and farm issues exacerbated problems for the rural and farm women that it endeavored to assist. The CLC's report identified "the burdens and the narrow life of farm women" as one of the "most prominent deficiencies" of country life.[124] The male commissioners' perceptions of rural and farm women were consequential because they created a heuristic through which policy makers interpreted these women, their labor, and their livelihoods.[125] If authorities recognized women as subjects whose perspectives would enrich existing notions of rural life, and included women as investigators whose interpretations would illuminate alternative aspects of the CLC's data, then they could capture a more complete assessment of rural America.

In spite of these shortcomings, the CLC's report remains noteworthy because of the perspectives it revealed about women. Because Roosevelt took a holistic approach to country life that aimed for "better farming, better business, and better living," understanding rural and farm conditions also required understanding rural and farm women.[126] When it addressed "Woman's Work on the Farm," the report noted that farm women experienced hardships including "poverty, isolation, [and] lack of labor-saving devices" more acutely than farmers, which amounted to a "more monotonous" and "more isolated" experience.[127] Yet when it recommended how to

improve these "deficiencies," the CLC identified technologies that would make women's work more efficient *and* social institutions that would provide women with activities beyond household labor. The report announced: "The farm woman should have sufficient free time and strength so that she may serve the community by participating in its vital affairs."[128] Therefore, while Roosevelt's own attitudes about women largely hinged upon their reproductive capacities, the CLC's report indicated that for country life to become prosperous, women needed to be active both within *and* beyond the home.[129] Women's organizations and community involvement could enhance women's lives and free them from real and perceived "drudgery."[130] Rural and farm women increasingly embraced such collectives as the new century continued.

Beyond the CLC: Other Rural and Farm Effects and Initiatives

We saw in chapter one that the Country Life Movement emerged from the CLC's report. Still, other rural and farm initiatives developed following the CLC's work. While the CLC was conducting its research in 1908, the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations created its own Commission on Agricultural Research. This collective advised that research and instruction at the association's colleges should address not only agriculture's scientific aspects, but also "those business, economic, social, and governmental factors" that influenced farmers and their communities.[131] In 1913, Congress supported the creation of a Rural Organization Service within the USDA.[132] The American Country Life Association organized in 1919 under the leadership of CLC commissioner Kenyon Butterfield and worked to improve all aspects of rural life, not those strictly associated with farming. Like the CLC, those concerned about rural and farm people headed the ACLA – academics, businessmen, government agencies – not necessarily rural and people themselves.[133] From 1919-

1976, the ACLA organized annual national conferences and circulated its publication, *Rural America*, to rural citizens, Granges, Farm Bureaus, and urban members. While the ACLA slowly faded by the mid-1970s, its decades of operation sustained Roosevelt's vision of communicating rural issues to national audiences.[134]

Perhaps the most consequential outcome of Roosevelt's initiative involved how he rhetorically associated "rural" with "farmer" and "country life" in the American imagination. Although all rural individuals were not farmers, "rural" was often conflated with agriculture.[135] When "rural" was meant to signify something separate from farming, "rural non-farm" was a common identifier.[136] Beyond agricultural associations, "rural" connoted specific qualities that kept separate its people from non-rural cultures. Even as automobiles, paved roads, and rural free delivery services created opportunities for people, material goods, and ideas to move within and beyond rural spaces, popular discourses kept intact the rural/urban binary in order to reassert rural life as superior. Echoing Jefferson's earlier sentiments that regarded cities as scenes of corruption, Butterfield asserted the stark differences between urban and rural life: "City life goes to extremes; country life, while varied, is more even. In the country there is little of large wealth, luxury, and ease; little also of extreme poverty, reeking crime, unutterable filth, moral sewage. Farmers are essentially a middle class and no comparison is fair that does not keep this fact ever in mind."[137] The constitutive function of rural and farm life avoided economic extremes of decadence and poverty; corporate farmers, sharecroppers, or other laborers low on the "tenure ladder" did not inhabit this ideal.[138] Instead, "rural" meant middle-class modesty devoid of the poverty, filth, and "moral sewage" that littered the cities.

On the one hand, that which was "rural" was associated with certain industries (agriculture); institutions (the family, churches, local community organizations); and ideals

(simplicity, authenticity, intimacy). Yet because "rural" was coded as "farmer/agriculture," which was coded as "male," additional layers of discursive associations seemingly naturalized the exclusions they performed. Recall that Roosevelt's "ideal" twentieth century farmer was a white male middle-class property owner. Although other bodies worked the nation's lands and contributed to rural economies, those individuals – the poor white, the non-white, and the female – often did not count as rural, and therefore were dissociated from the characteristics ascribed to "ideal" rural citizens. Just as Jefferson's "farmer" drew definitive boundaries around that subject position, so too did early twentieth century public discourse prevent certain individuals from inhabiting a "rural" identity. What emerged from the early twentieth century's rhetorical vocabulary was a gendered, raced, and classed notion of a rural American – a notion that white rural and farm women would both sustain and test as the century continued.

The Smith-Lever Act of 1914: "Taking the University to the People"

Although higher land values and urban temptations pushed many farmers and rural people away from the country, the first two decades of the twentieth century required reliable farm labor and often rewarded those who remained on the land. During agriculture's "Golden Age" from 1900-1920, farmers charged higher prices for food and agricultural products because higher urban populations, along with U.S. participation in World War I, fueled the nation's demand for farm products and created new markets for farmers.[139] A bushel of wheat that yielded $1.25 in 1915 yielded up to $3.48 in 1917.[140] Cotton that sold for 13 cents per pound in 1913 netted 38 cents per pound in 1919.[141] To capitalize on current agricultural prosperity and establish the conditions for continued success, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Smith-Lever Act on May 8, 1914, and declared it "one of the most significant and far-reaching

measures for the education of adults ever adopted by the government."[142] An extension of the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, the Smith-Lever Act authorized the federal government to partner with state governments and land-grant universities to disseminate research to rural citizens through bulletins, agricultural extension services, and home demonstration agents.[143] Although Seaman Knapp in Texas and Booker T. Washington of Alabama's Tuskegee Institute had previously tested agricultural extension in the South, Smith-Lever was the first piece of national extension legislation that aimed "to reach and influence…the great body of ordinary farmers."[144] The philosophy of Smith-Lever was simple: it promoted a rural education of "learning by doing."[145] Believing that written texts would not be persuasive enough on their own, Smith-Lever proponents envisioned that farmers would only accept their lessons through "personal appeal and ocular demonstrations."[146] Men and women were trained at the land-grant universities, took their expertise to rural people and farmers who requested information, displayed how to use new machinery and implement new methods, and assisted their audiences as they replicated the lessons.[147] As a form of traveling knowledge, the extension services brought to rural America the virtues of modern science embodied in the educated agent.[148] And although Smith-Lever was federal legislation, local county efforts enacted, managed, and sustained agricultural extension and home demonstration programs. In fact, the agents were more often responsible to local and state governments than the federal government, even though those agents personified all of the various levels of the state apparatus.[149]

Because Smith-Lever became law only six years following Roosevelt's country life inquiry, some of the original commissioners could address this echo of their earlier efforts. By the mid-1910s, Liberty Hyde Bailey was, interestingly, apprehensive about Smith-Lever and other federal projects that aimed to assist rural and farm life. In his 1915 manuscript *The Holy*

Earth, published less than one year following the passage of Smith-Lever, Bailey made clear his anxiety about the recent legislation. “No such national plan on such a scale has ever been attempted,” he explained, “and it almost staggers one when one even partly comprehends the tremendous consequences that in all likelihood will come of it.”[150] Particularly troubling to Bailey was the potential for Smith-Lever and other programs to become too bureaucratic and, consequently, to undermine the democratic spirit required for those programs to thrive. The inclination to turn those programs into “‘projects’ at Washington and elsewhere” would “too much centralize the work,” complicate it with “perplexing red tape,” and render it vulnerable to “armchair regulations.”[151] To avoid these outcomes, Bailey advised that government programs needed to be connected to, and to emerge from, the people who would benefit from those programs. “To let the control of policies and affairs rest directly back on the people,” he explained, would render those programs democratic and more likely to succeed.[152] This was not the first occasion when Bailey expressed concern about the precarious circumstances that could potentially result when city people and projects encroached upon country life and its citizens. When he wrote about the Country Life Movement in 1911, for instance, Bailey worried that “demagogues and fakirs” would exploit the nation’s renewed interest in rural America; he similarly foreshadowed that politicians would leverage the public’s interest “as a means of riding into power.”[153] Ultimately, Bailey became a vocal critic of a program that, had it been enacted a few years earlier, he might well have managed or implemented.

While Smith-Lever was designed to make rural and farming labor more productive and less demanding, it produced a number of consequences that, ironically, did not always improve the lives of rural and farm people. First, by training men to be extension agents and women to be home demonstration agents (HDAs), the land-grant universities under Smith-Lever separated

farm and field labor from home labor. According to Katherine Jellison, this bifurcation "promoted the idea of separate spheres on American farms, with men's work taking place out of doors and women's work being performed in the house."[154] This gendered division of labor and space belied the reality that rural women's work had never been contained neatly within the home. As Deborah Fink points out, the program solidified the "farm/male, home/female division [as] government policy," even though women's experiences contradicted this separation.[155] Grey Osterud's study of early twentieth century New York farm families indicates that women "left the house to go to the barn and out to the fields whenever they were needed."[156] Because of the demands of farm labor, Osterud continues, women "did not regard the world as divided into *her* house and *his* barn and fields."[157] Second, by extending lessons that had been developed at institutions of higher education, Smith-Lever promoted a certain type of knowledge: one that was expert-tested, approved, and questioned rural people's traditions and conventional wisdom.[158] For rural women, this meant that instead of learning alongside men how to tend to the land, they learned about interior cooking and cleaning appliances. In addition, the agents' movement from the land-grants to the countryside animated "insider/outsider" tensions that echoed earlier reactions to Roosevelt's CLC: not all rural and farm people readily embraced new technologies and ideas, especially when non-rural people provided them.[159] Finally, extension services separated white demonstration work from black demonstration work. As a result, African American rural and farm people often did not have access to the same lessons as did white rural and farm people.[160]

Tensions animated the benefits of Smith-Lever's pedagogy and revealed the challenges of activating federally funded and university-bred programs in rural and farm America. Even as rural women were gaining education that aimed to relieve their drudgery, they were being

encouraged to replicate an urban model that promoted domesticity, homemaking, and consumerism.[161] The presence of HDAs suggested that rural and farm labor was becoming professionalized and required expert training and assistance to be properly performed.[162] While rural and farm women would engage these issues with each other, the educated "experts," and other authorities as Smith-Lever became more commonplace, we should understand first what rhetorical spaces were already available for their voices, and what spaces were developing.

Where Were Rural and Farm Women?: Existing and Emerging Rhetorical Contexts

Women's Contributions to Nineteenth Century Rural Social Movements

During the early twentieth century, middle and upper-class urban women participated in clubs and philanthropic organizations that focused on securing and improving access to safe food and milk, sanitation, and suffrage.[163] While these reform efforts generated opportunities for urban (mostly white) women to mobilize publicly for political purposes, rural and farm women participated in various associations and social movements decades earlier. The Grange, the Farmers' Alliance, and the Populist Party were political and rhetorical spaces that included rural and farm women.[164] Founded in 1867, the Order of Patrons of Husbandry – more commonly, "the Grange" – united local communities of rural men and women across the nation.[165] Although Granges varied by geographic regions, members participated in similar social, political, and intellectual activities, regardless of where they gathered; these activities were steeped in "preserving the rights and dignity of farmers" as they faced railroad monopolies and the rise of corporate agriculture.[166] By providing platforms for rural and farm women's voices and inviting those women to shape the organization, the Grange somewhat loosened the nineteenth century's rigid gender norms. During Grange meetings, women delivered speeches to "promiscuous"

audiences, deliberated rural issues, and discussed legislation – noteworthy activities that reflected the Grange spirit of mutuality among men and women.[167] Moreover, Grange women could become officers within their county units and then travel and speak to other county units. For example, Mary Anne Mayo, a Michigan farmer and Grange officer, delivered 123 lectures and public talks at Grange meetings throughout the state between 1885 and 1886.[168]

While the Grange functioned primarily as an educational and communal apparatus, the Farmers' Alliance operated as a constituency concerned with economic justice. Organized in the mid-1870s, the Farmers' Alliance enabled rural and farm people to continue protesting monopolies and the post-Civil War crop-lien system. Organized by regions, the Alliance fostered cooperation and a class consciousness among farmers and farm women.[169] Rural and farm citizens' economic anxieties found the ultimate political expression in the Populist Party. Founded in 1890, the Populist Party railed against the capitalist system that rewarded corporate magnates, trusts, and monopolists; by defining their mission as benefitting "the people," Populists worked to restore economic fairness with farmers and laborers.[170] Often regarded as radical for their time, Populists marshaled numerous strategies to reject the nineteenth century money power. While middle and upper-class women faced threats of harassment and violence for speaking to public mixed-sex audiences, Populists welcomed women into their political activism. For instance, Mary Elizabeth ("Mary Yellin'") Lease embodied the party's no-nonsense spirit when she urged Kansas farmers to "raise less corn and more hell."[171] Woman suffrage remained a contentious issue at the national level even following women's enfranchisement in 1920, yet Populists secured woman suffrage in Idaho and Colorado in the 1890s.[172] Populists merged with the Democratic Party in 1896 and endorsed William Jennings Bryan's presidential campaign, yet his defeat resulted in the dissolution of the People's Party.

Nevertheless, Populists succeeded in publicizing the nation's economic problems, illustrating the power of rural and farm organization, and revealing that the government needed to address rural and farm grievances.[173] What's more, these rural social movements demonstrated that the nineteenth century's postbellum political culture required women's participation.

Rural and Farm Women in Early Twentieth Century Print and Political Contexts

Organizers of nineteenth century farm associations and rural social movements appealed to rural and farm women from within, yet urban individuals increasingly valued women's perspectives during the era of rural "uplift." While gendered in its initial enactment, the CLC planted the seeds of a rhetorical culture in which rural and farm women engaged authorities about the issues that shaped their lives. For instance, in its February 1909 issue, *Good Housekeeping* launched a National Farm Home Inquiry to "achieve that which Mr. Roosevelt's commission left mainly untouched" – a collection of rural women's opinions.[174] Editor James Eaton Tower supported Gilman's critique of Roosevelt and updated *Good Housekeeping* readers in the April 1909 issue that the National Farm Home Inquiry had already received "extraordinary returns" from women across the country.[175] According to Tower, this suggested that "[t]he farm women have been waiting for their say."[176] Between February and May 1909, the magazine received over 1,000 letters "in which writers not only describe[d] conditions in great detail, but pour[ed] out their hearts in the expression of their needs, their ambitions, their dearest hopes."[177] Although Tower later noted that the "more extreme and harrowing stories" were omitted from publication to avoid "prejudicing the case of the farmers' wives as a class," *Good Housekeeping* reprinted many excerpts in its June 1909 issue so that readers could hear directly from the women themselves.[178] Other magazines engaged rural women by highlighting their challenges

regarding isolation, sanitation, and access to technology. Martha Bensley Bruere and Robert Bruere authored a series for *Harper's Bazar* titled, "The Revolt of the Farmer's Wife!"[179] From November 1912 through May 1913, the Brueres' articles documented why and how farm women were "revolting" by *not* abandoning farm life.[180] The Brueres revealed that farm women took it upon themselves to improve their homes and communities so that rural and life would be more attractive to future generations. The editors of *Harper's* were so fascinated by the Brueres' findings that they launched their own farm home inquiry and solicited farm women's letters to supplement the Bruere's articles. Therefore, mainstream magazines not only wrote about farm women, but directly called upon farm women to author or explain their own experiences.

This spirit of understanding farm women through their own words transcended print culture and also functioned within political culture. Clarence Poe, editor of *The Progressive Farmer* periodical, expressed to USDA Secretary David F. Houston that the farmer's wife "has been the most neglected factor in the rural problem" and "has been especially neglected by the Department of Agriculture."[181] While *Harper's Bazar* was circulating the Brueres' articles to its cosmopolitan readership, in October 1913 Secretary Houston mailed a bulletin to 55,000 rural homes that requested rural women's "own personal views" or "the combined opinion of your community."[182] Houston acknowledged Poe's charge in the bulletin and affirmed that, "Women are best fitted to tell the department how it can best help them."[183] The USDA received 2,241 replies that it organized into four USDA reports; the *New York Times* published some of the letters in its May 30, 1915 article, "Farm Women Find Life Hard."[184] These letters also revealed women's views of and desires for rural and farm life, and they expressed sentiments that ranged from absolute happiness and contentment to those of outright melancholy and depression.[185] The

New York Times noted in its summary that it was crucial to hear from women because the Smith-Lever funds would be going into effect later that same year.

Rural and farm women continued to embrace other rhetorical outlets as the 1920s agricultural crisis challenged rural and farm communities. At first, rural banks made loans and capital exceedingly available to farmers who wanted to capitalize on their wartime profits and purchase additional land. However, during this speculative "land boom," land prices jumped seventy percent by 1919 and many farmers incurred debt from land purchases.[186] While the mortgage debt for owner-operated farms amounted to $1,726,172,851 in 1910, that amount catapulted to $4,003,767,192 by 1920.[187] Soon after, land values and prices for agricultural products plummeted; this deflation bankrupted half a million farmers and those who persisted faced staggering debts and poorly valued land.[188] Farmers had difficulty accessing credit, and higher freight rates that the Interstate Commerce Commission established left farmers with limited opportunities to ship their products.[189] These economic exigencies altered the public's expectations of farmers. While independence, self-sufficiency, and conservatism had previously been praiseworthy qualities of farmers, they amounted to liabilities when the farm crisis required farmers to organize as a class and accept governmental assistance. Social psychologist James Mickel Williams perhaps best captured this shift when he summarized: "Conditions changed, and change in the rural heritage was inevitable. Individualism [among farmers] became unprofitable and had to give way."[190]

Once again, country life caught the attention of, and seemingly required assistance from, the highest office in the land. On December 30, 1921, President Harding wrote a letter to his Secretary of Agriculture Henry Cantwell Wallace (original CLC member Henry Wallace's son) and requested that he organize a national conference "to consider the agricultural problems of the

American people" and to figure out how "to remedy the severe hardships under which so important a portion of our productive citizenship is struggling."[191] Echoing Roosevelt and his CLC, Harding declared that the current rural and farm crises affected the entire nation and required national attention.[192] This attention manifested at the National Agricultural Conference in Washington, D.C., during January 23-27, 1922. Throughout the week, 336 out of 439 invited delegates convened, discussed ideas with internal committees, drafted reports, and shared their recommendations with the conference attendees. These delegates represented "every phase of agricultural activity" and included farmers, college officials, agricultural periodical editors, bankers, and businessmen associated with agricultural industry.[193] When Secretary Wallace wrote back to Harding following the conference, he proudly declared that "never before in our history was there brought together a group of men who so completely represented the agricultural thought and practice of the Nation."[194]

Absent from Wallace's announcement was the fact that women were delegates at the 1923 National Agricultural Conference. Although Wallace invited over 400 men and only 25 women, the twelve women who attended served on the "Farm Population and Farm Home" committee and discussed, deliberated, and delivered alongside their male counterparts. Mrs. Charles W. Sewall from Indiana began her address on behalf of the committee as follows: "I realize that it is very presumptuous for the farmer's wife to speak out in meeting….but farm women have been invited here by Secretary Wallace and…we have worked long and hard to present to you a set of recommendations that you as a conference will be glad to adopt."[195] While she initially qualified her presence at the podium, Mrs. Sewall affirmed her right to speak at the conference by citing Wallace's invitation and announcing that her committee's report was valuable. (We will encounter Sewall again in chapter four, as she was one of the women selected

to participate in the 1926 national conference of rural and farm women.) That Wallace invited women to render political service at a national event suggested that authorities were continuing to recognize the value that rural and farm women brought to political conversations. As Mary Meek Atkeson later reported in her 1924 manuscript *The Woman on the Farm*, Harding's conference was significant because, "For perhaps the first time in history, the country woman was given recognition in national affairs."[196] Atkeson may not have imagined how quickly other opportunities for "the country woman" to speak from a national platform would arrive.

Summary

Perceptions about rural and farm people sustained particular ways of thinking about America's rural and farm culture in the early twentieth century. One perception advanced the notion that farming was a male enterprise, even though women have worked the land and sustained farms for centuries. Another perception suggested that farmers contained specific characteristics that suited them to succeed on the land: they were self-sufficient, independent, moral, strong democratic specimens whose virtue was revered and unmatched. Yet rural and farm life has never been monolithic. The precarious cultural terrain of the early twentieth century revealed that once-precious notions of the rural nation had become problems. The era's uncertainties altered how people talked about rural and farm life; sovereign farmers needed to cooperate with each other and the state, rural and farm women were appealed to as legitimate sources that could help improve rural and farm life, and while "rural" often connoted whiteness, maleness, and middle-class authenticity, cracks in this rhetorical foundation tested what "rural" meant amid economic crisis. As material technologies that improved labor became more commonplace in rural spaces, so too did rhetorical technologies that connected rural people

across the country at the site of the printed page. One such technology, *The Farmer's Wife*, emerged as the key magazine for rural and farm women from the early twentieth century through the early years of the Great Depression. Editor Dan A. Wallace, Henry Wallace's son and Secretary of Agriculture Henry Cantwell Wallace's brother, declared of *The Farmer's Wife*: "There are many 'pretty' magazines for women – and good magazines too – but where else will you find a magazine edited entirely by and for those who talk the language of the farm home?"[197] But individuals beyond those who spoke about the farm home shaped the magazine – those who occupied the farm home shaped it, too. As the next chapter reveals, rural and farm women mobilized *The Farmer's Wife* as a vehicle for their arguments about motherhood, field and house labor, and community politics. In so doing, they challenged authorities overseeing the magazine, and each other, about what rural and farm life most needed moving ahead, and how they might best contribute.

Chapter Three:

Defining the Modern Rural and Farm Woman: *The Farmer's Wife* and Interruptive Rhetorical Agency

The farmer's wife as a type; as a human being separate and distinct from other women; as a convenient creation of the imagination of social and political reformers; as a downtrodden class, worn out through weary years of isolated drudgery, variegated by maternity and its duties – the farmer's wife, fashioned after these shallow images, *does not exist*, except as an individual, here and there. She is largely a myth or what each theorizer imagines her to be that he may support his pet theory.

— Editors of *The Farmer's Wife*, "What is a Farmer's Wife?"

It has been one of the greatest desires of my life to burst forth on a printed page. But I never expected it to happen.

— Sally Sod, "Sally Sod's Success"

The January 1920 issue of *The Farmer's Wife* forced its readers to confront the potential consequences of refusing home improvement. On its editorial page that boasted "A Happy New Year!" the periodical offered a separate and more sinister message titled, "A Cemetery – and a Sermon." Beneath these words readers encountered a description of a miniature cemetery exhibit that the State Agricultural College of Montana's extension department had created and displayed at the Montana State Fair. The small tombstones displayed "truthful" yet "shocking" epitaphs: "'Mother – walked to death in her kitchen'; 'Sacred to the memory of Jane – she scrubbed herself into eternity'; 'Susie – swept out of life with too heavy a broom.'"[198] Despite its alarming presentation, the purpose of the exhibit, according to the United States Department of Agriculture, was clear: "It was meant to emphasize the need for home convenience, for lack of which many a farm woman has gone to her grave."[199] While this example was perhaps extreme in its invocation of premature death, it animated *The Farmer's Wife*'s consistent mission during

the early twentieth century to promote new home technologies, labor-saving strategies, and, ultimately, a modern farm woman.

This mission of constructing a particular "type" of farm woman was one that the editorial staff of *The Farmer's Wife* (hereafter, *TFW*) did not admit outright. As the first epigraph above indicates, the editors criticized the very *idea* of the farmer's wife as a "convenient creation of the imagination of social and political reformers" that was "fashioned after…shallow images" of farm women trapped in drudgery, isolation, and motherhood. Nor was *TFW*'s mission one that emerged clearly during its thirty-three year tenure as the singular periodical designed for American rural and farm women.[200] Yet analysis of *TFW* from 1920-1929 reveals that the periodical *was* fashioning a specific farm woman fit for the modern era, testing its viability each month with new print material, and appealing to its readership to embody and perform the principles ascribed to its modern vision. While *TFW* often encouraged its readers to become involved in political and community affairs, it maintained simultaneously the expectation that the farm woman would always return to the home. Even as the periodical constructed a particular type of modern farm woman – one who embodied the expert identity of a "farm homemaker" – it ensured also that this seemingly professional woman would not stray from the traditional values attributed to white rural womanhood.[201]

But what did women actually say about their experiences during the era of economic crisis? How did they define their present and future responsibilities in the home, in the community, and in the world? Who were they, in their own words? *TFW* is a space wherein we can witness how farm women rhetorically defined themselves because editors regularly solicited and printed readers' contributions. Accordingly, Janet Galligani Casey argues that *TFW*

"nurtured a rhetorical community through which the magazine and its various autobiographical voices were mutually constituted."[202]

Yet even as *TFW*'s editors publicly requested that women contribute their ideas, they sometimes belittled those contributions in private. A former editor who worked as a manuscript reviewer criticized the magnitude of and intentions behind rural and farm women's letters: "Not just two or three but dozens came every day. Folks…wrote articles on a great variety of subjects. They also wrote fiction and poetry, anything that might yield a small pay check."[203] Perhaps illegible to this editor, the letters demonstrated farm women's capacities to mobilize their knowledge for reasons financial – to increase the family's income; communal – to connect with other women living on the land; and rhetorical – to speak with each other with a common vocabulary.[204] *TFW*'s contributors did not write to the periodical with the goal of collectively authoring rural womanhood, but instead asked and answered questions, sought practical advice from one another, and requested that the editors introduce or discontinue certain features. Therefore, analyzing the women's intentions is not the most valuable way to understand how rhetorical agency took shape in and through their texts. Instead, I find it productive to ask, "What worldviews did farm women construct in *TFW*?" This question recognizes the unpredictability of circulating discourses, acknowledges that the women and editors are best understood as contrasting with *and* mutually reinforcing each another, and locates rhetorical agency as emerging through the interactions that transpired in the magazine. I argue that as women talked to one another, to the editors, and to *TFW*'s staff writers, they collectively generated a more complex vision of "the modern farm woman" than what the editors might have imagined.

To understand these rhetorically constructed visions, I examined every issue of *TFW* from 1920-1929 and identified common patterns between how the editors and staff writers

defined "the farmer's wife," and how women who wrote to the magazine defined themselves. These patterns were clearest in two recurring features during 1926-1928 that cohered around ideas about success: a "Master Farm Homemaker" contest, and women's written contributions to the "Sally Sod" debate. Although these two features are the primary units of analysis in this chapter, I also draw upon other components of *TFW*, including cover illustrations, advertisements, and articles, as well as arguments about "the farmer's wife" and rural women from contemporaneous sources. These sources, which represented "elite" and "everyday" groups and individuals, constituted various notions of rural womanhood that revealed contrasting ideas about gender and identity.

I concentrate on success as a rhetorical frame because anxiety about rural America's success circulated throughout the nation as economic crisis enveloped farmers and the agricultural system. James H. Shideler asserts that economic tensions punctuated the "turbulent historic intersection" between the city and the country during the 1920s.[205] According to Shideler, as material goods and excess signified urban modernity and achievement, deflation and reduced farm prices rendered rural Americans less capable of securing such achievement. That is, in a culture marked increasingly by excess, the "good things of life" like "serene security, independence, and righteousness" – elements of one's character within the ideology of agrarianism – were lesser indices of success in the national imaginary.[206] But the "rural problem" was now at a tipping point: America needed farmers to remain on the land and supply its food, yet this would only be achieved with "an efficient, happy, and contented agricultural population."[207] There needed to be a compelling reason for citizens in crisis to see themselves as, and as becoming, successful. Summarizing a key idea that women articulated at President Harding's 1922 National Agricultural Conference, Mary Meek Atkeson noted that the rural

problem had for too long been defined "as an economic, rather than a human problem."[208] Following Atkeson's argument, I argue here that anxieties over success regenerated the imperative to define rural success according to human qualities. While economics certainly undergirded the exigencies of the 1920s, the impetus to recapture the idea of success as tied distinctly to human character was also present in rural culture. The "average American farm woman," Atkeson asserted, believed in "the ultimate success of the people on the farm."[209] When women wrote to *TFW* to offer their definitions of success, then, they also articulated arguments that confronted long-held beliefs about women, gender, and rural life.

Through *TFW*'s "Master Farm Homemaker" contest, editors, and staff writers mobilized the rhetorical strategy of definition, intensified with enthymemes and synecdoche, as they crafted what I am calling a *sanctioned femininity*. Aligning with the ongoing domestic science and home economics movements, this gendered identity celebrated rural women's emerging status as trained professionals and informed authorities on rural matters, yet reinscribed traditional gender logics cohering around family, domesticity, and material consumption. In order to keep women on the farm – a mission made manifest in *TFW*'s editorials, fiction stories, columns, and advertisements – these discourses taught their readers how to achieve success by staying in place. Within *TFW*'s broader rhetorical frame of expertise and "success," women's discourses emerged and articulated alternative definitions of successful rural womanhood. To explore these instances of redefinition, made vivid through dissociation and *phantasia*, I turn to the magazine's "Sally Sod" feature and farm women's published letters as rhetorical interruptions to the magazine's sanctioned "farmer's wife." These letters constituted a *counter femininity* that positioned rural women as arbiters of "success," troubled gendered ideas about field labor and motherhood, and introduced different possibilities for rural women's identities.

These competing modes of femininity enabled an emergent mode of rhetorical agency that I call *interruptive*. Rhetorical agency as interruptive, or as an interruption, manifests when discourses enter into rhetorical spaces and break from the authorized styles, ideas, and patterns that govern those spaces. Like interruptions in everyday life, these rhetorical interruptions are unexpected yet noticeable because they disturb the typical flow of the spaces in which they occur. In this way, rhetorical agency is what Marilyn Cooper terms "an emergent property" that manifests as rhetors share in the production of rhetorical action.[210] Yet these rhetorical interruptions are also fleeting – they exist as brief moments that eventually disappear or that the norms of the rhetorical space ultimately overcome. As discourses interrupt the customs of an existing rhetorical space, they enact what Stephanie Kerschbaum calls "a kind of kinetic energy" which indicates the presence of rhetorical agency in the middle space between intention and effect.[211] Although the short-term effects of interruptions might appear negligible because of their brief existence, the accumulation of interruptions can become meaningful throughout time as those interruptions reveal alternative worldviews from those expressed in the sanctioned styles. In the case of *TFW*, the magazine accommodated women's rhetorical interruptions regarding gendered ideas about women's roles as home laborers and mothers. In so doing, it evolved into a text that provided more than information: it provided also a distinct forum of public deliberation for America's rural and farm women.

In what follows, I provide first an overview of early twentieth century rural print culture and Webb Company, the publisher of *The Farmer's Wife*. I explain why *TFW* was an exceptional farm periodical *and* early twentieth century woman's magazine, and I also situate *TFW* within a broader assemblage of farm paper editors. Next, I explore *TFW*'s definition of the modern farm woman through its Master Farm Homemaker contest, and I contextualize the contest within the

broader cultural movement of domestic science and home professionalism. My analysis then turns to the "Sally Sod" feature and farm women's letters to each other. In examining how the women debated the meanings of "success," I argue that their attempts at redefinition posed rhetorical interruptions to *TFW*'s idea of its representative figure. Their letters to each other and to the periodical's editors indicated not only what the "Master Farm Homemaker" scorecard and its designers overlooked about the realities of success in rural America, but they demonstrated also rural and women's capacities for rhetorical expression and public argument when those in authority sometimes questioned the existence of both.

***The Farm Press and* The Farmer's Wife**

The role of the farm press in early twentieth century U.S. history cannot be overstated. While approximately 157 farm periodicals existed in 1880, that number exceeded 400 by 1920.[212] Furthermore, circulation statistics probably underreported the actual number of individuals who read farm papers because those who bought subscriptions often shared their papers with family members, neighbors, and community acquaintances.[213] Middle-class farmers could acquire information from government bulletins, experiment stations, and farmers' institutes, yet farmers reported that they benefitted more from farm newspapers and magazines than any other source. A 1913 USDA survey of farmers revealed this preference and concluded that "the agricultural press would seem to be at present the most efficient of our agricultural agencies in reaching the farmers."[214] In contrast to organized events that required travel or official reports that took time to circulate, farm papers arrived regularly to the farm on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly basis. In this way, they provided "fresh matter" and the newest information, rather than information that might be months old by the time of the farmer's

acquisition.[215] Yet farm periodicals and papers extended to their audiences other possibilities beyond this practical utility. Stuart Shulman points out that, within the context of the Progressive Era, the farm press "reached across local and regional boundaries, providing a link for rural opinions."[216] While many farmers declined to adopt the recommendations proffered in the farm pages, they might have found greater value in print culture's communal capacities. According to John J. Fry, farmers "may have subscribed to and read farm newspapers less for their specific content and more for the community created by knowing others were dealing with the same situations."[217]

Farmers were not passive audiences; instead, they engaged farm papers as sites of deliberation wherein they engaged with the editors the issues central to agriculture and rural life. Many of the editors of early twentieth century farm papers held reform positions on country life, had little experience with farming, or had relocated to cities and therefore were distanced from the day-to-day practices and problems of agriculture.[218] By articulating their perspectives, farmers mobilized the farm papers as channels that connected their ideas to other farmers and to editors who held prescriptive visions of what agriculture and rural life ought to become.[219] In his review of farm papers from 1860-1910, Richard T. Farrell discovered that editors appealed increasingly to women during this time by providing greater space to "womanly" interests like household articles and feel-good stories.[220] Yet while farm periodicals enjoyed popularity during the early twentieth century, the farm press lacked a single text devoted entirely to farm women.

Edward Allyn Webb, president of Webb Company, began to fill this gap in 1882 when he purchased the small farm paper *The Northwestern Farmer* and remodeled it into *The Farmer*. First stationed in Fargo, then in Dakota Territory, the paper became so successful that Webb moved his company's headquarters to St. Paul, Minnesota in 1890.[221] *The Farmer* was written

for a male audience, yet Webb broadened his gaze in 1905 when he purchased *The Farmer*'s sister publication, *The Farmer's Wife*, and moved it from Winona, Minnesota to St. Paul. A trip to the 1905 Iowa State Fair with Henry Wallace, publisher of *Wallaces' Farmer*, inspired Webb to publish a magazine exclusively for women. While Webb and Wallace were sitting on a bench and "watching the people go by," Webb noticed that the farm women "looked so tired, and so overworked."[222] Perhaps material curated specifically for farm women would lessen their drudgery. According to Webb, the goal of *TFW* was "to ease the loneliness that isolation brought to the farm wife and to help her improve the quality of life in the farm home."[223] By showing concern for the farmer's wife and hoping to improve her life , Webb "antedated the conclusions of President Roosevelt's famous Country Life Commission, which first drew national attention to this problem."[224] With circulation rates of more than 750,000 per month by 1912, the periodical was well on its way to fulfilling its mission by serving as a conduit that connected its readers scattered across the country at the site of the printed page.[225]

Published monthly, *TFW* contained a wide range of material that addressed its readers as mothers, stewards of the home, and "real, thinking farm women."[226] The cover illustrations tended to visualize the "common" farmer's wife; she sometimes appeared alongside her children and farm animals, and if she was absent, the cover usually depicted children, livestock, or natural scenery.[227] Men were rarely present. During the first half of its run, from 1906 through the late 1910s, the cover regularly pictured the farmer's wife as an outdoor laborer and producer (see Figure 1). This mode of visualization shifted during the 1920s, as the representative farm woman appeared increasingly sleek, glamorous, and connected to home interiors (see Figure 2). Subscribers would also notice a change in how the *TFW* branded itself on its covers. Webb's project initially called itself "A Farm Woman's Journal," but later identified itself as "A

Magazine for Farm Women." Inside the magazine, readers would find Field Editors' reports about what successful farm women across the U.S. were doing in their communities. For instance, Bess M. Rowe kept readers informed about "Home Demonstration Results," while Clara M. Sutter communicated the latest advancements in poultry raising in her section dedicated to "The Farm Woman's Poultry Business." In addition to these practical pieces about labor methods, readers also encountered standing features including fiction stories, letters from farm women, and articles about children's health and education that doctors and professors usually contributed.[228] The magazine embraced contests during the early 1920s and awarded its readers' prize-winning letters $1-200; score cards appeared for these contests and to supplement other articles that addressed nutrition, food preparation, and education. The closing pages of a typical issue contained numerous advertisements for kitchen appliances, medicines, and foodstuffs; patterns of the latest fashions for farm women and children; and advice on cooking, sewing, and gardening techniques.

TFW also recognized its readers as political actors, both within their local communities and the nation, and its issues reported regularly on political issues that affected rural and farm people. For instance, Managing Editor Dan A. Wallace, tended to infuse his editorials with arguments about the need for rural organization. In its "News from Washington" feature, *TFW* kept readers attuned to updates on farm legislation, achievements within organizations like the American Farm Bureau Federation, and upcoming national or international conferences like the World's Dairy Congress (see Figure 3). Through ongoing columns, the magazine also appealed to its readers as citizens and encouraged voting – a strong theme during the 1920s following the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920. Ellis Meredith wrote a recurring column about "woman's citizenship duties" throughout 1922, and Marjorie Shuler wrote monthly articles from

April 1927 to March 1928 that engaged farm women's legal and economic rights.[229] *TFW* aimed to deliver news, advice, and encouragement on matters both practical and political.

TFW, by name alone, appeared inclusive through its lack of specificity regarding who it imagined its readers to be. Yet both its ideal vision that the editors promoted and its actual contributors did not reflect the range of women who farmed, were farmers' wives, or identified as rural. To be clear, *TFW* understood its namesake to be white and not impoverished. In this way, it engaged in the construction of whiteness similar to that of other early twentieth century women's magazines, like *Ladies' Home Journal*.[230] While some contributors to *TFW* identified themselves and their families as poor and struggling (often evidenced with details that, for example, they rented their farm homes or could not afford the latest labor-saving devices), those contributors were exceptions throughout the periodical's tenure.[231] Moreover, the periodical's construction of the modern *white* farm woman was further pronounced by its neglect and treatment of non-white women. *TFW* hardly included Mexican American women, even though they participated in extension education funded through Smith-Lever and their labor was critical to American Southwestern economies.[232] When African American men or women appeared in *TFW*'s pages, their presence was often marked with exaggerated racial stereotypes, or with a white individual's account of African Americans working in her fields.[233] Therefore, *TFW* both envisioned and promoted the modern rural and farm woman as white and middle-class, or at the very least, white with middle-class aspirations.

Despite these limitations, *TFW* was an extraordinary periodical for its time. First, while peer farm magazines like *Wallaces' Farmer* and *Prairie Farmer* targeted regional audiences, *TFW* circulated nationally and represented women's voices from across the U.S. Second, while contemporaneous women's magazines like *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Woman's Home*

Companion often visualized and represented women as consumers, *TFW* acknowledged the complexities of its readership's relationships to labor by appealing to rural women as both producers and consumers.[234] Third, throughout the early twentieth century, *TFW* stood "absolutely alone" as "the one representative journal of the farm women of America"; without substantive competition, it enjoyed unmatched authority as the organ for American rural and farm women.[235] More broadly, this text provided to women who could access it opportunities that scholars argue manifest in women's print culture and reading practices: to forge female friendships, to contemplate the everyday and noteworthy aspects of their lives, and to "seek out in the periodical explanations and advice concerning social roles, behavior, and feelings."[236]

Perhaps most important, however, was the extent to which *TFW* consistently featured women's voices during its tenure. Managing Editor Dan A. Wallace saw the farm press and farm women as mutually benefitting from a relationship. In an address at the 1923 American Country Life Conference, he declared: "In improving the conditions of the farm home, it seems to me that the press should strike up a partnership with farm women."[237] Whereas most early twentieth century women's magazines provided a singular column or section for their audiences to "talk back" to the editor, *TFW* was unique for its constant appeals to and publications of women's contributions.[238] The forms of these contributions included letters to the editors, submissions to write-in contests and other forums, and letters from farm women to each other. Janet Galligani Casey argues that the consistent presence of actual farm women in *TFW* mattered because it belied the notion that there existed a single "type" of farm woman; indeed, farm women's words often revealed conflicting desires and experiences that could not be neatly contained in one holistic definition.[239] The capacity for women to represent themselves in *TFW* was crucial. "What was clearly at stake in *The Farmer's Wife*," Casey suggests, "was a modern concept of the

farmer's wife, the limits of which were generated, and policed, by individual farm women readers."[240]

Yet why would *TFW* invite and publish letters that pivoted away from the magazine's overall vision of the successful farmer's wife? What benefits could *TFW* claim through its accommodation of women's critical voices? Part of these answers, I suggest, may have been rooted in commercial exigencies. *TFW* generated revenue from two major sources: advertising and reader subscriptions. One-time editor W. H. Kircher noted that the magazine "didn't attract enough advertising" to be "prosperous," so it focused on subscriptions.[241] In January 1920, *TFW* recorded $472,276 in sales and profited $44,310; at this time, a one-year subscription cost fifty cents. But both sales and profits steadily decreased over the next three years such that by 1923, the magazine had $353,533 in sales and a profit of $36,380. To make *TFW* profitable again, Webb Company lowered its subscription price in January 1924 to one dollar for a four-year subscription; this rate remained through 1930. Still, the magazine struggled to increase its profits, for although it netted $42,187 in 1926, two years following its substantial price decrease, that number plummeted to $33,956 in 1927.[242]

I suggest that the period during and immediately after this second profit crisis of 1927 – the very time of the moments of reader engagement that I take up in this chapter – marked a moment of experimentation for *TFW*. In inviting and publishing alternative views and voices, *TFW* could increase its paying subscribers by appealing to those women who perhaps did not necessarily agree with the magazine's overall vision, or did not feel adequately represented in its textual and visual content. Yet because the Sally Sod debate was a rhetorical interruption that eventually ended, *TFW* could accommodate those alternative views without alienating its core subscribers. Continuing the debate allowed *TFW* to keep readers interested – and perhaps attract

new paying subscribers along the way – but the promise of returning to "normal" mitigated the risk of losing its existing subscribers. By April 1929, the magazine reached 900,000 subscribers, which marked a substantial increase from 800,000 just one month prior. Perhaps its experiment had worked. Still, the question persisted of who was deemed worthy of representation in the magazine, and it found answers that narrowed the idea of "the farmer's wife" in the "Master Farm Homemaker" feature.

Defining the Modern Farm Woman: Expertise, Professionalism, and **The Farmer's Wife*****'s Master Farm Homemakers***

In their 1906 manuscript *The Home Economics Movement, Part One*, Isabel Bevier and Susannah Usher, both professors of Household Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, documented "the origin, development, and present status" of Home Economics instruction at American institutions of higher education.[243] After tracing a brief history of this instruction, Bevier and Usher noted that the particular interest in Home Economics for farm women was not surprising, for government officials had requested such pedagogy for years. For instance, in his 1897 report to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Secretary James Wilson declared that farmers had benefitted from the science developed at land-grant colleges, but their wives lacked comparable training:

> In the great work of helping the women of our land, nearly half of whom are toiling in the homes upon our farms, this department, it is believed, has a large duty to perform. For whatever will be effective in raising the grade of the home life on the farm, in securing the better nourishment of the farmer's family, and in surrounding them with the refinements and attractions of a well-ordered home will powerfully contribute alike to the material prosperity of the country and the general welfare of the farmers.[244]

The state envisioned that it could "help" turn of the twentieth century farm women by, among other things, teaching them about "home life" and acquiring the "refinements and attractions"

that amounted to a "well-ordered home." Material reasons, including rural economic stability, made necessary such assistance. Yet this assistance, which Wilson later described as "practical training to the future wives and mothers of our farmers," also served ideological purposes.[245] According to Wilson, this "practical training" would enable farm women to continue "rearing the future masters of our vast agricultural domain."[246]

Perhaps unanticipated by Wilson, the idea of a "master" farmer circulated in the public vocabulary decades later as those who ran and read the agricultural periodicals attempted to locate and honor the nation's best farmers. The Master Farmer contest and "movement" originated in *Prairie Farmer* in 1925 and recognized those men whose lives reflected excellence. In the October 1927 issue of *Rural America*, *Prairie Farmer* editor Clifford B. Gregory explained the motivation for developing the contest: "A nation that honors its captains of industry and finance, its scientists and its statesmen, and fails to honor its soldiers of the plow, is overlooking the very foundation of its greatness."[247] Following *Prairie Farmer*'s idea, *Wallaces' Farmer* soon inaugurated its own Master Farmer contest; it announced its first call for Master Farmer submissions in its April 9, 1926 issue, and spent the remainder of 1926 publicizing the contest and encouraging its readers to nominate those men in their communities whose lives demonstrated "Good farming, clear thinking, right living" – the motto of the periodical, and the categories around which its Master Farmer scorecard were based.[248]

As he witnessed his father's periodical recognize those "certain farmers who have achieved notable success as efficient rural citizens," Dan A. Wallace saw an opportunity for *TFW*.[249] Wallace announced in his February 1927 editorial that *TFW* would soon launch its own contest to honor Master Farm Homemakers (MFH). He justified the need for a MFH contest in terms of equity: "In these contests the fact has stood out that there can be no Master Farmers

unless there are also Master Home Makers because farm success comes from the working out of a real partnership between the farmer and his wife."[250] The April 1927 issue announced the official call for submissions for Master Farm Homemakers and printed the nomination form. Two general criteria governed the contest. First, nominees "should be a real force in directing the *thinking* of the family, and *right thinking* is most important" [emphasis original].[251] Second, women needed to be nominated by at least four women who knew "better than any others, just how fine they [the nominees] are."[252] The magazine's staff spent the next year reviewing applications, and in April 1928, *TFW* inaugurated its first Master Farm Homemakers.

I analyze the MFH feature as a representative snapshot of the type of modern farm woman that *TFW* rhetorically defined in the late 1920s because the feature organized the qualities and behaviors that it promoted for years prior. David Zarefsky argues that when rhetors construct a definition, they also "shape the context in which events or proposals are viewed by the public," and therefore offer a lens through which to assess the concept and its referent.[253] In this way, Zarefsky continues, definition invites "moral judgments about circumstances or individuals."[254] Edward Schiappa reminds us that definitions index a community's values, and therefore constitute "rhetorically induced social knowledge" that informs how people interpret and act in their shared world.[255] Instead of approaching definitions as "propositions of fact" (X "is" this), which links a concept to a certainty, Schiappa suggests approaching definitions as "propositions of value" (X "ought to be" this).[256] According to Schiappa, studying definitions as propositions of value gets us closer to seeing how definitions selectively "emphasize aspects of social realities that serve particular interests."[257] If, as Chaïm Perelman argues, definition functions by "stressing aspects that will produce the persuasive effect that is sought," then the MFH feature functioned as a rhetorical definition that indicated *who* was valuable in rural

America and *how* others could achieve similar value.[258] If the contest revealed and rewarded its vision of the "farmer's wife," then it would encourage other women to emulate the MFHs. This was suggested by the contest's use of score cards. Managing Editor Ada Melville Shaw noted the importance of score cards in her January 1925 message regarding an earlier contest: "Score cards are increasingly popular because their value as NORMALIZERS is increasingly apparent."[259] For this reason, I recognize the act of scoring and judging the candidates as *TFW*'s way of defining the "normal" or "right" type of farm woman.

By applying the logic of organization through the use of a score card, *TFW* communicated the idea that its readers could also implement systems and record-keeping in their everyday work – an idea that aligned with the ongoing domestic economy movement which aimed to lessen women's labor through "the application of scientific strategies to everyday chores."[260] According to Sarah Stage, early twentieth century home economists "politicized domesticity" by encouraging women to take their traditionally private home-work into public spaces.[261] While Catherine Beecher and other nineteenth century Victorians supported a domesticity that both trained women to perform homemaking duties and kept women's influence in the home, home economists advocated "municipal housekeeping" which leveraged women's domestic tasks and deployed them in public life.[262] Yet Victorian gender codes, as Marilyn Irvin Holt argues, "had limited applications" in rural contexts "where distinctions between male and female labor often failed."[263] Still, questions regarding the professionalization of "farm homemaking" had circulated for some time among those connected to the federal government, land-grant universities, and other institutions of higher education. For instance, C. F. Langworthy, Chief of Nutrition Investigations at the Office of Experiment Stations, noted in his 1913 USDA report that women had requested information about how to better do their

"housekeeping" work.[264] In her 1914 article "The Young Woman on the Farm," which appeared in the *Cornell Reading-Courses* during CLC Chair Liberty Hyde Bailey's tenure as the school's Dean of the College of Agriculture, Martha Foote Crow asked the following question in relation to preventing farm women from leaving for the city: "Shall we dignify farm housekeeping by good equipment and scientific management, and create in young women a zest for the work that calls to them?"[265] In the case of rural and farm women, I am arguing that *TFW* did just that: it professionalized the role of "farm homemaker" to encourage women to stay in the home and focus on home aesthetics so that their children would find rural life attractive and not leave for the city. In so doing, these discourses defined the farm woman as the "expert" and "master" of her domain, the farm home.

In the months leading up to the revelation of *TFW*'s first honorees, the editors and staff writers articulated the principles that governed the selection process. The February 1928 editorial called the farm woman "the special custodian of the welfare of the home; not that the farm man is uninterested and does not concern himself about it, but in the division of farm life responsibilities, the home and its activities fall to her share."[266] Reflecting the strategy of dissociation in which ideas that traditionally fit together are broken apart to advance a new meaning of an existing term, this editorial punctuated the gendered separations of the farm enterprise. Here, the collective efforts of the farmer and the farmer's wife are detached and distanced from each other; what emerges is a mode of farm life in which the man labors in the fields and the woman protects the home. As farm women's letters reveal in the following section, this separation of labor did not reflect many women's experiences. Still, defining a MFH as the home's "special custodian" reinforced what *TFW* had communicated for years: that its readers' qualities as farm women were unique, admirable, and necessary for national prosperity.

Managing Editor Ada Melville Shaw summarized the magnitude of farm women's responsibilities in an enthymeme in her November 1926 editorial: "The farm home is the backbone of our country; the farm family is the source of our best citizenry; the farm woman has a greater share than she realizes in the shaping of our national character."[267] For an enthymeme to have rhetorical import, audiences must possess the social knowledge to provide the missing component and complete the rhetor's idea.[268] What Shaw left unexpressed for her readers to fill in for themselves was the "familiar fact" that, as farm women, their greatest "share" or duty was to raise children so that they would contribute to the republic – a rural Republican Motherhood of sorts. This duty relied upon the farm woman's placement in the farm home, where she could manage and oversee the proper development of the nation's "backbone."

When *TFW* announced its first Master Farm Homemakers in April 1928, it revealed also its purpose: "to fix once and for all in the public mind a true understanding of the dignity and importance to the nation of farm homemaking as a profession."[269] Fifty-six women from twelve states were recognized as MFHs; their photographs were printed in a yearbook-style layout alongside staff writer Bess M. Rowe's article (see Figure 4). In July 1928, Rowe expounded upon the principles that these women, who each represented "the typical successful American farm woman," enacted.[270] The Master Farm Homemaker was in a partnership with her husband; faithful; brave; "keenly alive" to her responsibilities in the community; and knowledgeable about business.[271] In public speeches connecting homemaking to citizenship, Illinois MFH judge Isabel Bevier argued that "bringing business ideas into the home" would make homemaking "more respectable and attractive."[272] This idea existed in *TFW* during its run of MFHs, for specialists and experts occupied an increasing presence in the magazine during the late 1920s and advised readers how to implement accounting and budgeting systems.[273] As the photographs revealed

and as later articles confirmed, the "typical" MFH was white.[274] Finally, the MFH was "fundamentally content" with her life such that "she would rather be where she is than in some other place in life."[275]

In recognizing those women who fulfilled *TFW*'s definition of a "Master Farm Homemaker," this contest performed the rhetorical function of synecdoche. One of Kenneth Burke's "Four Master Tropes," synecdoche is a rhetorical figure that "stresses a relationship or connectedness between two sides of an equation" in a way that allows a part to represent, or stand in, for the whole.[276] Ned O'Gorman explains that synecdoche "depends on a network of symbolic associations and interrelated meanings" to create an "integrative" relationship between microcosm and macrocosm.[277] Those women recognized as MFHs "stood in" for the broader population of U.S. rural and farm women that *TFW* envisioned; they were a part that represented the entirety within the rhetorical imaginary. *TFW* extended this strategy through its use of visual argument. To punctuate the notion that the contest winners collectively functioned as a synecdoche for successful farm women, it published a composite portrait of eight of the first MFHs that accompanied Rowe's July 1928 article (see Figure 5). Heidi E. Huntington argues that visual synecdoche functions like an enthymeme because "the viewer is drawn in to the interpretation, or the completion, of the synecdoche."[278] The composite portrait of "the Typical Farm Homemaker" invited readers to symbolically associate the portrait with the illustrations that framed it. These visuals depicted necessary activities for the "Typical Farm Homemaker" – cooking, nurturing children, attending church, and counseling her husband. In this way, the visual synecdoche indicated that the composite portrait captured the essence of MFHs and the actions that enabled success.

Still, tensions inhabited the matrices of messages that *TFW* communicated to its readers. For instance, even as the editors encouraged farm women to exercise the franchise and recognized the MFH as "an actively participating citizen," they situated their appeals in terms of women's home responsibilities.[279] The October 1928 editorial announced: "Generally women excuse themselves for not voting by saying that politics and government are for men. But that is not true. Politics and government affect the home, which is woman's realm; they affect it directly and intimately."[280] In addition, the magazine continued to stress motherhood as the farm woman's most important function. When Florence Allen, a judge for Ohio's 1929 MFH contest, spoke at her state's recognition dinner, she emphasized that "the farm home is the great source of soundness in our national life…because it pours new, sound, untainted blood into our national organism."[281] Constructing a metaphor of the farm home as a container that transfers its pure contents into a living republic, Allen stressed and continued the coded argument that white rural blood was "sound" and "untainted." Additionally, the MFH discourses suggested that the "typical" farm woman was happy staying in place, a claim that *TFW* supported throughout the 1920s with its emphasis on publishing content that affirmed country life's superiority.[282] Susan J. Matt notes that the increasing availability of popular women's magazines and catalogues fueled many rural and farm women's desires to acquire consumer products so that they could become more like wealthier urban women.[283] The decreasing emphasis on the rural and farm woman as a producer and the move toward a consumer whose attention was directed inward was reflected in the flood of articles and advertisements that promoted home beautification and that circulated alongside the MFH pieces (see Figure 6).[284]

By March 1929, the Master Farm Homemaker "movement" had solidified what a successful rural and farm woman required. In "The American Farm Woman Comes into Her

Own," Richard A. Perry declared to *TFW* that the movement "helped give the public a more correct picture of the modern farm woman and the importance of her work."[285] As a result, "the rural homemaker [was] being recognized as a professional woman" and enjoying the dignity that such recognition extended.[286] Standing in for the other women of rural America, the MFHs embodied the definition of success that *TFW* envisioned moving forward. Yet even as *TFW* attempted to "normalize" its modern farm woman, its MFH feature revealed the limits of her possibilities. Her domain of expertise was retreating farther into the farm home, which she now needed to beautify, organize, and protect, because her ultimate responsibility still cohered around motherhood. When rural and farm women wrote to *TFW*, however, they authored alternative experiences that revealed the actual realities of rural and farm womanhood.

"Sally Sod Starts Something": Interruptive Rhetorical Agency in Rural and Farm Women's Letters

"Does the average farmer's wife deserve even honorable mention if she does nothing more than raise a family?"[287] Loretto Hughes Green, who preferred to be known as "Sally Sod," raised this contest-themed question at the end of 1926 and saw it in print in *TFW*'s January 1927 issue.[288] Sod explained that *TFW*'s ongoing "How Some Women Succeed" series had left her feeling both introspective and confused regarding the proper definition of "success." Her inquiry was grounded in her experience as a Michigan farmer's wife who raised ten children and labored all of her adult life in the farm home – a journey quite different from those "successful" women whose short biographies consistently revealed incomes earned outside of the home, community leadership positions, and entrepreneurial activities. If success for the farmer's wife tended to be represented in terms of money, what did that say about Sod's unpaid yet critical labor of sustaining her farm family and home? "I am taking myself for example and know that there are

many, many more situated as I am, asking the same question in their own minds," Sod wrote. "I am in the ranks known as the 'ungainfully employed.' I can work until I am unable to do anything more. But do I bring in any cash? No, not one cent."[289]

The editors seized the opportunity Sod's letter presented and Grace Farrington Gray, a Field Editor who wrote the "Success Stories," penned a response that appeared in the same January 1927 article. Even as Gray assured Sod that raising children was a success in and of itself, she emphasized the significance of money to the farm enterprise:

> It is all very well to say that there are better things than commercial success. Yes, of course, we agree. But the money *must* come first. A woman cannot even have leisure to get out and to do her duty to her children's school and to her community until she has money enough to buy labor-saving devices so that she will not be tied too closely to the housekeeping machine.[290]

Here, Gray entered into an ongoing public conversation in which authorities presented better equipment as the key to the farm woman's emancipation from the home and into the community.[291] She also defended *TFW*'s pattern of featuring as "Success Stories" those women who earned "pin-money" by selling products like eggs and baked goods. Yet Gray acknowledged that "what farm women say of themselves carries more weight than what any one can say about them," and asked if she could visit Sod to write her Success Story.[292] Sod was not convinced that her life indicated success and denied Gray's request. "We still live on a rented farm, with positively no modern conveniences, either in barn or house," Sod explained. "Ours is not a Success Story."[293]

With Sod's refusal to allow Gray to visit and relay Sod's experiences to *TFW*'s readers, it appeared that the issue was closed. Yet Sod and Gray's exchange struck a nerve with farm women and ignited a year-long debate about definitions of success that challenged the idea of success presented in the MFH contest. As soon as March 1927, only two months following the

appearance of Sod's letter, *TFW* declared that "Sally Sod start[ed] something" and published the first set of what would later amount to dozens of letters from rural and farm women across the United States (see Figure 7). Some of these letters defended Sod's identity as a mother and not an income-earner; others denounced Sod for failing to acquire household equipment that would relieve her domestic burdens. Regardless of the positions expressed, these letters evidenced a collective interruption of the magazine's definition of the successful farm woman. Through redefinition by dissociation, women's letters introduced alternative notions of success that constituted multiple identities for "the farmer's wife." Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca explain that dissociation works by uncoupling the parts of a supposedly integrated concept, and then illuminating how those separate parts can be rearticulated to create new grounds for public argument.[294] Through this uncoupling, dissociation "brings about a more or less profound change in the conceptual data that are used as the basis of argument," and therefore can be a source of invention.[295] As rural and farm women deliberated the meanings of success, their discourses dissociated qualities presumed to fit within their experiences and introduced alternative qualities that better represented their identities. In so doing, their discourses disturbed the gendered expectation that they would be content as "Master Farm Homemakers" and constituted counter expressions of rural womanhood. As we shall see, those expressions, made present through *phantasia* or rhetorical imagination, emerged in farm women's letters that addressed field labor and motherhood.

"Seething with Righteous Indignation": Deliberating Gendered Expectations of Labor

The editors appreciated Sally Sod's earnestness and good nature – and the volume of responses her writing generated – and they invited her to contribute additional letters, diary entries, and nonfiction stories throughout 1927 and 1928. The April 1927 issue featured Sod's

first feature article; titled "One Month out of My Life," the piece detailed Sod's life in Michigan with ten children and no modern conveniences. In his editorial for the same issue, Dan A. Wallace noted of Sod's article: "Our editors all agree that it is one of the best things we have ever published."[296] Yet not all readers shared this sentiment, and the July 1927 issue revealed "A Different Jane's" disputation:

> Dear Farmerettes: I've just finished reading Sally Sod's article, "One Month out of My Life" and my being is seething with righteous indignation. She is making a slave of herself. I've read these letters each month but this has aroused me to the fighting point.[297]

Jane's primary complaint was that Sod seemed happy in her drudgery, which was a dangerous message to send to America's rural and farm women. She then grounded her disagreement in the farm's division of labor – an issue that the original "Jane" inquired about in an April 1926 letter, and that Sod's story animated:

> Now for Jane and Sally Sod. Jane wrote about a year ago. She says she helps Jim in the fields, then does her housework and advises young brides to do so as long as the man doesn't impose. To ask a wife to go to the field is imposing. Who would do his farm work if he helped you with the housework? To neglect one's home in such a manner spells ruination. A woman becomes coarsened and the man soon depends on her as much as on his hired man.[298]

Arguing that farm women would be "coarsened," stripped of their femininity, and likened to "hired men" if they worked outside, A Different Jane rejected the very idea of field labor for farm women. Additionally, by declaring that farm women who abandoned their housework for field work would create "ruination," A Different Jane marshaled principles of domesticity that posited women's work as both special for its moralizing influence yet limited to the private sphere. Perhaps most significantly, her letter seemed to discount the various experiences of her

fellow farm sisters by suggesting that all farm women had the luxury of choosing the types of labor they performed.

Readers did not let A Different Jane's claims go unchallenged, and the editors told her in the September 1927 issue that their desks had "literally been flooded with letters, most of them taking issue with you."[299] Unsurprisingly, these letters took many forms as farm women disputed A Different Jane's ideas about gender, space, and "proper" labor. For instance, a woman who called herself Sally Sod the Second mobilized A Different Jane's language of "coarsened" as she explained how she and her husband managed the farm:

> I enjoy helping him and then he helps me with the dishes, dressing the kiddies, carrying water and so forth. If his work coarsens me, I am afraid he is in danger of becoming effeminate. Such a shame! as the li'l darlint [*sic*] is only six foot four in his Rockford socks![300]

With a sarcastic tone, Sally Sod the Second revealed just how ludicrous she found A Different Jane's logic that certain forms of labor threatened constructions of manhood or womanhood. Moreover, her revelation of labor shared between her and her husband indicated that success came through cooperation, not isolation. Other women extended this idea in their letters to A Different Jane, which were also published in the September 1927 issue. For example, Hoosier Maggie explained that her willingness to work outside was rooted in a partnership between her and her husband: "I did not marry to be my husband's hired hand either, but I did marry to be my husband's helpmeet in the true sense of the word."[301] A woman who called herself "A Back Number" affirmed the necessity of cooperation to ensure the farm's stability. She wrote: "Let me ask just why not [work outside] if you are physically fit? I don't believe in slavery for either man or woman, but what I do like to see is cooperation and helpfulness – one helping the other in times of need."[302]

These discourses highlighted a common theme throughout farm women's experiences: that women and their labor have always been essential to maintaining the family farm.[303] Moreover, through dissociation, these discourses crafted a vision of farm labor that was grounded in partnerships, not individualism. Recall that during this time, *TFW* was defining its namesake as a "Master Farm Homemaker" and maintaining the idea of separate spheres of work on the farm. In this exchange, however, the women who refuted A Different Jane's argument challenged also the expectation that farm labor was divided along gendered lines. By uncoupling the woman from the home and rearticulating her within the context of the outdoors/fields, the letters indicated alternative realities than those presented in the sanctioned discourses of the MFH contest. Moreover, in collapsing the binary of woman/home, the letters showcased what Kristy Maddux calls "the broadening function of dissociation."[304] Instead of following the argument that the farmer's wife, by definition, was (or should be) mostly a homemaker, the women's words implied that women's labor took limitless forms. Even as advances in rural policy and technology attempted to concentrate women's work in the home and make it more efficient, farm women have always needed to work in the fields.[305] The women who claimed field labor as a part of their experience and explained it as a form of collaboration troubled the idea that the fields rendered them less feminine. Perhaps, as these letters suggested, field labor amounted to more satisfaction with farm life because of the mutuality it required.

While some of Sally Sod's defenders justified their outdoor work in terms of partnership, other women demonstrated that such labor transcended external needs and instead provided internal fulfillment. Toward this end, some of the letters evidenced the rhetorical strategy of *phantasia* to make present the sensorial elements that animated the women's experiences. Quintilian defined *phantasia* in the *Insitutio Oratoria* as the mental capacity "by which images

of absent things are presented to the mind in such a way that we seem to see them with our eyes and to have them before the senses."[306] Michele Kennerly offers a helpful summation of *phantasia* as "making things present to the mind's eye."[307] The purpose of using language to craft mental images is, often, to influence perception. According to Debra Hawhee, "saying has the capacity to facilitate seeing," and if we see something differently, perhaps we might then understand and act differently.[308] In this way, as Kennerly and others assert, *phantasia* is critical to rhetorical judgment because of its capacity to inform present and future action.[309]

Some of the women in the Sally Sod debate called upon language to craft visions in their interlocutors' minds of the pleasures that outdoor labor could facilitate. Mrs. Z. Y. explained in November 1927 that while she had once been embarrassed to work outside, she eventually relished it:

> Once I would have been terribly ashamed to have had my town friends drive in and find me in 'smelly' knickers and rubber boots, but now I am proud. Proud that I am capable of doing so many different kinds of work. Whether my husband thinks any more of me for my interest, I do not know and I do not care. The satisfaction to myself is enough.[310]

Not only does Mrs. Z. Y. bring before the mind's eye the vision of her wearing rubber boots and knickers – neither a dress nor an apron – but she also appeals to the sense of smell to communicate the grittiness of "doing so many different kinds of work." As she relays these details, she makes present the image of a "proud" farm woman undeterred by outside expectations. Mrs. E. P. E. articulated a similar perspective in the next month's issue regarding the satisfaction she achieved through working in nature:

> Some of you who have never spent hours in the field, may be ignorant of its pleasures. Perhaps you have never watched the robins and blackbirds and vireos and thrushes and plovers and ever so many more as they follow the wake of the tractor and disc.[311]

By bringing before the eyes the various "pleasures" of fieldwork like the birds that trailed the machinery, Mrs. E. P. E. crafted with words a picture of alternative rural realities. Yet as Ned O'Gorman reminds us, *phantasia* is more than a product – it is also a capacity and a process that can create the grounds for deliberation.[312] In bringing before the eyes visions not yet expressed with words, a deliberative *phantasia* can, Hawhee argues, "compete with, or perhaps even overtake, what is already before the eyes of the audience…leading to belief formation and decision making."[313] In constructing a different vision of labor than that articulated in the MFH contest, Mrs. E. P. E. and Mrs. Z. Y. also put before the eyes of *TFW*'s audience other possibilities and extended the scene of deliberation in which they were engaged. Their letters opened the discursive space for other women to enter and continue to debate their ideas regarding labor and mutuality.

Of course, some women aligned with A Different Jane and argued for women to remain working in the farm home.[314] Their claims reflected what Managing Director F. W. Beckman argued in his first editorial in March 1927, just as the Sod debate gained traction. Regarding the gendered separation of labor, Beckman wrote: "[W]hile many of the farm tasks lie outside of the home and are distinctively the man's tasks, yet as many others lie in the home and are the farm woman's tasks."[315] Yet the significance of the women's disputes lies less in the specific claims they expressed, and more in the fact of their very existence. Even as *TFW* promoted its modern woman as a homemaker pleased with her domesticity and surrounded by material goods more than the articles of her production, farm women's discourses interrupted the very notion that their lives *as farm women* could ever reflect the gendered expectation that their labor remain in one place. As a collective interruption that indicated alternative realities of gender, labor, and space than those authorized in the MFH contest, these letters enacted rhetorical agency through

their presence in a column that was meant to address modern technology in the home. As these letters evidenced, field labor was not only a part of farm women's experiences, but it was also a source from which the contributors developed their identities.

"What about These Others?": Revealing the Limits of Assumed Motherhood and Discussing the Prospect of Failure

Thus far, I have argued that if we want to witness rhetorical constructions of rural womanhood beyond those defined in *TFW*'s Master Farm Homemaker contest, we should turn to the women's discourses themselves. In doing so, I have suggested that one alternative notion of rural womanhood emerged in those discourses: women as field laborers. This identity indicated how many "farmer's wives" found, or tried to achieve, success in rural America. But what about those who struggled, particularly within the context of farm women's perceived ultimate responsibility: motherhood? *TFW*'s editors and other public figures invested in rural life had long proclaimed that America's future success relied upon the stable and "healthy atmosphere of the farm home" — a realm that belonged to the farm woman and that would materialize only if she performed her "prime function…to bear and rear a sufficient number of healthy children."[316] The emergence of failure was one interesting development in the Sally Sod-inspired exchanges regarding "success." This time, childlessness or irresponsible motherhood signified prosperity or lack thereof. These exchanges also evidenced dissociative logics that, on the one hand, broadened the idea of success through claims that motherhood was not the sole route to "good" rural womanhood. On the other hand, some of the exchanges narrowed the conditions of success through the rhetorical boundaries they constructed around "responsible" motherhood.

"Pep" from Minnesota's March 1927 letter provides an entry into broader conversations about failure. Although she did not discuss motherhood, Pep was the first woman to enter the

Sally Sod exchange and confess disappointment in her life as a farm woman. She echoed Sod's initial query and explained: "I have often asked myself, 'Am I a success?'"[317] She continued and listed her various achievements: earning a noteworthy raise while working as a maid, dressmaking in town, painting the exterior of her family's farm house, "working in the field like a man," and studying psychology and metaphysics.[318] She also noted her more official capacities, which included writing for a "Household Department" for a farm paper, working as a local extension leader, and serving in her township's Farm Bureau. Despite Pep's impressive portfolio of "some of the things" she had accomplished, she explained that "the world has not sung my praises nor even noticed that I existed at all."[319] What's more, "Pep" closed her letter by asserting that farm prosperity required women, yet women maintained unequal standing with their male partners: "This I do know, that in this vast and intricate machinery of agriculture with its many wheels, large and small, all farm women are necessary cogs."[320] Suggesting that women were crucial to farm success yet always subordinate to the overall agricultural system, Pep opened the space for other women to enter and voice their experiences of failure.

While Pep's sentiments arguably stemmed from her visible work, later discourses about failure cohered around the more private issue of childlessness and illustrated the limits of indexing success according to children. For instance, the May 1927 issue published Jenny Jones's letter that revealed a harsh reality of rural life: infant mortality.[321] She began by asserting that motherhood appeared to be the only indication of womanly achievement:

> DEAR FARMER'S WIFE: Sally Sod has started something. But why should *she* ask, "What is Success?" I thought the world knew that raising children was the only worth-while success. Everybody says so. The papers are full of it. THE FARMER'S WIFE stresses it in every letter that is published. We hear it discussed in every social gathering. Hence there is not a word left to be said for those others whose story is different.[322]

But Jones was one of "those others" who had a different story. She explained that she and her husband "planned to raise children," but their infant daughter "stayed with us just a brief moment and then went back to God."[323] The Joneses never had other children, and they were socially shamed within their community to such an extent that they opted instead to lead "more and more a recluse life" than to continue the "needless suffering" that interacting with their insensitive neighbors generated.[324] She closed her letter with the admission that perhaps her childlessness was purposeful for those women whose children had survived:

> I am sure Sally Sod knows she is a success and I hope that each one of the ten [children] will be successful. The same wish goes out to all those others in the success class. The world needs and appreciates their kind. I am only one of the world's great failures, needed, too, as a background to set off the others.[325]

Just as Pep declared that farm women were "cogs" and necessary sacrifices for the farm enterprise, Jenny suggested that, as a woman who was not a mother, she was somewhat of a martyr, "a background to set off the others" whose motherhood invited celebration. Janet Galligani Casey argues that middle-class farm women "*had* to reproduce" because their farms required children's labor, because the cities depended also on farm youth for their labor and character, and because their children would ease anxieties regarding the decline of "a pure American race."[326] If farm women's success hinged upon their reproductive capacities, as many believed, then surely it was radical to reveal one's intimate knowledge of her childlessness.

While Jones's letter highlighted the absence of children in farm women's experiences, other letters revealed the problems associated with the presence of children. Put differently, while childlessness suggested failure, the mismanagement of children could also threaten a woman's success. These letters denounced Sally Sod who, recall, had ten children and no

modern conveniences. A woman who called herself "A Different Jane's Sympathizer" wrote in November 1927:

> Dear Editor: My FARMER'S WIFE just came and I want to tell you how tired and disgusted I am with that Sally Sod soft stuff. I am a woman out of a family of eleven children and I know what it means to raise a family so large. One is deprived in more ways than one, in education, clothes and the necessary things of life. I am a busy farmer's wife and I don't believe in bringing more babies into this world than we can raise and mother.[327]

Arguing that bearing more children than one could care for would result in a life of deprivation, this letter raised the issue that perhaps the measure of womanly success did not require the physical act of childbearing. Moreover, it disentangled "mother" from "woman" by suggesting that success should be not defined based on childrearing or reproductive control. In this way, "A Different Jane's Sympathizer" invited women like Jenny Jones to see themselves differently – not as failures.

A Different Jane re-entered the conversation in January 1928 and expressed similar ideas, albeit in a sharper tone, regarding those who continued having children when they knew they could not care for them:

> The state will have to educate these children. And neighbors will have to help clothe and feed them….I have had in my school room from these poor, large familied [*sic*] homes, under-nourished and half-clothed children, who can't buy books, till I am at war with all the parents of such flocks. Promising children, too, handicapped for life because they lack proper care. For the child's sake, give a thought to its future![328]

Mobilizing her experience as a rural schoolteacher, A Different Jane cited irresponsible motherhood as a different type of burden: one that affected "the state," "neighbors," and teachers like her for whom childcare was an extra responsibility. Additionally, her vivid language that brought to the mind's eye schoolchildren who were "under-nourished and half-clothed" appealed

to emotion and invited her audience to sympathize with those children so that they might not contribute to that pattern. In this way, *phantasia* functioned in the manner that Ned O'Gorman describes as calling upon *lexis*, or style, to produce images that can cultivate emotion, which can then inform rhetorical judgment.[329] Furthermore, A Different Jane's letter distinguished between "right" motherhood and "wrong" motherhood when it noted that these situations tended to occur in "poor, large familied homes" that developed "flocks." Her words offered a vision to resist, and thus extended a different example of dissociation. Whereas the earlier letters uncoupled "mother" from "woman" to avoid castigating those women like Jenny Jones whose situations rendered them childless, A Different Jane and her "Sympathizer" delinked motherhood from an *irresponsible* rural womanhood so that only those women who could provide for their children would be held in high esteem. Taken together, these letters interrupted the notion that motherhood alone indicated success. While the gendered assumption that all women would become mothers lurked throughout rural America, these letters demonstrated the problems inherent to defining success according to reproduction. Whether farm women were childless due to physical or unfortunate circumstances, or enacted irresponsible motherhood by bearing more children than they could manage, their discourses challenged the expectation of the farm woman as a childbearing and citizen-rearing figure. Conversations about success, it seemed, also required conversations about failure.

Conclusion

In January 1929, *The Farmer's Wife*'s editors composed a message that was strikingly similar to the one offered at the decade's beginning. Nine years earlier, the editors had described Montana State Agricultural College's cemetery exhibit in order to communicate the potential

consequences of refusing modern improvements. As the 1920s closed, the editorial message indicated again that women were suffering because they lacked home technologies:

> We can think of no greater boon to farm women than the addition to their homes of this or that contrivance for lessening their labors….[P]rogress has not been so good to the woman's side of the enterprise. True, many aids have been invented for her help, but most farm homes do not have them.[330]

What makes this editorial noteworthy is that despite *TFW*'s persistent celebration of the "modern" farm woman during the 1920s, its ideal did not neatly align with its audience's material realities. Even as official discourses encouraged women to acquire labor-saving devices, its admission of progress delayed for "the woman's side of the enterprise" acknowledged a somewhat failed vision. Improvement, it appeared, was more expensive, or at the very least more complicated, than the editorial board perhaps anticipated. What's more, as rural and farm families stood on the verge of surviving the agricultural depression that had enveloped much of the nation for nearly ten years – and as rural and farm women emerged poised to contribute further to community and national affairs – *TFW* reinforced its argument that the farm woman's ultimate place was in the home. What had changed in an entire decade?

I argue that much had changed, or perhaps, was distinctive, from before. For instance, Sally Sod purchased a power washer with the money she earned from writing her semi-regular articles. "I'm celebrating!" Sod exclaimed in her May 1928 letter to *TFW*. "Listen! Do you hear it? That's my new power washer, washing overalls. And I haven't an ache nor a pain."[331] While Sod introduced herself to *TFW* in January 1927 as someone with "no modern conveniences" and therefore was "not a Success Story," her letter to the magazine in May 1928 revealed a different reality. In appreciation, she noted: "So if there is anything I can do for THE FARMER'S WIFE, as a magazine, or for its editors individually, just whistle."[332] Although one contributor expressed displeasure during the Sod exchanges because, to her, Sod was being "exploited for publication

and emulation," Sod's material gain during her time as a special contributor improved her life and labor.[333]

Yet the Sally Sod debates eventually ended, and *TFW* closed the 1920s with a greater amount of textual and visual material devoted to Master Farm Homemakers, expert voices, and home beautification.[334] While the "Letters from Our Farm Women" feature remained, the magazine was mostly devoid of a deliberative space that its readers shaped with their questions and convictions. The January 1930 cover indicated that the magazine had maintained its rate of selling over 900,000 copies per month that it first publicized in April 1929; the January 1931 cover revealed that number had increased to over 950,000 copies per month. Perhaps *TFW* no longer needed women's critical voices to attract a larger readership. Their interruptions had ended. What, then, of rural and farm women's agency?

Throughout this chapter, I have suggested that long-term change is not the only indicator of rhetorical agency. Instead, the rhetorical interactions that enable argument, deliberation, and transformation among its participants point to the potential for short-lived exchanges to produce the energy that moves and shapes a text. I have also argued that if we want to witness the rhetorical potential of interruptive agency, we should turn to the discourses of rural and farm women who complicated institutional constructions of their identities in ways that go beyond intention and effect. In her report from the 2003 Alliance of Rhetoric Societies conference, Cheryl Geisler wrote that rhetorical agency was "on the cusp of a major rethinking" because scholars were moving toward investigating how "subaltern groups," or those "without taken-for-granted access do, nevertheless, manage to exercise agency."[335] The women who wrote to *TFW* constituted such a group, for even as their material realities – labor, isolation, money, and time – created obstacles that made seemingly impossible those women's likelihood of textual

engagement, they still managed to access and, as we have seen, co-author the very magazine that purported to tell them about their lives. The very fact of their presence in its pages is significant. Even though the Sally Sod contributors did not permanently unsettle *TFW*'s format and rhetorical definition – even though they appeared as interruptions to the magazine's ideal of the "farmer's wife" – their discourses made legible the idea their identities were more complex than what the Master Farm Homemaker contest implied. Their letters to each other created what Lisa M. Gring-Pemble calls "a transitional space between the women's public and private lives where they tested their own ideas and the ideas of other women."[336] As women wrote to *TFW* to argue with each other about labor and motherhood, they also authored their own "success stories" that accumulated to illustrate the many facets of rural and farm life that the magazine underrepresented or avoided. Their striking claims and vivid language were powerful testimony to the idea that "the farmer's wife" possessed both the writing ability and imagination to construct and communicate other definitions of prosperity. Even though the women usually wrote under pseudonyms, their choice to enter into the uncertain rhetorical space of the Sally Sod debates where they put themselves at risk for public judgment and personal attack is both daring and admirable.

Jeffrey Grabill and Stacey Pigg argue that identities can be "performed and leveraged in small, momentary, and fleeting acts" as rhetors invoke personal experiences in group conversations.[337] By drawing upon their experiences to dissociate "home" and "mother" from "woman," *TFW*'s contributors interrupted the notion that increasingly beautiful homes filled with children indexed success for the modern rural and farm woman. Jeff Motter argues that dissociation works to "invent new rhetorical possibilities for understanding and action."[338] By challenging and redefining the terms of "success" that the Master Farm Homemaker

"movement" offered, *TFW*'s contributors broadened the principles and practices required to be seen as successful, indicated from their experiences what constituted "success," and illuminated new visions of "the farmer's wife" that confronted gendered notions of rural womanhood. They established the new terms for their individual and collective identities. While some scholars question whether or not agency is an illusion, Celeste Condit reminds us that if agency is such, it is a "necessary illusion" to preserve the belief in rhetoric's possibilities.[339] As these women made appeals based on labor and motherhood, their very act of self-definition was significant because they laid before their fellow readers the option of seeing differently their identities and contributions to the world. While the magazine's manuscript reviewer interpreted rural and farm women as wanting only money in return for their textual labor, rural and farm women's letters to each other tested such claims regarding their perceived incompetencies for public expression. Their letters to each other emphasized that these women valued the strangers that they encountered in *TFW*'s pages, understood that their personal experiences were grounds for public argument, and even when they vehemently disagreed with each other, validated the right of each woman to declare for herself the meaning of success.

Figure 1. Cover of *The Farmer's Wife*, August 1914. Other cover illustrations during the first half of *TFW*'s run repeated the visual patterns depicted here: the farm woman as outdoor laborer, mother, and located in a rural setting. Source: *The Farmer's Wife*, August 1914, cover.

Figure 2. Cover of *The Farmer's Wife*, September 1927. Women appeared less frequently on covers during the later 1920s. Like the woman on this cover, women appeared glamorous because of cosmetics and the latest fashions, and they were often divorced from outdoor rural settings. Here, the apple basket of kittens is the only hint at this woman's connection to nature. Source: *The Farmer's Wife*, September 1927, cover.

Page 42 — The Farmer's Wife, July, 1922

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

National News of Interest to Farm Women

By Alice Gram, Washington Representative of The Farmer's Wife

To Outlaw War

The Great Convention City

Sixtieth Annual Convention Of The National Education Association

Woman's Party Headquarters

July 4 To Be Citizenship Day

Education Has Friends

Care Of Mount Vernon

Get These Slides

Figure 3. "News from Washington." This edition updated readers on events including the recent unveiling of the Lincoln Memorial, the new National Woman's Party headquarters, and President Harding's statements on public education. Source: Alice Gram, "News from Washington: National News of Interest to Farm Women," *The Farmer's Wife*, July 1922.

The Farmer's Wife, April, 1928 Page 9

Master Farm Homemakers of Twelve States

THESE fifty-six women have been awarded Master Farm Homemaker recognition in the states of West Virginia, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Iowa, Kansas, South Dakota, North Dakota and Minnesota. Further awards will be made in 1928 in Vermont, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Michigan, Mississippi and Maryland. Brief information about the fifty-six women will be found on a later page of this issue.

Figure 4. Master Farm Homemakers. *The Farmer's Wife*'s first Master Farm Homemakers (56 total). Source: Bess M. Rowe, "Master Farm Homemakers," *The Farmer's Wife*, April 1928.

The Farmer's Wife, July, 1928 Page 9

Composite Photo by Hollis

A Portrait: the Typical Farm Homemaker

By BESS M. ROWE

AFTER the banquet which honored the five Master Farm Homemakers of Minnesota, one of the guests, a distinguished business man of the Twin Cities, made this unusual comment:

"As I listened to those five women talk and tell of their experiences and of their aims and hopes in life, I felt as though I had been reading an autobiography of Abraham Lincoln."

He had been deeply impressed by a something in those women. And so were the guests at each of the recognition dinners in the different states, for many of them commented upon it.

What was it that stamped these women as unusual? What is the farm woman like?

It would be hard to find five women more unlike in most respects than those Minnesota women, — Mrs. Potter,

was just as interested and just as intelligent on the week-by-week development of crops and livestock as was Father.

This close understanding and partnership are possible among all members of the family. On the farm, more than any place else, the children can be "taken into the firm" early in life. This community of interests makes for a family unity which is very precious to the farm woman. As one of the Master Farm Homemakers in Ohio says:—"The spirit of '*We*' which is sweeping the country is found on farms. One of the lovely things of country life is that the family really lives together. We go to ball games, church, work, and social entertainments together. We farm women take an interest in the business of the farm, as well as the men, and fear that late frost just as much. Our children are mem-

Figure 5. Composite Portrait of Master Farm Homemakers. A visual assemblage of eight of the 56 Master Farm Homemakers depicted in the April 1928 issue. Bess M. Rowe, "A Portrait: The Typical Farm Homemaker," *The Farmer's Wife*, July 1928.

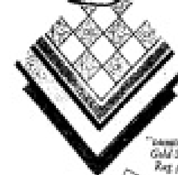

Figure 6. Congoleum Gold-Seal Art Rugs Advertisement. This is an example of the type of advertisement common during the late 1920s in *TFW*. Note the emphasis on attractiveness, leisure, and interiority. Source: *The Farmer's Wife*, March 1928.

Page 144   The Farmer's Wife, March, 1927

How does your garden grow?

The dangerous "weeds" of coughs and sore throats can be kept out of your children's experience. Give them delicious Smith Brothers' Cough Drops—absolutely pure and *safe*. Two kinds: S-B and Menthol.

SMITH BROTHERS COUGH DROPS

5¢

—and yet *Both* are the *Same age*

Sage Tea *Keeps* Your Hair Dark

WYETH CHEMICAL CO., Inc., NEW YORK

Agents $72 a Week

BROWN'S Home Study School

"Sally Sod" Starts Something

Must Raise Our Standards

DEAR FARMER'S WIFE: I have just read Sally Sod's letter and feel that I must write, as she expresses my sentiments exactly. She says, "I can hand THE FARMER'S WIFE to my little ones without a thought of their running into something I would rather they would not read."

THE FARMER'S WIFE is a wonderful magazine and worth ten times its cost although I hope it will never reach that high price for then it would be out of reach of many farmers' wives.

How Some Women Succeed stories have been full of encouragement for me. As I read of the nerve, grit and stick-to-it-iveness that helped others to success it helps me to keep up the fight.

I know success is measured by dollars and cents by the majority of people and the dollars (also the cents to most farmers' wives) do much toward attaining the ends for which we strive. But I think in the mind of the Creator a woman who is rearing her children intelligently is one of the most successful, so I think Sally Sod should always feel like "a howling success" and never like "the flattest failure."

The children of today make the America of tomorrow and we mothers must raise our standards and *keep* raising them. We are fortunate indeed to have a magazine like THE FARMER'S WIFE to help us.

I am glad we are to have Angelo Patri's articles, also Dr. Holland's again this year and every other thing in the magazine.—*I. D., Pennsylvania.*

She's a Brick, Anyway

DEAR Editor: A little more than a year ago my neighbor's little girl came to me and asked me to subscribe for THE FARMER'S WIFE. I had more papers already than I had time to read and I didn't want it in the least but I hadn't the heart to refuse the child. So I subscribed, thinking it would be more material for the waste basket. However, the child's mother pointed out the Success Stories to me.

Although born and reared on a farm and now a farmer's wife and although liking the farm in general (but thoroughly disliking some phases of it) I was a bit "blue," thinking that farm women as a whole didn't amount to much. And here I was confronted with a Success Story of an "honest-to-goodness" farm woman who milked the cows, fed the chickens, and tended the garden, like myself. Was all this worth putting in the paper? I had had other visions of success. After a few months I decided the Success Stories made mighty interesting reading anyway. And I discovered other things in THE FARMER'S WIFE too.

And now comes Sally Sod with her question, "What is Success?" Well now, come to think of it, what is it, anyway? Is it being able to do anything or any number of things? I can cook a meal that's eatable, and can keep a fairly respectable looking house. I make nearly all my own clothes and also those for my children. I can play and sing a tune and even give a few piano lessons occasionally. I superintend a country Sunday School and teach a class. But am I a success? Well, hardly.

But this is not getting anywhere. My husband read Sally Sod's letter and I asked him what success meant. But he didn't seem to be any better acquainted with it than his wife. We kept revolving it in our minds and talking about it and even mentioning it to a neighbor, without arriving at a conclusion.

Sally Sod had started something and I couldn't get away from it. As I went about my tasks it kept bobbing up. "What is success?" So I said to myself, "Now then, Betty Green, you've always had ambitions. Just where would you have to be, or what would you have to do in this world of affairs, to call yourself a success?" Common sense told me I had about as much chance of ever realizing my ambitions as a goose had of developing into a swan. "And so," I wondered, "is there a 'lesser state,' that might be called a success, something to which all farm women, myself included, might attain?"

We will forget the "high lights" of success and confine ourselves to the ordinary woman on the farm. What does it take to make a woman on a farm anywhere in the United States a success? First of all, she must have a desire for something better. Then she must have vision, foresight, stability, "level-headedness" and plenty of good common sense. She must not be afraid to work but her work need not be money-making directly. I like that expression "a working partner." The woman who does her own sewing and saves the expense of ready-made garments, the woman who buys her material wisely, the woman who does home canning to cut the cost of grocery bills is making money. Indirectly, it is true. But a "dollar saved is a dollar earned." She must know how to manage so as to make her work count and not allow it to become drudgery. It goes without saying, that she must be clean and orderly. If she has a family she must know how to care for them physically, mentally and spiritually in a wise, understanding and sympathetic way. This includes keeping posted on hygiene, on methods of teaching, and on what is going on in the world; beside knowing how to teach them the great spiritual truths of life. She may not be able to play or sing but she must know how to appreciate good music and must also read good books. She must know how to dress well. I don't mean keeping up with the latest fads, or paying extravagant prices, but knowing how to choose what is best suited to her. She must know how to take an intelligent part in community affairs and be able to assume leadership if necessary. She must have perseverance. No one ever gets anywhere on the road to Success who gives up at the *first failure*. She must know how to entertain her friends, not in any lavish or extravagant way, but simply to make them feel welcome and go away with a sense of having enjoyed themselves. And she must be neighborly—lending things and helping a neighbor during threshing, butchering and other crises. She must understand her husband's business and the problems he has to deal with and be able to offer suggestions.

I hear some one saying, "Well, that's a good deal to expect of one woman." It is. But Success means a great deal. Some may not agree with me, however, and set the standard still higher. But if those who measure up to this standard do not deserve to be called a Success, I believe they deserve some praise anyway. If, in addition to these other things, a woman has some business of her own, or some way of adding to the family income and can manage and operate it all herself and make it count for something, greater praise is due and she deserves recognition from the world, whether she gets it or not.

Congratulations to those who have already "arrived" and encouragement and cheer to those who are on the road. And please tell Sally Sod that if she isn't a Success, she's a "brick" anyway.—*Betty Green, Nebraska.*

Join Sally Sod's Round Table

SALLY SOD'S frank, impulsive letters evidently touched a main spring in the hearts of our Readers. They have inspired others to "speak right out in meeting."

We are glad to get these genuine, straight-from-the-shoulder reactions, and invite all those who are interested to draw their chairs, figuratively speaking, a little closer about *Our Round Table* so that we may talk things over, confidentially and in dead earnest. The one rule is that everybody shall be real and talk things—not as they should be but *as they are*.

Tell us what you regard as the most important issues in the country; what you are working for; what you want; and how THE FARMER'S WIFE can best help.

One of our correspondents raises the money question in a delightfully frank way. We see no reason why anyone should apologize for money making. It is basic. Without money there is no such thing possible as home, church, health, education or civilization.

THE FARMER'S WIFE is frankly in the market to help Farm Women make all the money they justly can.

If you differ from us at any point let us hear from you. Your views are our stock in trade.

Sunshine Makes For Happiness

DEAR Editor: I would like to join in the debate. I am so full of thoughts after reading THE FARMER'S WIFE and Sally Sod's letter. I am the mother of four girls. They all say they couldn't miss a single copy of THE FARMER'S WIFE. The oldest is twelve years.

I was raised on a farm and worked in the fields. It wouldn't worry me to drive a drill or rake hay but like Sally Sod I have been pretty busy raising children. Of course Sally has six more

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 156)

Figure 7. Letters in the Sally Sod Exchange. This is the first page of the inaugural set of farm women's letters that engaged Sod's question about success. Source: "'Sally Sod' Starts Something," *The Farmer's Wife*, March 1927.

Chapter Four:

Adapting Agrarianism: Rural and Farm Women's Consciousness Raising Discourses at the First National Farm Woman's Conference

Perhaps the inevitable emphasis that rhetoricians give to public discourse undervalues the significance of interpersonal communication in social change.

— Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "'The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron' Revisited"

When we look beneath the peculiarities of each section and the peculiar needs of each section, we come to the same fundamental principles everywhere in the United States…It simply means: know yourself; value yourself; develop yourself.

--- Mrs. Ira E. Farmer, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*

On October 27, 1925, Kenyon L. Butterfield, President of the American Country Life Association (ACLA), addressed the group at its annual conference with a speech titled, "Needed Readjustments in Rural Life Today." According to Butterfield – President of the Michigan State College of Agriculture and Applied Science and an original member of President Roosevelt's Country Life Commission – transformations in American society since the start of the twentieth century had dramatically affected the nation's rural and farm people. While some of those transformations, like better transportation and improved communication, were beneficial, others, including high land values and speculation, had pushed rural and farm people out of the country and into the city. To address this problem, Butterfield asserted, "We must build a permanent agriculture," an agriculture in which people prospered economically, socially, and spiritually. To accomplish this task, Butterfield continued, there were "certain attitudes of mind that must be developed and that must pervade our organized rural endeavor" to retain the "right" people on the land.[340] In other words, for there to exist a quality population of rural and farm people to

continue the tradition of agriculture, those people would have to develop a particular way of interpreting and understanding themselves and their relationships to the body politic. "Readjustment, an inventory of new situations and what is to be done about them," Butterfield had recently written, "these are the questions of the hour for the rural-minded."[341]

The "attitudes of mind" and the mental, material, and spiritual adaptations that Butterfield alluded to reflected the post-World War I climate in which many Americans experienced status anxieties regarding their individual and collective futures. While publications like *Harper's Magazine* engaged post-war unrest and what writer Frederick Palmer called the "psychology stimulated by our prosperity," others focused more specifically on how the era affected women.[342] In a 1921 article for *The New Republic*, Anne Martin, a Nevada resident who had recently campaigned as an Independent for a state Senate seat, announced, "Many women are in the grip of an 'inferiority complex.'"[343] Despite the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, Martin argued, gender inequality persisted not entirely because of men's unfair treatment of women, but because of women's restricted vision of themselves and their possibilities. "If we could only change our opinion of ourselves," Martin asserted, "our shackles would drop off instantly."[344] Readers of *The New Republic*, a generally progressive, intellectual, urban, middle-class audience, were not the only individuals who experienced self-doubt and searched for ways to achieve an improved self-perception.[345] Conversations about inferiority complexes occurred throughout print culture as Americans engaged the idea that Alfred Adler, a follower of Sigmund Freud, popularized in his early 1920s lectures and 1927 manuscript *Understanding Human Nature*.[346] The "sharp division" of "masculine" and "feminine" attributes, Adler explained, conditioned people to interpret negatively "feminine" qualities and practices; for women, this contributed to "the manifestation of an inhibited psychic development."[347]

Although the idea of women's inferiority complexes was commonly attached to suffrage discourses about women's political potential, rural and farm women were aware of these vocabularies and revealed that they also experienced inferiority complexes that affected their self-confidence and capacities for independent action.[348] Attuned to the needs and concerns of rural and farm people, Butterfield appointed a Committee on the Farm Woman Movement ahead of the ACLA's 1925 conference; its job was "to consider the varied aspects of developing the consciousness of our American farm women which may result in a real farm woman's movement."[349] One month following Butterfield's address, in November 1925, the Committee convened twice and concurred that "there existed at least the beginning of a 'farm woman movement' which was rapidly crystallizing out into a national group consciousness."[350] Considering that the 1920 census counted nearly 13 million rural females over the age of 20 and over 18 million rural children under the age of 15, women were poised to mobilize on behalf of themselves and their families.[351] But how could the Committee be certain? And how might it capture this quickly manifesting sentiment to understand it better? The group opted to take a comparative approach to "check up the thinking of the committee against the thinking of actual farm women" so that it might understand better the "ground swell of thinking among farm women over the country."[352] What resulted was a four-day national conference, held March 8-11, 1926, in which sixteen women who each represented a section of the United States and Canada convened at Chicago's Edgewater Beach Hotel and engaged the seemingly straightforward question: "What do the farm women want?"[353]

On its own, this conference, which the ACLA and *The Farmer's Wife* magazine co-sponsored, was noteworthy because of its national scope and its strict focus on women's voices. Although rural and farm women had long participated in public speaking contexts within

institutions like the Grange and the Farm Bureau, an exclusive gathering of representative farm women who spoke for the entire United States had never occurred. Yet this conference was extraordinary because it also functioned as a new enactment of President Theodore Roosevelt's 1908 Country Life Commission that aimed to investigate, understand, and improve rural and farm life. Eighteen years following Roosevelt's original study, the women called to Chicago in March 1926 revived "that rural home inquiry" about which Charlotte Perkins Gilman had written to *Good Housekeeping* readers in 1909. This time, as Bess M. Rowe reported in *The Farmer's Wife*, the all-female commission would "'find the answer,' in modern terms," for the question about farm satisfaction remained "as vital now as it was two decades past."[354]

This chapter takes the Chicago conference as a consciousness raising event in which its female contributors persuaded each other – and themselves – about the significance of their identities as farm women and their responsibilities to their families, communities, and the nation. According to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, consciousness raising is both "a mode of small-group communication" and "a rhetorical style and strategy" that is "uniquely suited to the characteristics of woman's subculture."[355] A form of self-persuasion and group persuasion, consciousness raising invites its participants, usually women, to both constitute and interpret themselves through a new perceptual filter: as public actors. "Rhetoric addressed to such people," Campbell continues, "must create its audience, transforming those exposed to messages into agents of change."[356] Although rhetorical studies of consciousness raising as a form of feminist advocacy focus on feminism's "second wave" during the 1970s, this chapter presents an alternative rhetorical context in which to consider consciousness raising as an exercise in critical thought and personal development.[357] At the Chicago conference in 1926, the female contributors participated in similar efforts to transform their understandings of themselves

through group conversation, personal disclosure, and individual exploration. Additionally, although second wave consciousness raising was often an intimate, private practice for its female participants, the Chicago conference presents a unique example through which to consider how women's consciousness raising discourses functioned as they fell on each other's ears and those of two prominent men in rural and farm affairs: Dan A. Wallace, the Directing Editor of *The Farmer's Wife*, and Henry Israel, the Executive Secretary of the ACLA. As (mostly) silent audience members for this conference, Wallace and Israel's presence signified for the women both the opportunity for them to alter the men's perceptions of rural and farm women and the prospect that their private conversations might be made into material for public consumption.

In this chapter, I argue that the Chicago conference provided a consciousness raising space and functioned as a site of rhetorical invention for its female contributors to articulate themselves into an adapted version of American agrarianism. Jeff Motter and Ross Singer identify agrarianism as a "malleable mythic form" that is particularly rhetorical in that it can diversely manifest depending on particular exigencies and conditions that invite its flexibility.[358] Context shapes and reshapes the contours of this narrative, and rhetors attuned to the ideals and principles of agrarian thought and practice are situated to extend the limits of the agrarian myth. While Deborah Fink reminds us that traditional Jeffersonian agrarianism posited farm women as private figures with little to no possibilities for public activity, the sixteen representative farm women intimated that perhaps the most necessary rural "adjustment" involved recognizing farm women as actors in a new agrarian vision.[359] Called to Chicago to critically engage the original inquiries of President Roosevelt's all-male CLC, the women mobilized elements of the feminine style as they partially filled the absences that the original commission's research and report had engendered. Appealing to romantic agrarian principles including stewardship, sovereignty, and

middle-class privilege, yet broadening the meanings associated with those principles, the women nurtured a different agrarianism: one that foregrounded women's contributions to rural and farm life, and one that introduced the idea of women in agrarian thought and practice.

This chapter proceeds in the following ways. First, I explain how scholars theorize consciousness raising as a mode of feminist rhetorical activity. Campbell argues that those who participate in consciousness raising practices often mobilize what she calls the "feminine style" of speaking; because the farm women's discourses activated elements of this communicative style as they tested the limits of agrarianism, I also discuss the feminine style and its relationships to female empowerment and gender (in)equity. Next, I situate the Chicago conference in its broader historical context and highlight the developments in rural and farm life between Roosevelt's commission and the Chicago conference. Then, I analyze the conference proceedings and reveal how the women's conversations adapted agrarianism by inventing three different possibilities for farm women in agrarian thought and practice. First, rural and farm women remained stewards of the home, but they broadened the notion of "home" to include other spaces where they could exert their influence and participate in public action. Second, rural and farm women remained self-sufficient, but they broadened the boundaries of inclusion so that they could organize and work together on behalf of rural and farm life. Third, rural and farm women remained beneficiaries of middle-class material privilege, but they broadened what indexed privilege to include characteristics constitutive of white rural womanhood. If the conference replicated the CLC's original judgment that the nation did not know enough about the status, problems, and possibilities of country life and farm people, its participants revealed what had escaped the CLC decades earlier as they invented different roles and relations for farm women moving forward. In the conclusion, I consider the consequences of the farm women's

consciousness raising rhetoric, particularly in terms of its exclusionary feminist politics. While the Chicago conference created rhetorical space for those whom the CLC previously ignored in terms of gender, it inculcated its own set of power hierarchies in terms of class through its exclusion of rural and farm women with lesser means and opportunities to leave their labor.

Consciousness Raising Practices and the Feminine Style of Public Address: Rhetorical Opportunities and Challenges for Argument, Identification, and Empowerment

As both a communicative event and a rhetorical strategy, consciousness raising presents its participants the chance to share with each other their individual thoughts, feelings, and experiences of womanhood, gender inequity, and discrimination. According to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, consciousness raising practices typically occur in "meetings of small, leaderless groups" that privilege conversation, personal expression, and self-analysis among its participants.[360] The goal of consciousness raising, as its name suggests, is for those involved to achieve an altered understanding of themselves as individuals and their possibilities for future action. It is an empowering mode of communication, Campbell explains, whose participants perform "an epistemic stance based on shared experience, participatory interaction in arriving at conclusions, strategic indirection in presenting evidence and argument, and conversation as the predominant mode through which influence occurs."[361] While participants are encouraged to disagree with each other and avoid unanimity, consciousness raising establishes the rhetorical context for participants to identify with each other and to see how "what were thought to be personal deficiencies and individual problems are common and shared."[362] In this way, consciousness raising "requires that the personal be transcended by moving toward the structural" so that participants understand how their individual experiences relate to common conditions; ideally, they are then poised to challenge or reshape those conditions.[363]

These potential effects of consciousness raising are illuminated in Tasha Dubriwny's study of the Redstockings' 1969 abortion speak-out. According to Dubriwny, as "second-wave" women articulated their individual abortion narratives in small-group settings, they created a collective rhetoric that privileged audience participation, recognized personal experiences as grounds for political knowledge, and allowed space for participants to revise the meanings of abortion.[364] Campbell explains that in consciousness raising spaces, "[a]ll participate and lead," and therefore "all are considered expert."[365] This notion of collaborative expertise manifests in consciousness raising contexts as participants – who are peers of each other – draw upon personal experiences to collectively reshape public vocabularies.[366] Therefore, consciousness raising as a mode of communication can disrupt or challenge established sources of expertise through its constitution of alternative voices as fit for political argument.

Those who participate in consciousness raising practices often mobilize what Campbell calls the "feminine style" of public address. As Campbell explains in *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric*, the feminine style often functions in consciousness raising contexts because the goal of both modes of expression is empowerment.[367] Like consciousness raising as a paradigm of feminist rhetorical practice, the feminine style of speaking is personal in tone; relies on particular forms of evidence including personal experiences, short stories, and examples; moves inductively; invites audience participation; and establishes identification between speaker and audience.[368] The feminine style is "a highly appealing form of discourse," Campbell argues, because it invites those marginalized from traditional arenas of public address to draw upon "common values and shared experience" as they establish themselves as public actors.[369]

While Campbell developed the feminine style in her analysis of nineteenth century female orators who confronted the rhetorical challenge of "cop[ing] with the conflicting demands of the podium" – inhabiting the identity of woman *and* speaker – scholars have extended the parameters and possibilities of the feminine style as a mode of public argument.[370] Sara Hayden's study of Jeannette Rankin's suffrage discourse affirms that the feminine style can be effective for rhetors who "perceive themselves or are perceived by others as wielding little power."[371] Because the feminine style "suggests, invites, and requests," and therefore is a less direct communicative style than demanding or asserting, rhetors who employ the feminine style can craft public arguments that do not appear to threaten patriarchal ideals at the same time that they strategically work to destabilize those ideals.[372] Bonnie J. Dow and Mari Boor Tonn's analysis of Ann Richards's rhetoric reveals that a more contemporary feminine style extends the possibilities of public argument: it validates claims with experience, recognizes personal experiences as material for public knowledge, and establishes political relationships among rhetors and audiences that are rooted in common family values.[373] In these ways, the feminine style functions both to empower audiences and to critique the "traditional grounds for political judgment."[374] And yet even as the feminine style can function to create rhetorical opportunities for women in public life and political argument, other scholars have demonstrated that the feminine style can perpetuate ideas and practices that undermine efforts for creating gender equality.[375] In their analysis of presidential films, Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles argue that the feminine style can actually disguise and perpetuate anti-feminist and hegemonic ideologies. "The use of a 'feminine' style," Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles explain, "may not signal the feminization of political discourse, but simply a shift in the expression of traditional, patriarchal political images."[376] Katie L. Gibson and Amy L. Heyse's analysis of Sarah Palin's

2008 Republic National Convention address illustrates how the feminine style can elevate hegemonic masculinity as it establishes a political persona for an individual female rhetor.[377] What these studies suggest, as Gibson and Heyse nicely summarize, is how the feminine style may not always "necessarily [be] tied to feminist values and that the feminine style may, in fact, serve to validate patriarchal values and ideals."[378]

As we will see, the first national farm woman's conference extended to its participants the chance to figure out together the meanings, problems, and possibilities of farm women amid the nation's agricultural crisis. Before we consider what those women said, we should first understand who those women were, how they were selected for the conference, the structure of the conference, and its origin.

"Awakening an Echo of the Roosevelt Inquiry": The Chicago Conference as a Female Enactment of the Country Life Commission

Between Roosevelt's initial country life inquiry in 1908 and its 1926 female iteration, the United States in general, and the rural and farm United States in particular, experienced considerable change across social, political, and economic levels. While I detailed some of these changes in chapter two, and while a full overview of these changes is beyond the scope of this chapter, I highlight here a few moments that illustrate the era's transitions. After the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, some rural and farm authorities imagined that farm women would be poised perhaps more than ever to exert their influence in public affairs. During his president's address in 1920 at the ACLA's third annual national conference in Springfield, Massachusetts, Butterfield identified women as key to the association's ongoing mission of garnering support from male farmers. "With the increasing influence of women due to women's suffrage, I think we will find it much easier than ever before to interest the farmers in country life," Butterfield

proclaimed. "The women have been more keenly alive than the men to the limitations of the country due to isolation."[379] Suggesting that farm women's political work amounted to privately persuading male farmers, Butterfield's optimism for the Nineteenth Amendment's influence on rural life still located farm women as supplementary to the male farmer's political development.

At the same time that Freud, flappers, and the literary works of F. Scott Fitzgerald gained popularity among the urban sophisticate, some elected officials organized on behalf of the nation's farmers.[380] In 1921, congressional members from both the Senate and House of Representatives formed the Farm Bloc to push for legislation that would protect farmers from the post-war economic collapse. While the Bloc helped to pass the Packers and Stockyard Act (1921) that shielded farmers from price mismanagement, it interestingly encountered criticism similar to that which the CLC received for not incorporating farmers into its leadership.[381] Despite these and other efforts to help farm people, the nation's agricultural population steadily decreased during the first half of the 1920s as rural and farm people – especially those under 21 years old – migrated to cities.[382] The total U.S. population increased by nearly 10 million from 1920 (105,710,260 people) to 1925 (115,378,000); during this same time, the agricultural population dropped by 2.5 million and amounted to a little over 29 million of that 115 million population total.[383]

Technologies made their way to the countryside and offered rural and farm people improved modes of communication with and connection to towns and cities. Between 1920 and 1930, the percentage of farms that reported automobile ownership rose from 31 to 58; 21 percent of farms reported radio ownership in 1930, an increase from only five percent in 1925.[384] While rural electrification would not be a staple on farms until the 1950s, rural and farm people encountered appeals for home electricity decades earlier through the cooperative extension

service and other agencies.[385] Thanks to the U.S. Postal Service and its Rural Free Delivery program which "brought the outside world much closer," rural and farm people accessed papers and periodicals whose content both reflected rural and farm issues and reproduced visions of middle-class consumerism that circulated in other forms of print culture.[386] As much of the agricultural U.S. fell into an economic crisis in the 1920s, its people also encountered new or improving rural institutions that aimed to ameliorate their struggles. The Chicago conference was situated within this broader context and alongside these events.

Understanding the Chicago Conference: Its Organizers, Participants, Audience, and Format

Dan A. Wallace expressed in the April 1926 issue of *The Farmer's Wife* that the Chicago conference was the opportunity to "take this step in awakening an echo of the Roosevelt inquiry."[387] Wallace's colleague Bess M. Rowe, Field Editor for *TFW*, noted that Wallace's own attendance at the conference was its own echo of his father's earlier service to Roosevelt. As "the son of a member of the Country Life Commission," Rowe noted, the younger Wallace seemed "a man well fitted to 'carry the torch' of rural leadership handed on by his father."[388] The burden of echoing Wallace's father's earlier work fell on the ACLA's Committee on the Farm Woman Movement. Committee members who attended the conference included Schuttler; Rowe; Grace E. Frysinger, Extension Home Economist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture; Anna M. Clark, board member of the Young Women's Christian Association; Dora H. Stockman, member of Michigan's State Board of Agriculture; and Mrs. H. W. Lawrence, member of the Board of Directors of the Ohio State Farm Bureau Federation.[389] Each member of the Committee had "some definite type of contact with farm women throughout the United States," and so "each could bring to the group some special point of view gained from such contact."[390] The

Committee was in charge of choosing the participants and it established the following criteria to guide its selections:

1) They shall be farm women.
2) They shall be women of balanced judgment.
3) They shall have knowledge of conditions as they really are in their own section of the country.
4) They shall be able to see beyond the borders of their own state.
5) They shall not be blinded by enthusiasm for their organization.
6) They shall be women of vision.[391]

These terms reveal a few noteworthy items. First, the condition that each contributor exhibit "balanced judgment" indicates that the committee desired women who were prudent, careful, and reasonable. These characteristics point to *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, as a resource that would guide the women as they spoke for themselves and others. Second, the visual language in items four through six suggests that the committee preferred participants who would not be distracted by mediating influences as they engaged in discussions (e.g., "enthusiasm for their organization"), but rather would maintain a clear, direct focus on present issues. That clear and direct focus (which also interacts with *phronesis*) was also valuable for the future, for the "women of vision" who gathered in Chicago would be able to see beyond the conference and have insight into how to achieve their ideas once they returned home. This visual language also incorporates a geographical component in that the ideal contributor would be grounded in her particular community but could broaden her gaze to understand the issues that transcended her community and state. This awareness of local and regional concerns was particularly important to the Committee; when it selected the sixteen women for the conference, it explained that each women was "representing the thinking of one section of the country."[392]

Who were these women? While I provide in the appendix a list of the conference participants and the states they represented, that list does not express the breadth of experiences

and depth of rural and farm knowledge that the sixteen chosen women possessed. The biographical snippets that I provide here certainly are not sufficient in communicating each woman's value to the conference and her community; nevertheless, I hope that they provide a more intricate portrait of a few of these women and better illuminate why they were selected to speak on behalf of farm women and children from their respective regions.

Mrs. Julian A. Dimock (legal name: Annette Chase Dimock) of Vermont taught home economics at Ypsilanti Normal School and at Simmons College. She also wrote a standing advice column called "Letters to Peggy" for the *Burlington Free Press* and contributed to other magazines pieces about marketing, nutrition, and food conservation.[393] Mrs. Ira E. Farmer of Atlanta, Georgia, took a break from her leadership roles as President of the Thompson Women's Club and the County Federation of Women's Clubs to develop a Department of Public Relations in an Atlanta department store the year prior to the conference.[394] Mrs. Dora H. Stockman of East Lansing, Michigan, had recently been elected to the State Board of Agriculture; this came with the distinction of being the first woman to hold an elective office in Michigan. Since 1914, she had lectured in the Michigan Grange and, at the time of the conference, had published three books of farm poetry and songs.[395] She was also recognized as a prominent organizer for Michigan woman's suffrage.[396] Mrs. R. E. Tipton of Lexington, Kentucky, helped to found the Fayette County Community Council in 1920 and served as its President for four years. During her tenure, the Council established a women's restroom in the County Court House and created a circulating library in the County Superintendent of Schools office. She also assisted in developing an interdenominational Missionary Society among farm people in her community.[397] Mrs. Isaac Edinger (legal name: Annabel Long Edinger) earned two degrees from Columbia University before moving with her husband to a 1,000-acre ranch in Divide, Montana. A former

Field Secretary of the Red Cross and surgical dressings teacher during World War I, Edinger championed child health and welfare from her western ranch and spoke occasionally to local women's clubs.[398] (Local newspaper *The Dillon Examiner* reported on February 24, 1926, a few weeks ahead of the conference, that the Montana State Federation of Women's Clubs was "honored" at Edinger's selection for the Chicago conference.[399]) Mrs. G. Thomas Powell of Long Island, New York, was the President of Nassau County's County Home Bureau for several years and then served for two years as President of the New York State Federation of Home Bureaus. She wrote and directed a picture show about Home Bureau activities that circulated internationally to illustrate common practices of U.S. extension services.[400] She also wrote a pageant called "In Partnership with the Farmer" that was presented for the New York State Federations of Farm and Home Bureaus in November 1922 and, in February 1923, in Cornell's (Liberty Hyde) Bailey Hall during the university's Rural Extravaganza.[401]

Based on these details, as well as others that appeared alongside vignettes of each participant in *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, a few patterns emerge about the sixteen women. These women were established leaders within and beyond their communities; they served on, directed, and sometimes even established local organizations and other official or municipal bodies. These women were educated; some had previously taught at state colleges, at Grange or Farm Bureau meetings, and at women's club meetings. They leveraged their education in service to others; some contributed advice and articles to print publications, and others organized in their communities for better rural conditions.[402] Most of these women, as their marriage details indicated, were over forty years old at the time of the conference; they had experiences and knowledge that younger women probably lacked. And although some of these women grew up on small family farms, many currently lived on 100+ acre farms or ranches – an

element that I want to linger with for a moment. Recall that the Committee selected each conference participant because its members had "some definite type of contact with farm women throughout the United States." The Committee most likely would not have known these sixteen women existed if the women's labor was so overwhelming that it precluded them from participating in extra-farm affairs. Consider that in 1925, tenant labor that amounted to nearly 2.5 million individuals sustained 38.6 percent of the nation's farms.[403] The very presence of the women in Chicago suggested that they enjoyed material advantages to the extent that they were able to leave behind their labor for a few days without jeopardizing the entire farm enterprise. Neither tenant farmers nor sharecroppers, these women could exercise some degree of choice regarding how and when they labored; moreover, they could extend their labor beyond their farms and into their communities. I offer these remarks to emphasize how these "representative" farm women represented only a certain type of American farm woman: one who was middle-class (or at least not impoverished), much like those women that *The Farmer's Wife* both imagined and constituted as its ideal rural woman. Therefore, while the Committee endeavored to populate its conference with sixteen individuals who collectively reflected the breadth of farm women, we might consider that these chosen women were more exemplary than average.

The sixteen farm women and the other conference attendees convened at the Edgewater Beach Hotel, which had recently opened on Berwyn Avenue along the northern edge of Chicago along Lake Michigan (see Figures 8-9).[404] On March 8, Chair Schuttler opened the conference with a frank statement: "We are here to consider *what the farm women of America want* [emphasis original]."[405] The conference was an opportunity for its participants to "come to a realization of their power" so that they could achieve "everything under the shining sun they need."[406] Schuttler then established that the event would proceed as "a conference without

speeches," for "[n]ot a single man or woman has been invited to address us."[407] Schuttler punctuated the magnitude of the participants' representative function when she advised: "I am hoping that as we talk we will keep in mind this fundamental idea: I am not speaking for my little community individually but for the many millions of farm women and the millions of farm children of the United States."[408]

Although the conference was scheduled to last four days, there was not a predetermined agenda that outlined topics for the women to engage or designated amounts of time for discussions. Instead, the conference unfolded organically as its contributors discussed and deliberated with each other how farm women might best achieve progress. According to Campbell, "[t]here is no leader, rhetor, or expert" at a consciousness raising event.[409] This was a key feature of the Chicago conference, for the rural and farm women's participation relied upon conversations as the primary mode of their rhetorical expression. During this initial dialogue and throughout the entire conference, the sixteen women remained together and did not break off into smaller groups. They contributed to the conversations on a voluntary basis; some women noticeably spoke more than others, while others remained silent for most of their time together. Schuttler structured the discussions by introducing new questions, prompting participants to clarify or extend their comments, and summarizing main points when a topic reached its conclusion. Occasionally, Rowe and Frysinger, both colleagues of Schuttler as fellow members of the ACLA's Committee, assisted Schuttler in summarizing and streamlining the discussions. Otherwise, the sixteen farm women were those who most shaped the conference. "The meeting," Schuttler clarified for them, "is yours."[410]

On the first day, the women engaged Schuttler's earlier assertion that farm women appeared to be grappling with an "inferiority complex." If the first day recognized a general

status of the nation's farm women, then the second day established just what farm women wanted. "If you think a farm woman wants a certain thing," Chair Schuttler stated at the beginning of the second day, "say so."[411] The women generated a list of requests that ranged from radios to better recognition for their labor. Committee member Anna Clark organized those requests into fourteen categories. In a democratic exercise, all participants voted on the four topics they most wanted to discuss during the remainder of the conference; they elected to talk about education, economics, appreciations, and community development. Discussion of those topics extended to March 11, the final day, when Schuttler announced that each person in attendance would share with the group the idea from the conference that left the greatest impression on her or him, a conversation that I explore later in the analysis.

When Roosevelt first wrote to Bailey and outlined his vision of the CLC's work, he explained that the commission should produce "a summary of what is already known, a statement of the problem, and the recommendation of measures tending toward its solution."[412] Imitating the CLC's process, Schuttler opened the conference by stating that, for the participants to answer the question, "What does the farm woman want?" they first needed to consider and assess the current status of farm women. As the women engaged this question, they drew upon personal experiences and collectively adapted broader meanings for terms constitutive of rural and farm life. Those adaptations were most present as the women discussed stewardship, organization, and prosperity.

Adapting "Home": Stewardship as Farm Women's Civic Responsibility

Schuttler began with the claim that the average farm woman previously suffered from an "inferiority complex" that damaged her self-confidence and hindered her capacities to contribute

to her communities. However, “a legitimate pride” was beginning to replace that inferiority as the farm woman realized “the importance of the farm family and of herself,” which stimulated “a new sense of responsibility.”[413] She opened the floor to discussion, and Mrs. Julian A. (Annette Chase) Dimock immediately challenged Schuttler’s claim. “One trouble with us is that we have an awful attack of self-pity,” Dimock countered, because there existed “too much investigation, too much along the lines of United States reports.”[414] Indeed, federal officials and popular writers had investigated and documented “the farm woman’s problems” for years, which fueled the notion that there was something inherently wrong with those women.[415] If farm women could “get to a new state of mind,” Dimock asserted, they could achieve a form of self-satisfaction that “doesn’t depend on money and material satisfaction wholly.”[416]

As other women entered the conversation, the notion emerged that community involvement could best mitigate farm women’s feelings of inferiority. Mrs. Hoover’s remarks about her experiences in California offer a representative example:

> In our community there were both the city and the country factors and we farm women did feel a little bit ashamed because we were not dressed as well as city women. There was a home-made look about our clothes. During the war we came in contact with each other and started a Parent-Teacher Association. The contact tended to broaden us. The Home Demonstration Agents have helped us with our clothing work so we don’t feel when we go to town that we look so much like ‘country.’ That has given us confidence. *We have become so much interested in improving our community that we have forgotten all about an ‘inferiority complex’* [emphasis original].[417]

Drawing on her private feelings of previous shame, Hoover expressed that city and country comparisons were one source of her and other farm women’s sense of subordination. When they directed their gazes away from the city and turned them inward to their own communities, Hoover and the women from her region discovered the value in working together to improve local conditions. That work, she intimated, made their lives more purposeful. She continued to

explain how she and other California women developed their communities through various modes of rural education:

> I have a game with the youngsters – the school children and my own children – to see who can find the first flowers in the woods. This year we had a flower show. The children in school didn't know they had any flowers and you would be surprised to know that there were over 100 different varieties of wild flowers in bloom at one time in the mountains. Get the children's eyes on the beauty of the country and they will see infinite pictures. This year we are to exhibit foliage and ferns and then we will take up the study of food in the country in comparison with food in the city. We will have the children name over [*sic*] the things they eat. We will ask them what city people have to pay for chickens and milk and those things that are so much better and more abundant in the country. In all these ways we shall try to prove to them that we are really better off than people in the city. *When we are doing these worth-while things we have no time to think about personal humiliation* [emphasis original].[418]

Coupled with the earlier passage, Hoover's statements presented specific examples of her and other farm women's work in the west and revealed how that work was meaningful in their everyday lives. As mothers and educators, Hoover and other farm women appealed to their roles as nurturers as they inculcated in farm children knowledge about and appreciation for country living. Furthermore, in sharing this story with her fellow conference participants, Hoover offered a strategy whereby other women could overcome self-pity through investing their energies in community programs and education. If farm women focused less on themselves and more on others, Hoover's narrative indicated, then they might achieve greater meaning in their own lives.

Hoover's statements also offered the first moment in the conference when the idea of "home" and farm women's identities as "homemakers" were broadened. Roosevelt's 1909 letter to Congress articulated a narrow vision of the average farm woman: "If the woman shirks her duty as housewife, as home keeper, as the mother whose prime function it is to bear and rear a sufficient number of healthy children, then she is not entitled to our regard."[419] In contrast to Roosevelt, Hoover suggested that the idea of "home" was not entirely domestic, for it also

included common spaces in towns or villages. Moreover, the duties associated with home keeping involved sharing knowledge with others outside of one's family because doing so would ultimately benefit the entire community. In this way, Hoover mobilized elements of the feminine style that Dow and Tonn call "the concrete concerns and values of family life" and, through examples from personal experiences, connected those concerns and values "to political responsibility."[420] To be clear, the idea that farm women could and should be active community participants was not a new one. As the CLC's report noted, it was desirable for farm women to "have sufficient free time and strength so that she may serve the community by participating in its vital affairs."[421] Yet Hoover's experience was notable because it revealed that extending farm women's responsibilities out into public spaces benefitted not only those external spaces, but women's internal self-worth. When Hoover offered personal experiences as evidence of how she altered her self-perception, she legitimized the role of narrative examples in the conference discussions about how farm women could free themselves from their feelings of inferiority. In so doing, she introduced to the other women the prospect that their individual pasts could function as collective knowledge as they talked together about strategies for achieving their desires – that "'truth' is found in what is said and what is experienced."[422] If traditional agrarianism located farm women entirely in the farmhouse and precluded the possibility for those women to be public actors, Hoover's experiences tested the boundaries of that notion by suggesting that farm women could extend their stewardship out into their local areas.[423]

If farm women could recognize their roles as nurturers of agrarian thought in children both within and beyond their homes, then could they also see themselves as stewards of something more abstract – of citizenship? Put differently, what other functions could "home" and "homemaker" hold for farm women going forward? During the second day, farm women

deliberated the prospect that they could connect their roles as teachers to the broader task of overseeing and sponsoring citizenship. In a conversation about appreciating culture, Mrs. Isaac (Annabel) Edinger interjected and raised the issue of Americanizing the non-U.S. individuals who worked her farm: "You all must have hired men at times. They are often foreigners and how can we help to introduce them to our ways?"[424] Edinger's query both reflected and reproduced a narrative that permeated much of rural and farm culture: that the "proper" steward of the countryside was someone born in the United States.[425] She continued:

> I am going to give you an illustration of how I have seen it done. This home has artistic things in it like potteries and oriental rugs. At certain times there are four hired men and sometimes as many as twenty-three to eat in the family dining room. This ranch woman does not change her standards. Butter balls are made; there are silver dishes and they are used. There are no gasoline lamps with broken globes, nor a kerosene lamp siting in the center of the table. Instead, there are always candles on the table when light is required. This woman doesn't save her china and her silver knives and forks for 'company' but she gives them to her family and to the men who happen to be a part of her household. Where does the citizenship come in? What other opportunities would these men ever have of seeing the way we want our American children to live? We say we have no opportunities to teach citizenship. We have the greatest chance in the world.[426]

In contrast to Hoover's earlier contributions that located farm women's potential outside of the home, Edinger's comments introduced the notion that farm women's duty to manage the home could assume a civic function when those *unlike them* entered their domestic spaces. Her argument, bolstered by the assumption that "these men" who worked the land and sat in the dining room among their overseers would never find themselves in comparable circumstances, identified farm women as benefactors who bestowed on the hired men opportunities to glimpse the intimate experiences of, and to learn from, middle-class rural culture. When Edinger announced that homemaking could be the method through which "foreigners" became Americanized, she connected farm women's commonplace labor (e.g., setting the table) to the possibility that that labor could manifest out in the world in the form of "better" citizens.

Edinger's remarks, although perhaps startling to the contemporary reader, echoed and extended existing discussions within rural and farm culture regarding rural and farm women's participation in Americanization programs. For instance, *Wallaces' Farmer's* "Hearts and Homes" section, Nancy Wallace's space to engage (mostly Iowan and Midwestern) farm women, commonly addressed such topics.[427] A February 13, 1920 article noted: "We [women] are getting away from the idea that Americanization consists only of teaching English to a lot of foreigners. Teaching the appreciation of ideals is more important than the language."[428] Arguments such as these proposed that farm women could teach the perceived special qualities of rural and farm life. Yet not all of the conference participants shared Edinger's sentiments. For instance, Mrs. Robert C. Dahlberg challenged the premise of Edinger's motion when she relayed the experience of a Minnesota woman who "does a great deal of Americanization work."[429] Dahlberg explained: "She said in her work with foreigners she found they *have* something to give us. Perhaps if we could get that appreciation, we would have a better chance to do citizenship training. We try so hard to get them to be like us that we many times miss the things they might give us."[430] Other women affirmed Dahlberg's argument and explained how embracing other nationalities had been important to their own community's development. Anna Clark shared that a small Connecticut town hosted "a week of community beauty" in which residents of various international cultures curated booths for their neighbors to visit and learn from. "It did much for that town in citizenship," Clark continued, "the expression of beauty and the interchange of real affection and appreciation."[431] These discussions about farm women's domestic duties in relation to citizenship drew upon established modes of thought at the same time that they articulated alternative ways for farm women to conceptualize and perform their "homemaking" labor. Campbell argues participants are not required to reach absolute agreement during consciousness

raising practices; instead, “individuals are encouraged to dissent, to find their own truths,” and to let those truths inform their individual action moving forward.[432] As the women debated the limits and possibilities of their role as “homemakers,” their remarks suggested that their stewardship could be broadened so that they might also be citizen-makers. The conference provided the context for the women to learn about alternative ways of living and being a farm woman; ultimately, the women would have to decide for themselves the extent to which they would or would not engage in such practices upon their homecomings.

The women’s discussions during the first two days of the conference evidenced different ideas about the location and duties of “home,” but later conversations cohered more explicitly around community development and geography. As these conversations evolved, so too did the women’s understandings of the magnitude of “home” and their places within it. For instance, when the women first discussed community development, their definitions of community relied on specific places and common centers: “the district reached by the school”; “the folks who attend the same church and go to the same store”; “two small towns, that country between them with the church, school, community interests and the farms radiating in toward them.”[433] Although these notions of community were quite local, they expanded radically by the closing discussion. Schuttler required each participant to “each take just a minute or two to say the thing that stands out in our minds as that which we are carrying away personally from this conference.”[434] Mrs. Cutler of Iowa announced: “The thing that struck me…was a form of geography.”[435] She elaborated:

> While I have been in other conferences where Georgia and North Carolina and Virginia have been represented, somehow I never got to know them well and to know their problems. I am carrying away a better understanding of my own United States and the problems that we farm women have. I have seen your problems and how you have solved them in your sections, how Mrs. Canada, for example, has labored on cooperative marketing. We can go back to our own

> localities and apply these principles to our problems and we can go on from there in the solving of difficulties we left at home.[436]

Referencing her previous experiences of representing Iowa at national Federation of Women's Club events, Cutler announced that this conference had collapsed space in a way that enabled her to understand better how farm women's "problems" were not rooted to specific places. Instead, Cutler realized that there existed collective experiences among farm women that united those women across the national landscape. Her revelation highlights a key function of consciousness raising: that participants achieve identification with each other based on "common values and shared experience."[437] Additionally, Cutler's acknowledgement that she had learned from her fellow farm women various strategies for "solving the difficulties we left at home" suggests that she viewed the other women as peers who, through sharing their own individual stories, also participated in "fostering the growth of the other toward the capacity for independent action."[438] When the women returned to their home states, they were now equipped with various strategies for handling the issues specific to their local communities.

If Cutler's response collapsed space and created a greater sense of intimacy and identification among the participants and their various "home" communities, others extended the idea of home beyond statehood. Dahlberg's response most vividly evidenced how large the meaning of "home" had become: "As a home person and a home lover, I am particularly glad of the privilege of coming to a better appreciation of the fact that *the world is my home*."[439] This response was striking. The women had discussed their duties as "homemakers" for much of their time together, yet the idea of home assumed an increasing elasticity throughout their conversations. While voices within and beyond rural culture identified farm women as guardians of the home, the Chicago women stretched the boundaries of domesticity and invented other meanings of home. For them, home included their communities, the United States, and, as

Dahlberg expressed, the entire world. As these territories expanded, so too did the women's duties: as "homemakers," they were also "world-makers." Dow and Tonn argue that rhetors who mobilize the feminine style can draw upon "connection, empathy, and familial concerns" as rhetorical equipment for establishing relationships with each other, and for critiquing and improving public life. [440] When the women deliberated the meanings of "home," they also invented possibilities for their identities as "homemakers" that moved house-work into the public realm. Farm women could draw upon their roles as mothers to expand their stewardship to broader communities; in so doing, they could manage citizenship and oversee other elements of national affairs. Yet as the next section makes clear, farm women also needed to extend the agrarian principle of self-sufficiency to create more collaborative opportunities with other women. As the conference continued, the participants took up this notion when they discussed the idea of rural and agricultural organization.

Adapting Self-Sufficiency: Imagining a Coalition of Farm Women

During the opening discussion of farm women's "inferiority complex," Mrs. Ira E. Farmer of Georgia offered an interesting approach to elevating the art of homemaking in the public imagination. "Farm women and all other housekeepers have permitted the world to minimize home-making," she claimed. "It is a profession and should be recognized as such. If we don't do it ourselves, we can't expect other people to do it."[441] Suggesting that farm women were partially responsible for their underappreciated labor, Farmer argued that only when women accepted the task of influencing public opinion would they then achieve proper recognition. Farmer also invoked republican values to legitimize farm women's future action. As I discussed in chapter two, the political philosophy of republicanism was intimately connected to

how individuals understood rural and farm people, and to how rural and farm people understood themselves. Having inherited the ideological benefits and baggage associated with agrarianism, American farmers performed a pivotal role in the nation's ongoing narrative of how its independent stewards of the land sustained the republic.[442] Farmer's assertion that she and her fellow farm women needed to "do it ourselves" and not rely on outside sources aligned with the customs of sovereignty and self-sufficiency with which the conference participants most likely would have been familiar. Yet, as I also discussed in chapter two, the meanings ascribed to farmers shifted during the agricultural crisis: if independence was previously an admirable quality of individual farmers, it transformed into a liability for the industry of agriculture as economic uncertainties settled across the American country landscape. Dan Wallace wrote of this "new era" for agriculture in his January 1924 editorial for *TFW*: "The farmer has grasped the idea that agricultural problems must be solved by farm folks themselves through their own organized effort and by substituting group action for individual effort."[443] Caught between the convention of independence and the exigence of organization, the Chicago women crafted a middle space between these two positions in their rhetoric of agrarianism. John M. Murphy explains that rhetorical traditions "provide inventional resources" that extend to rhetors "the opportunity to construct political authority."[444] As the women engaged the issue of rural organization, they stretched the traditional principle of self-sufficiency to imagine farm women as a powerful group: they could remain independent from other influences yet develop a coalitional posture with each other. When farm women worked together toward the common good of all farm women, they could realize their value, influence how their communities handled important issues like health education, and sustain agricultural morale.

As the conversation persisted, Mrs. Edinger admitted that she had felt such a sense of inferiority prior to the conference that she had considered not attending.[445] Yet when she saw city women the previous night in the Edgewater Beach Hotel, Edinger realized: "I don't believe those women would ever be called to such a conference. I don't believe they know enough."[446] Edinger's appeal to knowledge reflected messages that *The Farmer's Wife* had consistently communicated to its readers; that is, farm women were upheld as "real, thinking" people whose connections to the land instilled in them a special capacity that city women lacked.[447] As Edinger continued, she revealed how other farm women could achieve similar self-satisfaction:

> Power is latent in farm women, but they are laboring under this inferiority complex. This latent potential power must be brought out. Isn't it the farm women themselves who have to do it? I don't care who else helps – the Federation of Women's Clubs or the Extension Service – *we have to do it ourselves* [emphasis original].[448]

By calling on farm women to make present their hidden potential, Edinger contributed to an ongoing public conversation about rural and farm people uniting to solve for themselves their economic and social problems – a conversation that identified "self-help" as the ultimate solution.[449] By arguing that individual farm women should collectively work on behalf of a larger constituency, Farmer and Edinger advanced the broader idea of farm women as powerful actors. If Jeffersonian agrarianism required a hidden woman who would not distract from the more valued male enterprise of farming, the conference women, in imagining how farm women could increase their visibility and activate their "latent" capacities, started to challenge the invisibility and submissiveness that persisted in American agrarianism.[450]

Other participants suggested strategies for improving rural life that were premised upon farm women's collective organization. One interesting exchange emerged during a discussion about how farm women could better promote the need for health education in their communities.

Maintaining a common stereotype of farm people as stubborn and reluctant to accept assistance, Farmer noted the challenge of convincing others to accept health curricula: "The trouble is that the farm woman won't accept help when she can get it."[451] Cutler responded that the problem was the *source* of information: "[w]e don't accept it because the demand does not come from us. If we get the community into *that frame of mind where they want the thing*, we will accomplish something [emphasis original]."[452] Schuttler then directed the participants to brainstorm how the nation's farm women could arouse the public sentiment for health education that Cutler claimed was lacking. Just as they had earlier mobilized stories to suggest how to extend the boundaries of "home," the women continued to draw upon examples from personal experiences to envision how farm women as a group could be a force for rural improvement. In this way, the conversation moved inductively, which Campbell emphasizes is a key feature of the feminine style.[453] As the women drew upon individual experiences and examples to evidence their specific claims, the accumulation of those experiences and examples co-constructed a broader argument about what rural and farm women might be able to achieve together: better health outcomes within and beyond their communities. For instance, Edinger and Mrs. Ivon Dallas Gore of Utah noted that their states employed county health nurses and Fitter Family contests, respectively, to publicize the importance of rural health.[454] In these cases, farm women's responsibilities involved participating in these programs to ensure their children's "health." Powell explained that New York's farm women, in conjunction with the Home Bureau, had "created a demand for better health work in the rural districts" by requesting that the state appoint a Rural Health Commissioner. Noting that the state would soon engage this request in a hearing at Albany, Powell cited New York's farm women as instrumental in bringing this to fruition: "the women have asked for this Commissioner of Rural Health and we have done it entirely by ourselves."[455]

While Edinger and Gore identified trained experts as sources of health education, Powell advanced the notion that farm women, when they worked together, could effect the change that they desired in their communities. Her contribution opened space for the other women to consider how their individual experiences as farm women and their collective capacities as a group might be a counter-source of change.

The discussion of farm women's roles as publicists for health education assumed a grave tone when Mrs. H. M. Aitken, Canada's sole representative, addressed the relationship between health education and maternal mortality. I quote her at length:

> In our own county last year ten mothers died in childbirth. We compiled on one page a little health propaganda which we sent out, emphasizing the value the state places on the life of a child and on the life of a mother. It involved just ten horrible facts which we sent to every father in the province. Within three months we had a Fathers' Health Association, formed for the lowering of maternal mortality in our country. *Your nation and mine are at the bottom in a list of sixteen. Nations to which we send missionaries and doctors lead us in a lower death rate of mothers in childbirth* [emphasis original]. We need to get these facts and to see to it that everybody else gets them. We should see that they go out with a bang; that they are not tied up and lost in a dozen typewritten sheets, but that we have five or six damning facts that will go over.[456]

This contribution is noteworthy for a few reasons. First, its content revealed the horrific realities and potential consequences of inadequate health knowledge. Throughout the entire U.S., more women died during childbirth or from childbirth-related causes in 1920 than in 1910.[457] When rural people lacked access to credible information, Aitken argued, individuals, communities, and the nation suffered as a result.[458] Second, Aitken's narrative named farm women as authors of – and farm men as audiences for – a health campaign. In this way, Aitken affirmed farm women's judgment to choose the most persuasive data and to craft an effective mode of communication for those data. Yet Aitken's response becomes most remarkable when we consider it alongside the CLC's earlier work. In an earlier draft of its report, the CLC's then-titled section "Women's

Work and Organizations" included a passage about the consequences of too much labor and over-reproduction. Yet one of the commissioners crossed out that passage and prevented the information from being published in the final report. The deleted language stated:

> The Commission has had professional medical testimony to the effect that in some districts girls are carrying and bearing children at a too early age, so that by the age of thirty years they are often broken down; also that in these same districts it is a [*sic*] common for a man to have buried two wives and to have married his third. In some localities women are doing field labor in addition to their household duties.[459]

If the CLC's task was, in Roosevelt's words, to "report to me upon the present condition of country life," the commissioners' judgment that erased from its final report the condition of the overlabored farm woman erased also the opportunity for that condition to gain broader public attention.[460] Here is where Aitken's remarks become rhetorically powerful, for they not only demanded that farm women create their own methods for informing rural publics about women's health, they constituted farm women as architects of rural knowledge.

Tasha Dubriwny argues that when those in consciousness raising contexts recognize personal experiences as material for collective understanding, they undermine "traditional notions of 'objective' knowledge" and disrupt established sources of expertise.[461] When this occurs, it creates space for the voices of those who might lack professional education or training to assert their understandings of particular issues and to see those understandings affirmed in the small group context. To be clear, I am not suggesting that Aitken intentionally provided her narrative to correct, or even connect herself to, the CLC's report. Rather, I am situating her response within the context of the CLC's reports in order to illuminate how the male commissioners' judgment about what constituted relevant information for and about farm women was partial in that it was detached from the actual conditions on the ground in rural and farm homes. Aitken's remarks, although most likely unknowingly, indicated that discrepancy. In

so doing, her ideas pushed the other conference participants to consider how to create public demand for better maternal health services. Moreover, they revealed that farm women were the ones to do this work. Bess M. Rowe of *TFW* supported Aitken's plan of selecting and distributing "five or six damning facts" because, "We can get them across in that way ['with a bang'] when we can't get them across in the form in which the research mind generally puts them."[462] Dimock also agreed with this strategy for rural health communication. "I think we have to do it ourselves, not leave it to the agencies," she asserted.[463] Thus, when farm women extended the boundaries of self-sufficiency and aligned with each other, they could reveal the limits of sanctioned experts and assert themselves and their ways of knowing as grounds for future rural development.

A final exploration of coalition-building emerged during a discussion about farm women's roles in the economic development of their communities. A few women explained that they and women in their states managed family records, participated in canning clubs, and sold foodstuffs and small animals at curb markets. Aitken then argued that rural cooperatives would fail without female support. "We have not been able to put over any cooperative enterprise without the women," she explained of Ontario. "When we can link up the administration end with the production end, making men and women equal partners, I think we shall find we can put over any kind of cooperative marketing."[464] Here, Aitken framed gender equality as an imperative for rural economic success. Dan Wallace, who up to this point in the conference had remained silent, could not resist the opportunity to address the topic. "What Mrs. Aitken says about the cooperative movement interests me very much," Wallace announced, "because that is one of my pet hobbies."[465] Indeed, as *TFW*'s Directing Editor, Wallace had frequently leveraged his editorial platform to argue that country life would only survive if rural and farm people

organized as a class to counter the rise of corporate farming and agribusiness.[466] This moment, however, Wallace declared that "cooperative associations all over the country are in danger because of the lack of local morale….The farm women of America can do no greater service in promoting the economic success of agriculture than by getting behind these cooperatives" and "keeping up the morale of these organizations."[467] Sustaining morale was not a new task for farm women; indeed, they often interpreted their roles as supportive to their husbands, families, and communities.[468] But as the women engaged Wallace's proclamation, they revealed that they saw themselves as more than cheerleaders for cooperatives; they were businesswomen who interpreted their productive and marketing labor as central to their success.

If women learned from each other various approaches to administering local cooperatives, then their collective labor might sustain rural and farm economics. Schuttler punctuated the necessity of this communal knowledge-building: "It is a matter of education *among ourselves* [emphasis mine]. We have a lot to learn. We have always taken the attitude that if a cooperative failed it was the fault of outside opposition. We have to recognize the fact that that is not always wholly true."[469] The women, drawing upon their individual experiences, described what they had seen or participated in in their own communities. Chappell explained the value of contracts in South Carolina farm women's business endeavors:

> I want to mention our Home Producers' Association. They have somewhat obviated the difficulty for us by disposing of the product of the girls [canning projects]. They make contracts both with merchants and with the women who produce. We have a marketing specialist. When I say 'we,' I mean the women. The women make a contract to produce a certain number of jars and the marketing agent makes a contract with the merchants.[470]

According to Chappell, South Carolinian farm women found economic opportunity through dealing directly themselves with other cooperative agents. Dimock offered her own example of how contracts benefited farm women in Vermont:

> You have to have a contract and have to educate people. We have been raising potatoes of different sizes and putting them in small packages and they have gone almost like wildfire. We got our market and got the farmers to supply the potatoes. You have to know you can get your market and your supply.[471]

Together, Dimock and Chappell's statements about contracts indicated among the Vermont and South Carolina farm women for whom they were speaking a sense of collective ownership of the markets: "*we* got *our* market." Marketing agents, merchants, and farmers assisted the farm women in this enterprise, but the farm women themselves, as Schuttler declared, needed to learn together how best to develop their communities. By sharing their anecdotes with marketing contracts, the women announced that they – not their husbands or benevolent figures like Wallace – were best poised to manage local cooperatives.

Thus, while agrarianism celebrated the individual male farmer who labored his lands and was mostly separated from state forces, the material conditions of the agricultural crisis demanded a more practical vision for rural and farm people. Indeed, James A. Montmarquet explains that one of the primary contradictions of agrarian thought and practice rests on "how to reconcile rural individualism and independence with the need for concerted action and reform."[472] Rhetorically, this period generated a shift in public discourse about rural and farm people. While Murphy explains that rhetorical traditions organize social knowledge and provide equipment for invention, he also reminds us that the social knowledge of rhetorical traditions is itself situated and radically contingent. As such, rhetorical traditions incite rhetors to learn from the past and to recognize "the need to adapt the wisdom of traditions to changing circumstances" in the present.[473] This emerged during the conference as the participants invoked the principles of an agrarian past to authorize their different conditions of agrarianism. In Chicago, the women embraced the principle of self-sufficiency but also adapted it so that it became more inclusive. In their conversations, the women made clear that it was up to farm women to figure out together

what was most needed for rural women and their communities moving forward. Their principle of self-sufficiency was crafted with a vision of farm woman coalition: when farm women organized, they could realize their individual and collective self-worth, arouse public sentiment about significant community issues, and sustain local cooperatives and broader rural and farm economies. If the women were truly amid the era of "self-help," then the Chicago women announced that the notion of "self" ought to embrace others as well.

Adapting Privilege: Broadening Wealth to Include Character in Women's Visions of Rural Prosperity

One item of final discussion during the four-day conference involved farm women's economic problems and how the contributors and other farm women might better address those problems. Their talk began with an assessment of economics in the most fundamental sense of the term. For instance, Wagar explained that farm women lacked financial knowledge to such an extent that "many women don't know the difference between a deed and a will"; an extreme consequence of this knowledge gap could manifest "if he [the husband] should happen to pass away suddenly, the woman is perfectly helpless."[474] Other women announced the need for financial independence. Mrs. Farmer explained that the Georgia farm women she spoke with argued that when they sold items at local markets, "[t]he returns should go absolutely to the woman's pocket and not to a joint bank account."[475] These comments, although seemingly ordinary, reflected a privileged class status that allowed the conference women to imagine how they might separately earn, and then *control*, their money. Recall how earlier, I explained that many of the conference women lived on large properties and were fortunate enough to develop themselves as leaders in their communities. These practices would have been unavailable to, or difficult to attain for, non-landowning laborers whose work was much more precarious and

controlled. As the economic discussion continued, the women stretched the meanings of privilege beyond those associated with capital and connected them to characteristics constitutive of white rural womanhood. In so doing, they not only illustrated that material wealth was not the sole index of rural prosperity, they also reaffirmed arguments about rural superiority and realized their value as farm women.

Schuttler posed a question about the relationship between standards of living and farm income – that is, how could farm women create and sustain a quality home environment if they did not earn, manage, or control money? (Although this conference occurred in the year prior to the Sally Sod debate, it is interesting to see that the anxiety around home, motherhood, and economics manifested in these "representative" women's thoughts and words as well.) Or, put differently, just how mutually dependent were character and capital? Jefferson's agrarianism is primarily interpreted as an ideology of human characteristics, but in the early republic character and capital were not so easily separated. That is, while the yeoman farmer was constituted as a self-sufficient, moral, and virtuous democratic specimen, he also owned the small family farm that his manual labor sustained. According to A. Whitney Griswold, property ownership enabled the development of the "independence and self-reliance" in farmers that then "were most readily convertible into enlightened self-government."[476] Character and capital were mutually constitutive. However, those material and symbolic resources were available only to certain individuals; as Joan M. Jensen reminds us, the agrarian myth "had no sympathy for the poor, the female, the ordinary person who was not white."[477] As the women explored Schuttler's query about standards of living, they began to see the limits of locating wealth in material culture and moved toward interpreting their own identities as sources of rich comfort. For instance, Edinger, Dimock, and Berger explained how they took modest but measurable steps to communicate to

their city guests the appearance of a quality farm home. Their approaches relied upon adorning their homes with material items: setting the kitchen table with candles, painting the porch blue, and bleaching tablecloths and linens. “We can maintain standards as high in our homes in the country as people in the city can,” Edinger explained, “if we know about the income and the costs.”[478]

While these strategies suggested that objects and appearances were useful in illustrating to city people the potential success of rural life, Cutler’s remarks introduced something different – perhaps farm women should be reassured not by what they owned, but by *who there were*:

> If one could sing aloud one thing this broadening has done through extension work and magazines and all this flood of good things we have had the last few years, I think perhaps we could put the result under the head, *the willingness of the farm woman to be herself* [emphasis original]. I remember as a girl, when I went through that very sensitive age of thirteen, fourteen and fifteen, I was terribly afraid some of the things my mother did were not exactly right. I know many home workers who have not rid themselves of that feeling. They scurry to the cellar when they have a guest and bring up different kinds of jam and sauce. By the time the guest comes to the table, they are worn out. A number of farm women have got over the feeling that made them terribly upset when some one [*sic*] came into their home and saw the things that they stood for. They know they stand for the things which are right and *the right thing is something that is simple and easy* [emphasis original].[479]

Cutler’s offering intimates a status anxiety among farm women and girls that transcended time; she connects her childhood concerns about her own mother’s work to current farm women’s feelings of insufficiency – of inferiority. But if the farm woman focused less on keeping up appearances for others and instead took pride in being “herself,” then she might recognize the value of “the things that they [farm people] stood for.” Those “things” were not domestic materials, but principles that rural women sustained. If farm women reminded themselves of those principles, then they could overcome self-doubt and find value in who they were – they could locate prosperity in their identities as farm women. Nellie E. Blakeman affirmed Cutler’s

notion regarding what could index a quality rural home. “The home I like to go into and consider successful, whether it is a home with money or not,” Blakeman stated, “is the one I feel has real comfort and true hospitality.”[480] If the discussion had begun with questions about economics, it evolved into a consideration of other elements beyond money and material goods that contributed to rural affluence. As Grace E. Frysinger summarized after the economic discussion, standards of rural living were “not dependent upon size of income but upon appreciation of the real values of life and making these function in daily relationships.”[481] As the conference came to a close, the participants shared how those appreciations would inform their work going forward. Specifically, they drew upon the qualities of white rural womanhood to articulate a privileged status and to authorize arguments for remaining on the farm.

Recall that at the outset, Schuttler required the women to engage the issue of the farm woman’s “inferiority complex.” When the conference reached its final discussion, Schuttler asked all participants to explain what ideas from the conference they would take home with them. Mrs. R. E. Tipton explained how the conference had energized her in a way she had never before experienced: “I have had a dream all my life of something I wanted to accomplish but I am about [*sic*] discouraged. I don’t believe I can ever make my dream come true. I am not big enough to do it,” she confessed. “But since coming here and being with you in this conference, you have given me an inspiration to carry through to the end.”[482] Mrs. Stewart explained that the women’s conversations extended her vision of herself and the importance of all farm women:

> The wonderful messages which have been brought here by you splendid women have certainly been an inspiration to me and I am going back to Louisiana with a broader vision than I had when I left there. I have always had a vision of what I should like farm women to be and I have done my little part in helping them to be that but I am going home with a much broader vision. I am going to feel a whole lot bigger and I am going into the work with a vim.[483]

If before the conference Stewart viewed her work as negligible ("little part"), her presence in Chicago allowed her to see with a new perspective the magnitude of her work. The "private, intimate communication" that Campbell explains as "both the mode through which women communicate and the means by which change can be effected" was central to the farm women's conference, for through sharing with each other their problems, experiences, and desires, they began to see themselves differently.[484] Hoover's contribution most vividly captured the spirit of consciousness raising among the women: "I have received an inspiration. The 'inferiority complex' has been removed. I can go back and tell our farm women that we are a big power and we have a big job."[485]

These affirmations of rural womanhood were noteworthy in comparison to the CLC's earlier report that painted a bleak portrait of the typical farm woman's burdens. The report stated:

> It follows, therefore, that whatever general hardships, such as poverty, isolation, lack of labor-saving devices, may exist on any given farm, the burden of these hardships falls more heavily on the farmer's wife than on the farmer himself. In general, her life is more monotonous and the more isolated, no matter what the wealth or the poverty of the family may be.[486]

Within a discursive context that had for decades maintained the idea of the farm woman as overburdened and underappreciated, the conference women found, through their four days of conversations, the encouragement to continue their lives in the nation's countryside. As they talked with each other at the Edgewater Beach Hotel, the women's discussions evidenced the inductive reasoning that Campbell explains is a feature of both consciousness raising and the feminine style. While the earlier discussions offered specific examples of how the women felt "inferior," the discourses evolved during the conference that enabled their individual experiences to be "generalized into statements about the conditions of women as a group."[487] By the end, the women were convinced not only of their value as farm women and the common struggles that

united them across geography, but also that they should continue their work on behalf of their communities. Beyond that, though, I suggest that the women were reaffirming rural life's superiority and subtly (and perhaps unknowingly) persuading one another to recommit themselves to the broader rural project of maintaining the idea of rural life and rural people as pure, normal, and real. During a conference that was assembled for its participants to determine "what the farm woman wants," it was noteworthy that the women never expressed their desires to abandon country life. Instead, as the closing discussion about standards of living suggested, the conference became a space to reassert rural richness, which the women located in character.

In his closing comments, Dan Wallace quite tellingly revealed what was at stake for the nation moving forward:

> The biggest men in this country are concerned today with the future of our civilization and they almost invariably feel that civilization depends very materially on the conditions in the open country and in the farm home. I only regret that these far-visioned people could not have been present at this conference throughout the proceedings. I know they would feel the pride I feel, that we have the kind of people out in the open country that you are….If we [*The Farmer's Wife*] can broadcast everywhere the truths which you have brought out, we feel that we shall be able to accomplish a real service to rural America.[488]

Suggesting that material conditions were less indicative of prosperity than were human characteristics, Wallace affirmed the value of having and keeping on the farm "the kind of people" that the women were. Those "kind of people," as Gore articulated in her closing remarks, were constituted with "wholesome ideals, straight thinking, friendliness, fair play and true democracy."[489] Furthermore, Wallace's recognition of the women's experiences as a form of knowledge underscores what Campbell tells us can occur in consciousness raising contexts: "a conception of truths and values as emerging out of symbolic interaction."[490] Therefore, while traditional agrarianism presumed a landowning male farmer, and that such ownership made possible the farmer's capacities to govern himself and his family, the women's adapted

agrarianism advanced the notion that money indexed wealth less than the qualities, relationships, and experiences of rural and farm life. The inherent value of rural life, these women argued, was the actual source of prosperity.

Conclusion: What the Farm Women's Consciousness Raising Reveals about the Gender and Class Politics of Agrarianism

In April 1926, less than one month following the conference, Dan Wallace situated his editorial for *TFW* about the Chicago event in the context of President Roosevelt's earlier mission. "Nearly twenty years ago a great American awoke to the fact that something was wrong with rural life," Wallace explained.[491] While Roosevelt's CLC might be judged a failure because its report was rejected in Congress and failed to garner its requested appropriations to disseminate its findings and continue its research, Wallace argued that Roosevelt succeeded because he made rural and farm life matter to the American public.[492] "The mere fact that someone took the trouble to recognize the needs of rural life," Wallace argued, "served the purpose of focusing public attention on this fundamental problem in our national life."[493] Wallace's remarks reflect what Mary E. Stuckey calls the "instrumental effects" of political rhetoric. That is, political discourse can create immediate and measurable outcomes like increased voter turnout or greater public support for a particular policy, but it can also create "more subtle, indirect, and long-term effects" that might include "putting an issue on the national agenda, framing an issue in specific ways, or influencing the national understanding of an issue over time."[494] The public attention that the CLC generated extended beyond Roosevelt's administration and nurtured the grounds for future rural and farm initiatives including the Smith-Lever Act of 1914; the Smith-Hughes Act (1917), which provided federal funding to rural schools that taught vocational agricultural and home economics; and the creation of the

American Country Life Association (1919), which continued the CLC's original mission.[495] In his 1920 presidential address at the ACLA's annual conference, Kenyon L. Butterfield remarked on the constitutive effect of the CLC and its report: "A great many men and women now leaders in country life really date their interest in country life to the hearings of the Commission, or to the report itself, or to the conferences on country life that followed directly as the result of that report."[496] The lingering influences of Roosevelt's Commission were manifest in further efforts to investigate, shape, and improve country life so that it would continue to develop the nation's admirable citizens.

No doubt one echo of Roosevelt's original inquiry was the Chicago conference wherein sixteen farm women gathered to reassess the status of country life and to articulate a collective vision of the American farm woman moving forward. While in 1909 Charlotte Perkins Gilman had asked of Roosevelt's group, "Why are there no women on this commission?" the Chicago conference corrected the absence that Gilman had earlier revealed: there *were* women on this commission.[497] In reiterating Roosevelt and his CLC's earlier judgment that country life needed publicity, the conference organizers and contributors created something different as they invented alternative ways of conceptualizing the farm woman in the national imaginary. After their March 1926 gathering, the conference participants left Chicago energized to build upon the vision that they collectively constructed. For instance, in May 1926, Annabel Long Edinger was elected Vice President of Montana's Beaverhead County Federation of Women's Clubs and delivered a "splendid address" about the Chicago farm woman's conference at the federation's semi-annual meeting.[498] "I have returned with a glorified attitude toward farm women," Edinger proclaimed, "enthusiastic and inspired with sense of her possibilities, with a great national joy and national consciousness – with a mighty feeling of patriotism."[499] In December 1926, Mrs. G.

Thomas Powell attended the ACLA's annual meeting in Washington, D.C., where she delivered an address titled "My Experience as a Farm Mother."[500] Mrs. Ivon Dallas Gore continued to serve as the Regional Representative for eleven western states on the American Farm Bureau Association's (AFBA) Home and Community Committee. Her report of the committee's work appeared in the AFBA's annual publication for 1925-1926; the text also noted Gore's participation in the Chicago conference and a Regional Agricultural Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, in October 1926.[501] All of the women continued their representative function as they served in an "advisory capacity" for the ACLA's Committee on the Farm Woman Movement.[502] It seemed that the Committee's plan to "check up" its thinking with actual women had achieved its mission of garnering the status of rural life from actual rural and farm women and galvanizing those women to continue the work of the conference in their homes and communities.[503] Beyond these historical occurrences, however, we should consider the conference's rhetorical implications, particularly regarding the intersecting dynamics of consciousness raising, the feminine style, and women's rhetorical invention.

Tasha Dubriwny argues that as those in consciousness-raising contexts share their values and experiences, they nurture the capacity to see themselves differently, to become poised to critique ideologies, and to understand better their possibilities for independent action. As participants co-construct meaning through conversation, they affirm a commonplace of rhetorical practice: "rhetoric," Dubriwny asserts, "is essentially a collaborative activity."[504] Such collaborative rhetorical activity can authorize alternative epistemologies; that is, as individuals come to interpret differently themselves and their capacities, they also establish themselves as experts whose personal knowledge can be grounds for political argument. The conference's consciousness raising discourses not only altered how the farm women thought about themselves

and the broader collectivity of farm women – they also revealed to the men in attendance the power of farm women's knowledge and expertise. On the final day, Henry Israel confessed: "I, as a man, have never before fathomed the depth of rural womanhood as you have revealed it in this group and I must certainly go away with appreciation of woman such as I never before have had."[505] Israel's proclamation challenged a fundamental premise of rural and farm life: that, according to Deborah Fink, "[r]ural people have concurred in attributing greater importance to men than to women."[506] In Jeffersonian agrarianism, women existed as secondary figures, not powerful actors. When the women shared their experiences, desires, and visions for farm life, they authored themselves into different roles and relations than those available in traditional conceptions of American rural life and agriculture. The conference provided the women the context to craft a different prospect of agrarianism that was a bit more inclusive than the CLC's vision in 1908. In revealing to Israel and Wallace their capacities to speak as experts of rural and farm life, the women illustrated also the political stakes that often enter into consciousness raising contexts. That is, consciousness raising announces whose knowledge matters, who gets to frame a particular issue, who gets to speak, and who gets spoken for.

One element of particular interest within this consciousness raising event was the participants' arguments for future rhetorical action. Throughout this chapter, we heard certain women recognize how persuasion functioned in their everyday lives as they endeavored to improve their communities. For instance, Mrs. Hoover explained that in her part of California, rural and farm women interpreted education as a significant opportunity for convincing children that rural life was superior to urban life. We also heard women announce the need for health campaigns and persuasive facts so that they could influence public opinion and incite others (in the case of the health campaigns, men) to believe what the women already recognized as

problems that threatened aspects of rural and farm prosperity. These and other arguments that emerged during the conference suggest that the women understood not only the value of persuasion, but also the appropriate forms of evidence that would be most convincing to their audiences ("we need five or six damning facts"). These women understood rhetoric itself. If the conference provided a somewhat limited space for the women to gather and share their own arguments, the arguments themselves gestured beyond the conference and pointed to other modes of rhetorical engagement that the women might take up once they returned home. In this way, the collective persuasion that occurred as the women convinced themselves and each other that they were happy with their lives transcended Chicago as the women departed with specific strategies to effect change in their local communities.

And yet, even as the conference was momentous for its investments in farm women's voices and the very *idea* of farm women as national rhetors, its mode of consciousness raising was not without its own exclusionary politics. Just as Roosevelt and his Country Life Commission drew definitive rhetorical boundaries around their idea of a rural citizen in a manner that failed to account seriously for the nation's farm women and girls, so too did the conference, its organizers, and its participants, circumscribe the identity of the farm woman in a manner that failed to account seriously for farm women and families beyond a middle-class demographic. In other words, if the Chicago conference addressed Roosevelt's gender problem by privileging farm women's voices, it simultaneously inculcated its own class problem by enlisting sixteen participants of relative means to speak on behalf of the entire nation's farm women and children.[507] Campbell argues that throughout U.S. history, "womanhood" has existed as "a concept relevant only to middle-class whites," which points to the fracturing that has always existed within feminist movements and activism even as individuals and groups make strides

toward intersectionality.[508] Even as the conference women articulated a vision of a more equitable agrarian mode of living, that vision was still constrained by its focus on issues mostly relevant to land-owning families who exerted some control over their means of production.

Finally, this chapter highlights the challenges that individuals encounter when they draw upon rhetorical traditions to authorize their arguments. John Murphy reminds us that rhetorical traditions can be an "enabling constraint," for even as they "offer opportunities to reaccentuate the wisdom of traditions while enmeshing speakers in the ongoing life of the community," they also require rhetors to exercise responsible judgment regarding how they bring the past to bear on the present.[509] As the women drew upon the rhetorical tradition of agrarianism, they avoided certain elements of that mythic framework at the same time that they acknowledged moments when they could work within it to create something different: an agrarianism in which women's homes were limitless, women developed a coalitional posture with other women, and women embraced their rural identities because they were the source of great wealth. On the one hand, I see these inventional moves as shrewd and powerful, for they enabled the women to position themselves within existing cultural narratives without threatening that overall narrative; they postured within the system so that they might alter it from within. On the other hand, these new possibilities seemed still anchored to some normative gender and class ideals that structured rural and farm life. For instance, as the women broadened their understanding of "home," they drew on their mothering roles and nurturing practices to authorize their public work. What might it have sounded like if these women argued from their own positions as *women* first, and wives, mothers, nurturers second? When the women discussed creating and distributing health propaganda to better educate their communities about maternal health, they identified men as the audiences for such information because men were the potential agents of change. Even as the

women imagined future rhetorical work for themselves when they returned to their home states, their agrarian vision that emerged through consciousness raising seemed poised to benefit themselves and other women like them. The consequence of this in particular and women's traditional arguments about gender in general is that they can function to "forward ideologies that seek to constrain women's agency even as [women] further their own rhetorical power as rhetorical agents."[510] So, while the conference women achieved a renewed understanding of their value and potential, their arguments that somewhat negotiated agrarianism's gender problems did not establish an alternative cultural narrative that eliminated patriarchy as its foundation. Still, I want to see their conversations as rhetorically savvy because they evidenced the participants' understanding of agrarianism and rural norms and ability to work within those norms to create space for themselves. That their different visions of rural womanhood both affirmed the underlying gendered assumptions of traditional agrarianism and amplified its class dimensions does not render the women's conversations, perspectives, and discourses insignificant. Instead, I suggest, they invite greater critical attention into how the intersecting dynamics of gender, race, and class constitute certain subjects as worthy of representation, and others as invisible in the public's conception of its rural and farm people.

Farm women who met in conference at Edgewater Beach Hotel, Chicago, March 8-11, under joint auspices of American Country Life Association and THE FARMER'S WIFE Magazine

What Are Farm Women Thinking About?

By Bess M. Rowe

"WHAT are farm women thinking about?" was the title of the article published in the April FARMER'S WIFE, in which we briefly outlined the purpose of a unique conference of representative farm women which met in Edgewater Beach Hotel, Chicago, March 8-11, under the joint auspices of the American Country Life Association and THE FARMER'S WIFE magazine.

Mrs. Schattler, chairman of the Conference, opened the proceedings by propounding the question, "What do farm women want?"—a slightly different wording of the question which formed the title of our April article.

For three days, the twenty farm women representing the four quarters of the United States and also our sister-neighbor, Canada, pondered this question, "thrashed" it out heartily and with vision and goodwill and brought out some most pertinent and significant ideas.

AS TO some of the varied "wants" of farm women which were brought into definite notice at this Conference, the following interesting list tells a tale all its own:

More libraries
Better movies
A bank account
Ability to plan
To be classed as women of ability and understanding —not as "farm women"
To learn the poetry and charm of farm life
Recognition of the value of our work
Better educational advantages for our children
In the Northwest, an automobile first and a telephone second
Good roads and other means of contact
Beautification of farm homes
Loan funds for girls who wish to enter college
Teachers in our rural schools who have knowledge of and sympathy with rural life
To have the hired men board themselves
All the latest machinery in the home so we can have time to get out
Cheaper linoleum that will last just as long
Efficient country doctors
Parents interested in and visiting the school
Adult education
Parents and children playing together
A chance to have our hobbies materialize
Good music
More knowledge of business methods
An attractive dining room table
Ability and willingness to use agencies for health, education and so forth that are already in the field
Eating in relation to health rather than recipes
The radio
Less pity and sympathy from city people and greater appreciation on their part of the joys and values of country life
Fair exchange of hospitality between city and country—especially on Sunday
An intelligent understanding of the importance of agriculture, on the part of both town and country
A greater joy in our job
County health nurses
Good pictures
More home demonstration agents
Advertising which does not indicate that work is drudgery
Support for the rural church through other channels than having the Ladies' Aid furnish meals
Better country preachers
Farm women representation on state and national committees

At the beginning Mrs. Schattler said, "I am among those who hope that farm women want about everything there is. I will even go a step farther than that. I firmly believe that if the farm women of America, as a group, ever realize their actual power, they can have just everything under the shining sun which they say they need."

From the foregoing list it would appear as if Mrs. Schattler already has the first part of her wish! The key to the fulfillment of her complete wish was expressed repeatedly in such statements as this: "Farm women can get what they want when their own latent power is freed and this can come only through farm women them-

CAN the readers of THE FARMER'S WIFE improve on the list of farm women's "wants" here given—the gist of the answer to the question, "What Are Farm Women Thinking About?" considered in the conference of farm women called conjointly by the American Country Life Association and THE FARMER'S WIFE Magazine?

After the list of "wants" was roughly classified, the various items fell under some fourteen heads and out of these the Conference group chose four for special discussion: Education, Economics, Appreciations, Community Development.

"When it comes to maternal mortality, we are ashamed to know that the United States and Canada are two nations which rank lowest in a group of sixteen—nations to which we send missionaries and doctors are ahead of us in their lower death rate of mothers in childbirth." Such is the appalling fact to which Mrs. Aitken (Canada) called the attention of the conferees.

The next question the Conference considered was how to reach all the mothers of the United States and Canada with such facts as the foregoing; how to bring about such education in right living that dwellers in the open country shall realize their natural heritage—a condition of positive health; shall think in terms of health rather than in terms of illness.

THE members of the Conference reported how this is being done in some states: The Fitter Families work which started in Kansas; the health examinations of children which are making children demand right food, plenty of sleep and whatever else will keep up their health and let them rank well in competition with their classmates; nutrition work through the State Extension Departments which has resulted in the farm women of New York demanding a State Commissioner of Rural Health; health examinations of farm women such as are being given by women physicians at the State Camp of Farm Women in West Virginia;—all these are helping the situation. But the twenty farm women at this Conference saw the job in even larger terms: they pointed out the need of a coordination of the activities of existent health agencies and that these agencies see the big job of positive health education as well as the development of their organizations; that rules of living for positive health be put into simple concise form.

Figure 8. Chicago Conference Participants. Bess M. Rowe's May 1926 article in *TFW* reported on the Chicago conference and pictured its participants. Source: Bess M. Rowe, "What Are Farm Women Thinking About?" *The Farmer's Wife*, May 1926.

Page 268

The Farmer's Wife, May, 1926

Farm women who met in conference at Edgewater Beach Hotel, Chicago, March 8-11, under joint auspices of American Country Life Association and THE FARMER'S WIFE Magazine

Figure 9. Chicago Conference Participants, Cropped. The caption reads: "Farm women who met in conference at Edgewater Beach Hotel, Chicago, March 8-11, under joint auspices of American Country Life Association and THE FARMER'S WIFE Magazine." Source: Bess M. Rowe, "What Are Farm Women Thinking About?" *The Farmer's Wife*, May 1926.

Conclusion:

Recognizing the Rhetorical Agency of Rural and Farm Women

In this dissertation, we saw two examples of rural and farm women's rhetorical engagements that revealed how those women thought and talked about themselves, each other, and their future possibilities. In the first example, *The Farmer's Wife* magazine, rural and farm women took up the issue of what it meant to be successful at a moment when the magazine presented a somewhat narrow definition of the successful "farmer's wife." As the women contributed letters to the Sally Sod debate, their arguments about field labor and motherhood, although probably unintentionally, tested the magazine's sanctioned ideal of the modern "farmer's wife" that the Master Farm Homemaker showcase vividly presented. During their exchanges, the women redefined the idea of successful rural womanhood by dissociating the woman from the home and repositioning her in and beyond the fields. The contributors also mobilized *phantasia*, or rhetorical imagination, to allow fellow readers and contributors to see, through language, the markers of prosperity in rural and farm culture. As they illustrated, prosperity did not need to be linked to motherhood. As the women's individual letters accumulated and combined into longer forums, they collectively interrupted the illusion of a monolithic farm woman tethered to the (interior) profession of homemaking. As a rhetorical event, the Sally Sod debate confronted long-held ideas and assumptions about gender within rural and farm culture: if farming was a male enterprise and women existed only to raise and retain the next generation of farmers and rural citizens, then the women's contributions indicated that, for the women who offered them, the presence of children in an increasingly efficient and comfortable home did not signal the ultimate achievement of rural and farm womanhood.

In the second example, the 1926 Chicago conference that literally asked its participants what they, as rural and farm women, wanted, the women engaged in consciousness raising practices that allowed them to overcome personal feelings of inferiority and collectively imagine an alternative agrarianism in which they existed as active figures. During the group discussions, the participants drew upon their particular experiences as evidence for their claims and validated one another's ideas as material for their collective consideration. They invoked elements of the feminine style including stories, examples, and personal tone, and moved inductively such that the women's many offerings led the conversation to the conclusion of empowerment. The women and this conference signaled a moment when rural and farm women convinced each other, and themselves, that they mattered. If women's presence in traditional agrarianism was negligible in relation to the men who benefited from the patriarchal infrastructure of rural and farm life, then the conference women worked within that traditional framework as they carved out spaces for their rhetorical invention. As the conversations stretched the boundaries of home to include extra-domestic spaces where women could perform stewardship, broadened the idea of self-sufficiency to suggest that women's coalitions could improve rural and farm life, and located rural and farm women's characteristics as sources of prosperity, they indicated that rural and farm women belonged in agrarian thought and practice. As a consciousness raising event, the conference achieved its purpose: it transformed the women's understandings of themselves and the men's notions of rural and farm womanhood. The attendees departed Chicago with a renewed sense of their individual and collective possibilities; the conference seemed successful.

These two instances indicate both subtle and significant achievements for the women who entered into and shaped the magazine and the conference. But what happens if we take a longer view of these instances as an in-road into reflecting on the meanings and possibilities of

rhetorical agency? Consider *TFW*: the Sally Sod debate eventually expired. While in 1932 the magazine sponsored another letter-writing forum regarding the costs and perceived value of extension services, the textual scene of women's letters organized around a specific issue did not exist as a recurring feature beyond the Sally Sod exchange.[511] Did the women fail? Are their letters less significant because they did not generate measurable and enduring change in the magazine? For the conference, recall how I noted earlier that the participants returned to their respective states renewed in their identities as rural and farm women and energized to build upon the collective thinking that emerged in Chicago. And yet, *TFW* and the ACLA did not curate another similar conference in the future, even as both entities celebrated the Chicago conference as a momentous and significant occasion. Does that mean that the women's conversations in Chicago are ineffectual representations of rural and farm women's desires? Are these women's arguments futile if they did not engender other similar rhetorical events beyond the Edgewater Beach Hotel?

These questions point to critical aspects of rhetorical agency: its relationship to change, its connection to a source's capacity for rhetorical argument, and its existence beyond a rhetorical event.[512] These questions also call to mind the relevance of success in assessments of rhetorical discourse. David Zarefsky engages this issue as he assesses public address scholarship and calls for renewed attention to the connection between agency and effects:

> Public address scholars should neither absolve rhetors of responsibility for their individual actions by assuming that the course of events was completely predetermined, nor fault rhetors for failing to make choices that were not realistically available to them. Instead, we must develop a richer case-based understanding of how public address achieves effects – and what the scope of 'effects' might be.[513]

Put differently, rhetorical analysis requires that scholars recognize both that people's actions produce consequences in the world and that various structures (material, ideological, social)

enable and constrain the forms that those actions take. People make choices. Sometimes those choices produce measurable outcomes, and sometimes they leave evidence of their existence without also leaving significant change in the world. In this project, the women's discourses enact both types of "effects." The women in this project chose to write, to speak, to contribute, to participate. In chapter three, those who debated with Sally Sod and her defenders offered explicit, unwavering claims that were grounded in their experiences and that crafted an agency for "the farmer's wife" beyond that which the magazine ascribed to her. These women were aware of their opinions, and they expressed them strongly. While I discuss below the fact that the women's letters did not produce change in a longitudinal sense, the Sally Sod letters did, during the period that *TFW* published them, reveal to the magazine alternative realities of its readership. Those letters also revealed alternative possibilities for the rural and farm women who read them and invited them to see themselves and their work differently. In chapter four, the conference participants opened themselves up to other perspectives as they talked with each other about who they were, what they wanted, and how they could achieve better conditions for their various rural and farm communities. Unlike the writers in *TFW*, the speakers in Chicago allowed themselves to be carried by the rhetorical encounter.[514] Reading the case studies together, one marks a firm commitment to one's beliefs; another indicates a willingness to be moved during rhetorical interactions. Both signify a form of agency through authorship. As the women writers, thinkers, and speakers talked together, whether in person or in print, they created something different: different visions of their identities for later readers to find inspiration in, different tasks and strategies for their individual and collective action, and different ways of talking about themselves and rural and farm life in public conversations.

Considering the relationship between rhetoric and effects, I interpret these discourses as rhetorically successful because they signified specific moments in time when rhetors came together, shared their claims, and opened themselves up to the possibility that their rhetorical investments might not lead anywhere beyond the magazine or the conference. The women engaged for the sake of engaging, without necessarily knowing what, if anything, might happen as a result. When intentions and expectations do not govern what happens during one's rhetorical performance, agency exists as a "capacity to make a difference in the world without knowing quite what you are doing."[515] There emerges a potential, but not a promise. When rural and farm women wrote to Dan Wallace and told *The Farmer's Wife* how they defined success, they illuminated aspects of their lived experiences that enriched the magazine's understanding of what it meant to prosper in rural and farm America in the later 1920s. When the representative women gathered in Chicago and talked with each other about their hopes and desires for rural and farm life, they convinced themselves and the others in the room that rural life was worth the constant struggles they faced; they also revealed that rural and farm women were perhaps best situated to take up the work of improving their communities and securing that "rural adjustment" that Kenyon Butterfield had earlier called for. Although these rhetorics might not signify monumental events in the course of history, their presence in the lives of the women who authored and enacted them, and their potential to influence how rural and farm women thought about themselves, is important. These women chose to encounter others and reveal incredibly personal details about themselves during those encounters. As moments of individual and collective expression, the bursts of rhetorical agency that manifested during women's interactions signaled the existence of other perspectives and possibilities than those with which the women may have entered into those interactions.

The women's rhetorical strategies of dissociation, *phantasia*, and consciousness raising enabled the women to see, through language, who they were and who they could become. When women entered the Sally Sod debate and redefined "success," their arguments introduced to fellow debaters, *TFW*'s readers, and the magazine's staff that rural and farm women's achievements did not depend on children and material objects. Calling upon their personal experiences, values, and desires, these women posited an alternative framework through which the magazine could interpret and judge rural and farm women moving forward. Moreover, these women's letters provided to *TFW*'s readers examples from which they might model their own rhetorical invention. The Sally Sod debate illustrated that even the most private, distressing, or unpopular experiences and sentiments had value and could stir other women to write their own letters and contribute to the conversation. When the sixteen women gathered at Chicago's Edgewater Beach Hotel and considered how they and the women they represented could perform their roles going forward, their conversations pointed the women in the direction of seeing themselves and their work as significant to rural and farm life. Invoking their prior observations and imagining their prospective responsibilities, the conference women negotiated the tradition of agrarianism's female subordination as they established places for themselves within that tradition in ways that would slightly alter it. According to Michael Leff, "tradition serves as the source and ground for civic discourse, since such discourse draws from and works to sustain the identity of the community, while it also functions as an instrument to effect change"[516] When the women adapted agrarianism, they drew upon what they knew to authorize different ways of enacting agrarianism's principles. As the women turned to the familiar notions of home, self-sufficiency, and class status, they affirmed their commitment to those institutions, principles, and markers as they rhetorically envisioned how they might make themselves present in one of the

world's most enduring philosophical and ideological traditions. The women ended their time in Chicago with transformed understandings of themselves as individuals and rural and farm women as a collective. As a form of social support, the women's conversations in letters and at the conference allowed readers and listeners to see themselves and their own identities validated in other rural and farm women's words. Rural and farm women's redefinitions, rhetorical imaginations, and consciousness raising conversations functioned to empower these women as they deliberated the issues that they identified as critical to their lives and identities.

Throughout this project, my goal was to take these women and their words at face value, to read their claims as expressions of their beliefs and worldviews, and to recognize their contributions to the rhetorical spaces in which they participated. At times, I had trouble fulfilling these principles. When Annabel Long Edinger spoke at the Chicago conference about the "foreigners" who labored the land, I cringed and wanted to write her off. When women wrote to *The Farmer's Wife* about the overwhelming responsibilities that accompanied their many children, I wished that they could have followed their dreams and escaped their rural and farm realities. Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch offer to the feminist rhetorical scholar a critical posture for when she confronts these very issues: an ethics of hope and care. "Even if and when we find ourselves disagreeing in the end with their values, ideologies, or beliefs," they explain, "we still look and listen carefully and caringly, contemplate our perceptions, and speculate about the promise, potential, and realities of these rhetors' lives and work."[517] For me, considering fairly rural and farm women and their discourses requires constant reminders that my desires for these women do not supersede what these women desired for themselves. As I discovered, the various meanings and conditions that women in *TFW* attached to their notions of success revealed that these women, like most people, probably did the best they could under the

circumstances that structured their lives. How extraordinary it is that rural and farm women located the time, energy, and means to contribute to rhetorical cultures their confessions, ideas, and hopes. With their words, the women in this project made their lives accessible to those who chose to look and listen. I am better for having looked and listened. I see their letters and the confessions they contained as evidence of bravery; the women who wrote and submitted them granted fellow readers the opportunity to dare to see themselves as important, even if they worked outside or did not have children. The women who debated success made their private lives publicly accessible so that they might transform themselves and others who were willing to look, listen, and learn. Surely that decision to enter a contingent space and to contribute with one's available means signifies rhetorical action. I understand the consciousness raising discourses as meaningful because as they accumulated throughout the four days, they revealed to the rural and farm women that their identities offered rich resources that they could draw upon to achieve better self-perception and to inspire others to act. By choosing to write and speak together, the women in this project also chose to be and act in the world together. That is rhetorically powerful.

As I now see it, my experience with this project mirrors the way that I have talked about rhetorical agency. Just like the women who chose to write and speak, I too chose to engage by reading and contemplating their words. Just as the women brought to their rhetorical interactions various worldviews, attitudes, and beliefs that consciously and unconsciously informed their expressions, I carried my own principles into my engagements with their texts in ways that shaped my readings. Like the women who entered into *TFW*'s letter forum and opened themselves up to encountering others who would refute or challenge them, I approached the critical act from a position of curiosity, rather than one of expectation. Like the conference

women whose language altered, in ways the women may not have imagined prior to the rhetorical act, how they and others interpreted their relationships and responsibilities, I opened myself up to the possibility of transformation as I considered their language.[518] And like the women who wrote and spoke without knowing if anything would change in the world other than the fact of having written and spoken, I came to these women's words not knowing where they might take me, but knowing that my engagement would lead me somewhere other than where I started. Cheryl Geisler writes of the choice to enter into a rhetorical encounter: "I don't know whether, if you engage with this rhetorical situation, you will succeed in the way you intend. But we do know that if you don't engage, nothing will happen."[519] As Geisler's claim argues and my experience with this project affirms, the potential effects of rhetorical engagement matter less than the interactive practice of engaging. That middle space between deciding to enter a rhetorical situation and knowing afterward what, if anything, that situation created is where the energy of rhetorical agency develops. Acting without expecting, seeking the potential and not the promise, is my understanding of rhetorical agency.

This project provides insight into how rural and farm women talked about themselves, their identities, and rural and farm women as a collective in two traditional spaces of public argument: a print magazine and a public speaking context. While I focus here on the relationships among rural and farm rhetorics, agrarianism, gender, and rhetorical agency, future work can pursue additional questions along these and other lines. For instance, in 1930, a collective of poets, writers, and novelists based at Vanderbilt University and who called themselves the "Twelve Southerners" (also called the "Nashville Agrarians") published a collection of essays that defended a Southern agrarianism and resisted the changes of industrialism. Their texts, as well as others that the "Chapel Hill Sociologists" at the University

of North Carolina penned in response, offer prospects for considering regional intricacies of agrarian thought and practice.[520] Turning to a more recent example, studying the speeches and public statements of Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA) can illuminate how Ernst draws upon her agrarian past as she inhabits the elite position of a person with substantial political power. Does Ernst speak the language of rural and farm culture to Iowa citizens and her colleagues in Congress? Might her rhetoric reveal a different shape of agrarianism (and its relationship to gender) in the contemporary moment? This inquiry could contribute to the larger project of understanding women's conservative arguments about gender, and allow the field "to grapple more fully with the constraints and potential for women who sustain and perhaps thrive rhetorically in conservative cultures."[521] Other scholarship could examine Bold Nebraska, a fascinating alliance among farmers, Tribal Nations, and environmentalists that emerged in recent years to resist the Keystone XL pipeline. How do arguments from tradition function as inventional resources for these groups and their activists? What do their strategies say about the problems and potentials of building coalitions across cultural divides, and how might those strategies offer to other groups tools for participating in social movements? My own future work on this project will consider how rural and farm women's teachers talked about and rhetorically constructed the idea of a professional rural and farm woman. While I have some archival materials of Jane Simpson McKimmon, one of North Carolina's first home demonstration agents who later managed all home demonstration work throughout the state, I will need to visit other collections to gather materials of the district agents that McKimmon oversaw. In its current iteration, this project foregrounds rural and farm women's voices; as I continue to develop the project, my goal is to learn more about the voices of those in charge of teaching rural and farm women. In so doing, I

hope to learn more about how rural and farm women's feminism outward from the home enabled other opportunities for women's rhetorical invention, engagement, and transformation.

Notes

[1] "Feminism on the Farm," *The Nation*, October 19, 1921, 440.

[2] "Feminism on the Farm," 440.

[3] The document was reprinted in "The Farmers' Celebrations," *Prairie Farmer*, July 12, 1873, 217. A later assessment of the document declared it was a "skilful [*sic*] parody [that] set forth at great length the conditions which had led to the uprising of the agricultural class." See Solon Justus Buck, *The Granger Movement: A Study of Agricultural Organization and its Political, Economic and Social Manifestations, 1870-1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1913), 86-87.

[4] Jenny Barker Devine, *On Behalf of the Family Farm: Iowa Farm Women's Activism since 1945* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013), 2-9.

[5] Paul H. Johnstone, "Turnips and Romanticism," *Agricultural History* 12, no. 3 (1938): 224-55; Paul H. Johnstone, "In Praise of Husbandry," *Agricultural History* 11, no. 2 (1937): 80-95.

[6] Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*, Book 6, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), 193.

[7] James A. Montmarquet, *The Idea of Agrarianism: From Hunter-Gatherer to Agrarian Radical in Western Culture* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1989), viii.

[8] See Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 24; Richard Hofstadter, "The Myth of the Happy Yeoman," *American Heritage* 7 (April 1956): 42-53.

[9] David B. Danbom, "Romantic Agrarianism in Twentieth-Century America," *Agricultural History* 65, no. 4 (1991): 11-12.

[10] The text I would recommend to anyone seeking to understand better the intersection of rural life and contemporary politics is Kathryn J. Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016). For examples of press coverage of the 2016 election and the rural vote, see: Dave Sutor, "Dems Should Embrace Rural Voters' Values, McClelland Says," *The Tribune-Democrat*, July 28, 2016, http://www.tribdem.com/news/dems-should-embrace-rural-voters-values-mcclelland-says-with-video/article_1b1efb34-5423-11e6-9ac1-83301fc5f80f.html; Matt L. Barron, "Analysis: Democrats Turn Their Backs on Rural America," *The Daily Yonder*, November 14, 2016, http://www.dailyyonder.com/analysis-democrats-turn-their-backs-on-rural-america/2016/11/14/16208/; "Farmers Are Courting Trump, But They Don't Speak For All of Rural America," *NPR*, November 29, 2016, http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2016/11/29/503182640/the-farmers-courting-trump-dont-speak-for-rural-america?sc=17&f=1001; and Robert Leonard, "Why Rural America Voted for Trump," *The New York Times*, January 5, 2017, http://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/01/05/opinion/why-rural-america-voted-for-trump.html.

[11] Lu Ann Jones, *Mama Learned Us to Work: Farm Women in the New South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 2.

[12] Deborah Fink, *Agrarian Women: Wives and Mothers in Rural Nebraska, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 191.

[13] One example is FarmHer, an online blog and traveling photography exhibit that aims "to change the image of agriculture [by including] women in that image through photographs and stories." See "About: Shining a Light on Her," FarmHer, accessed April 3, 2017, http://farmher.com/pages/about.

[14] Melissa Walker, "Introduction: Farm Women and Their Stories," in *Country Women Cope with Hard Times: A Collection of Oral Histories*, ed. Melissa Walker (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), xxix.

[15] Kim Donehower, Charlotte Hogg, and Eileen E. Schell, *Reclaiming the Rural: Essays on Literacy, Rhetoric, and Pedagogy* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012).

[16] Tarla Rai Peterson, "Jefferson's Yeoman Farmer as Frontier Hero: A Self-Defeating Mythic Structure," *Agriculture & Human Values* 7, no. 1 (1990): 9-19; Tarla Rai Peterson, "Telling the Farmers' Story: Competing Responses to Soil Conservation Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77 (1991): 289-308; Tarla Rai Peterson, "The Will to Conservation: A Burkeian Analysis of Dust Bowl Rhetoric and American Farming Motives," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 52 (1986): 1-21.

[17] Leroy Dorsey, "The Frontier Myth in Presidential Rhetoric: Theodore Roosevelt's Campaign for Conservation," *Western Journal of Communication* 59 (1995): 1-19.

[18] Jeff Motter, "Yeoman Citizens: The Country Life Association and the Reinvention of Democratic Legitimacy," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 51 (2014): 1-16.

[19] Thomas R. Burkholder, "Kansas Populism, Woman Suffrage, and the Agrarian Myth: A Case Study in the Limits of Mythic Transcendence," *Communication Studies* 40, no. 4 (1989): 292- 307; Ross Singer, "Visualizing Agrarian Myth and Place-Based Resistance in South Central Los Angeles," *Environmental Communication* 5 (2011): 344-49; Annie R. Specht and Tracy Rutherford, "The Pastoral Fantasy on the Silver Screen: The Influence of Film on American Cultural Memory of the Agrarian Landscape," *Journal of Applied Communications* 99, no. 1 (2015): 21-37; Stephanie Houston Grey, "The Gospel of the Soil: Southern Agrarian Resistance and the Productive Future of Food," *Southern Communication Journal* 79, no. 5 (2014): 387-406.

[20] Jeff Motter and Ross Singer, "Review Essay: Cultivating a Rhetoric of Agrarianism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98 (2012), 451.

[21] David B. Danbom, "Why Americans Value Rural Life," *Rural Development Perspectives* 12 (1996), 15.

[22] For a few examples of scholarship that animates these inquiries about rhetorical agency, see Cheryl Geisler, "How Ought We to Understand the Concept of Rhetorical Agency? Report from the ARS," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2004): 9-17; Michael Leff and Andrea A. Lunsford, "Afterwords: A Dialogue," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2004): 55-67; Christian Lundberg and Joshua Gunn, "'Ouija Board, Are There Any Communications?' Agency, Ontotheology, and the Death of the Humanist Subject, or, Continuing the ARS Conversation," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2005): 83-105; Cheryl Geisler, "Teaching the Post-Modern Rhetor: Continuing the Conversation on Rhetorical Agency," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2005): 107-13; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Agency: Promiscuous and Protean," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (2005): 1-19; Nick Turnbull, "Rhetorical Agency as a Property of Questioning," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 37, no. 3 (2004): 207-22; Darrel Enck-Wanzer, "Trashing the System: Social Movement, Intersectional Rhetoric, and Collective Agency in the Young Lords Organization's Garbage Offensive," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92, no. 2 (2006): 174-201; Sonja K. Foss, William J. C. Waters, and Bernard J. Armada,

"Toward a Theory of Agentic Orientation: Rhetoric and Agency in *Run Lola Run*," *Communication Theory* 17, no. 3 (2007): 205-30; Joshua Gunn and Dana L. Cloud, "Agentic Orientation as Magical Voluntarism," *Communication Theory* 20, no. 1 (2010): 50-78; Desiree D. Rowe and Karma R. Chávez, "Valerie Solanas and the Queer Performativity of Madness," *Cultural Studies/Critical Methodologies* 11, no. 3 (2011): 274-84; Elisabeth Hoff-Clausen, "Attributing Rhetorical Agency in a Crisis of Trust: Danske Bank's Act of Public Listening after the Credit Collapse," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 43, no. 5 (2013): 425-48; Jason Barret-Fox, "Posthuman Feminism and the Rhetoric of Silent Cinema: Distributed Agency, Ontic Media, and the Possibility of a Networked Historiography," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 102, no. 3 (2016): 245-63; N. Renuka Uthappa, "Moving Closer: Speakers with Mental Disabilities, Deep Disclosure, and Agency through Vulnerability," *Rhetoric Review* 36, no. 2 (2017): 164-75; Risa Applegarth, "Children Speaking: Agency and Public Memory in the Children's Peace Statue Project," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (2017): 49-73.

[23] Carolyn R. Miller, "What Can Automation Tell Us About Agency?" *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (2007): 147.

[24] Miller, "What Can Automation Tell Us About Agency?" 147.

[25] Dan A. Wallace, "Facing the Music of 1923," *The Farmer's Wife*, January 1923, 251.

[26] Casey, "'This is YOUR Magazine,'" 181.

[27] In the *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian provided a comprehensive outline of Roman rhetorical education that ancient teachers employed to develop eloquent writers and speakers. Early on, he revealed his purpose: "We are to form, then, the perfect orator, who cannot exist unless he is above all a good man. We require in him, therefore, not only consummate ability in speaking, but also every excellence of mind." For Quintilian, character and masculinity indexed "the perfect orator." See Quintilian, *On the Teaching of Speaking and Writing: Translations from Books One, Two, and Ten of the Institutio Oratoria*, ed. James J. Murphy (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 6.

[28] Cheryl Glenn, *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997); Susan Jarratt and Rory Ong, "Aspasia: Rhetoric, Gender, and Colonial Ideology," in *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*, ed. Andrea A. Lunsford (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995): 9-24; see also Elizabeth Tasker and Frances B. Holt-Underwood, "Feminist Research Methodologies in Historic Rhetoric and Composition: An Overview of Scholarship from the 1970s to the Present," *Rhetoric Review* 27, no. 1 (2008): 54-71.

[29] Molly Meijer Wertheimer, "Introduction: Roses in the Snow," in *Listening to Their Voices: The Rhetorical Activities of Historical Women*, ed. Molly Meijer Wertheimer (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 2. On the issue of evidence for the feminist rhetorical scholar, see also Hui Wu, "Historical Studies of Rhetorical Women Here and There: Methodological Challenges to Dominant Interpretive Frameworks," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2002): 81-97; Carol Mattingly, "Telling Evidence: Rethinking What Counts in Rhetoric." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2002): 99-108.

[30] Barbara Biesecker, "Negotiating with Our Tradition: Reflecting again (Without Apologies) on the Feminization of Rhetoric," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 26, no. 3 (1993): 236-37.

[31] For the foundational article on the cult of true womanhood and its presence in antebellum American culture, see Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1966): 151-74.

[32] Janet Galligani Casey, *A New Heartland: Women, Modernity, and the Agrarian Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 23. On farm women's labor as both productive and reproductive, Casey explains that "farm women not only were enmeshed in the struggle for an American identity that was prominently imagined in terms of the dichotomy between agrarian and industrial orders; they also were implicated in the ideologies of gender that redefined notions of domestic work as well as relations between re/production and consumption." (23).

[33] Ann E. McCleary, "'Seizing the Opportunity': Home Demonstration Curb Markets in Virginia," in *Work, Family, and Faith: Rural Southern Women in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Melissa Walker and Rebecca Sharpless (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 97-134.

[34] Marilyn Irvin Holt, *Linoleum, Better Babies & The Modern Farm Woman, 1890-1930* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 17.

[35] For an example of the regularity of farm women doing field work, see Rebecca Sharpless and Melissa Walker, "'Pretty Near Every Woman Done a Man's Work': Woman and Field Work in the Rural South," in Walker and Sharpless, *Work, Family, and Faith*, 63.

[36] In her analysis of Appalachian rural women's literacies, Kim Donehower asserts that these women's public and private rhetorical practices were so often blurred that the public/private distinction was "irrelevant." See Kim Donehower, "Reconsidering Power, Privilege, and Public/Private Distinction in the Literacy of Rural Women," in *Women and Literacy: Local and Global Inquiries for a New Century*, eds. Beth Daniell and Peter Mortensen (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007), 94.

[37] See Charlotte Hogg, *From the Garden Club: Rural Women Writing Community* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

[38] For a recent analysis of this vocabulary, see Charlotte Hogg, "What's (Not) in a Name: Considerations and Consequences of the Field's Nomenclature," *Peitho* 19, no. 2 (2017): 181-209.

[39] Carol Mattingly, *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000).

[40] Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch, *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012), 22.

[41] Hui Wu, "The Paradigm of Margaret Cavendish: Reading Women's Alternative Rhetorics in a Global Context," in *Calling Cards: Theory and Practice in the Study of Race, Gender, and Culture*, eds. Jacqueline Jones Royster and Ann Marie Mann Simpkins (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 182-83.

[42] Charlotte Hogg, "Including Conservative Women's Rhetorics in an 'Ethics of Hope and Care,'" *Rhetoric Review* 34, no. 4 (2015): 392.

[43] Hogg, "Including Conservative Women's Rhetorics," 393.

[44] Hogg, "Including Conservative Women's Rhetorics," 394.

[45] See Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

[46] Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform,* 24.

[47] William L. Bowers, "Country-Life Reform, 1900-1920: A Neglected Aspect of Progressive Era History," *Agricultural History* 45 (1971): 215.

[48] Mary Meek Atkeson described this conundrum in her manuscript which accounts for farm women's experiences during the 1920s. According to Atkeson, the farm woman "stands

somewhere midway, alternately torn by influences toward the old and toward the new." See Mary Meek Atkeson, *The Woman on the Farm* (New York: The Century Company, 1924), 5.

[49] Ronald R. Kline even calls the Country Life Commission "the rural arm of the Progressive movement." See Ronald R. Kline, "Ideology and Social Surveys: Reinterpreting the Effects of 'Laborsaving' Technology on American Farm Women," *Technology and Culture* 38, no. 2 (1997): 359.

[50] Clayton S. Ellsworth, "Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission," *Agricultural History* 34 (1960): 171-72.

[51] Edith M. Ziegler, "'The Burdens and the Narrow Life of Farm Women': Women, Gender, and Theodore Roosevelt's Commission on Country Life," *Agricultural History* 86 (Summer 2012): 78.

[52] William L. Bowers, *The Country Life Movement in America, 1900-1920* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1974), 3.

[53] Scott J. Peters and Paul A. Morgan, "The Country Life Commission: Reconsidering a Milestone in American Agricultural History," *Agricultural History* 78 (2004): 289-316.

[54] Bowers, "Country-Life Reform," 221.

[55] David B. Danbom, *The Resisted Revolution: Urban America and the Industrialization of Agriculture, 1900-1930* (Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1979), 47.

[56] On the consequences of the agrarian myth influencing the CLM reformers, see Bowers, "Country-Life Reform," 215, 221.

[57] For examples of such scholarship, see Gene Wunderlich, *American Country Life: A Legacy* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2003); Scott J. Peters, "'Every Farmer Should Be Awakened': Liberty Hyde Bailey's Vision of Agricultural Extension Work," *Agricultural History* 80 (2006): 190-219; Ben A. Minteer, *The Landscape of Reform: Civic Pragmatism and Environmental Thought in America* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006); Christopher R. Henke, *Cultivating Science, Harvesting Power: Science and Industrial Agriculture in California* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008).

An exception to this authority-centric perspective is Joyce Mae Thierer, "The Country Life Movement and Rural Women, 1908-1931 (PhD diss, Kansas State University, 1994).

[58] Melissa Walker, *All We Knew Was to Farm: Rural Women in the Upcountry South, 1919-1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 284.

[59] For "discursive contexts," I am referring specifically to Kirt Wilson's notion that the critic who performs an intertextual analysis recognizes that texts are always actively revealing and concealing elements of their discursive fields, and that her objects of analysis can be understood better by studying how those objects draw from and are shaped by other rhetorical practices. See Kirt H. Wilson, "Interpreting the Discursive Field of the Montgomery Bus Boycott: Martin Luther King Jr.'s Holt Street Address," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8, no. 2 (2005): 299-326.

[60] Sarah Hallenbeck, "Toward a Posthuman Perspective: Feminist Rhetorical Methodologies and Everyday Practices," *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 15 (2012): 21.

[61] John M. Murphy, "Theory and Public Address: The Allusive Mr. Bush," in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, 280-81.

[62] Michaela D. E. Meyer, "Women Speak(ing): Forty Years of Feminist Contributions to Rhetoric and an Agenda for Feminist Rhetorical Studies," *Communication Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (2007): 2-3.

[63] Examples of scholarship that performs these principles related to studying public argument through the mode of gender analysis include: Bonnie J. Dow, "Feminism and Public Address Research: Television News and the Constitution of Women's Liberation," in Parry-Giles and Hogan, *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, 345-372; Catherine H. Palczewski, "The Male Madonna and the Feminine Uncle Sam: Visual Argument, Icons, and Ideographs in 1909-Anti Woman Suffrage Postcards," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91, no. 4 (2005): 365-94; Belinda A. Stillion Southard, *Militant Citizenship: Rhetorical Strategies of the National Woman's Party, 1913-1920* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2011); Susan Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Activism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Sarah Hallenbeck, "User Agency, Technical Communication, and the 19th-Century Woman Bicyclist," *Technical Communication Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (2012): 290-306.

[64] Dow, "Feminism and Public Address Research," 353.

[65] John Morris Gillette, *Rural Sociology* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), 42.

[66] Michael Ratcliffe, Charlynn Burd, Kelly Holder, and Alison Fields, "Defining Rural at the U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey and Geography Brief," United States Census Bureau, accessed April 7, 2017, https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/reference/ua/Defining_Rural.pdf.

[67] Kim Donehower, Charlotte Hogg, and Eileen E. Schell, "Introduction: Reclaiming the Rural," in *Reclaiming the Rural*, 7.

[68] Janet Galligani Casey, "'This is YOUR Magazine': Domesticity, Agrarianism, and *The Farmer's Wife*," *American Periodicals* 14 (2004): 181.

[69] Reminiscences of W. H. [Chick] Kircher, *The Farmer* – Centennial Issue, 1981-1982, Box 1. Webb Company Records. Minnesota Historical Society.

[70] Bess M. Rowe, "What Are Farm Women Thinking About?" *The Farmer's Wife*, April 1926, 200.

[71] On the issue of monumental or memorable versus mundane women's rhetorics, see Barbara Biesecker, "Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25 (1992): 140-61; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Biesecker Cannot Speak for Her Either," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 26 (1993): 153-59; Barbara Biesecker, "Negotiating with Our Tradition."

[72] Nancy Grey Osterud, "American Rural and Farm Women in Historical Perspective," *Agricultural History* 67, no. 2 (1993): 4.

[73] Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "That Rural Home Inquiry," *Good Housekeeping*, January 1909, 120.

[74] Theodore Roosevelt, letter to the 60th Congress, February 9, 1909, in *Report of the Country Life Commission* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), 4. Although Roosevelt identified the group as the "Commission on Country Life" in this instance, he most often referred to the group as the "Country Life Commission." As an example, this is evident in the title of the very report containing Roosevelt's letter: *Report of the Country Life Commission.*

[75] Theodore Roosevelt, "Letter to Prof. L. H. Bailey Creating the Commission on Country Life," August 10, 1908. Reprinted in *Report of the Country Life Commission*, 22.

[76] Gilman, "That Rural Home Inquiry," 120.

[77] Liberty Hyde Bailey, letter to Mrs. H. B. Rose, October 17, 1908. Liberty Hyde Bailey Papers, #21-2-3342. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

[78] Quoted in James Eaton Tower, "The Farmer's Wife," *Good Housekeeping*, April 1909, 499.

[79] Gilman, "That Rural Home Inquiry," 120.

[80] U.S. Department of Commerce, *Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1923), 583.

[81] For instance, Hesiod's epic poem *Works and Days* connected husbandry with prudence and effort. See Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto & Windus, Ltd., 1973), 14; Aristotle, *Politics,* 193; Johnstone, "In Praise of Husbandry.

[82] See also Richard Bridgman, "Jefferson's Farmer before Jefferson," *American Quarterly* 14 (1962): 567-77. Bridgman argues that agricultural literature prior to the American Revolution reproduced European bucolic and romantic notions of farmers, but public discourse following the war characterized farmers as lazy for failing to cultivate properly the nation's wilderness. According to Bridgman, Jefferson writings redefined the American farmer and shifted public opinion about the farmer's value to the republic.

[83] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to John Jay," August 23, 1785, in *Memoir, Correspondence, and Miscellanies from the Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Thomas Jefferson Randolph (Charlottesville, VA: F. Carr, and Co., 1829), 291.

[84] Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (London: Burlington House, 1787), 274.

[85] Thomas Pangle notes that the ancient political influence is evident in the Federalist Papers: "The authors of the Federalist Papers, by taking the pen name 'Publius,' seem to announce from the start their identification with the Greco-Roman republican tradition." See Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 43; see also Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 19-20.

[86] James Madison, *Federalist* 10, in *The Federalist Papers*: *Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay*, ed. Michael A. Genovese (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 50.

[87] Madison, *Federalist* 10, 50-54.

[88] Madison, *Federalist* 10, 53; Kyle G. Volk, *Moral Minorities and the Making of American Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 20-21.

[89] See J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York: Fox, Duffield & Company, 1904); David Tucker, *Enlightened Republicanism: A Study of Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), 115-120.

[90] Alexander Hamilton, *Alexander Hamilton's Famous Report on Manufactures, Made to Congress December 5, 1791* (Boston: Home Market Club, 1892).

[91] James Madison, "Republican Distribution of Citizens, 1792" in *The Writings of James Madison*, vol. VI, edited by Gaillard Hunt (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906), 96, 98; Sheehan, *James Madison*, 117.

[92] Montmarquet, *The Idea of Agrarianism*, 87.

[93] A. Whitney Griswold, *Farming and Democracy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company), 1948, 29-30.

[94] Fink, *Agrarian Women,* 13-16, 20-22.

[95] Fink, *Agrarian Women*, 28.

[96] Theodore Roosevelt, letter to the 60th Congress, 9.

[97] "Roosevelt to the Iowa People," *Wallaces' Farmer*, October 11, 1907, 1145. Roosevelt cited the consequences of a too-poor or too-rich farming class: "We do not want to see our farmers sink to the condition of the peasants in the old world, barely able to live on their small holdings, nor do we want to see their places taken by wealthy men owning enormous estates which they work purely by tenants and hired servants."

[98] The eleventh census reported: "Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement, but at present the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line." Department of the Interior, *Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890*, Part I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1895), xxxiv.

[99] *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1910* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1911), 225.

[100] William Bowers characterizes this mobility as a "tenure ladder" on which hired hands occupied the bottom rung, tenant farmers were located in the middle, and farm owners were placed at the top. See Bowers, *The Country Life Movement,* 8.

[101] "The Exodus of Farmers," *Wallaces' Farmer*, September 25, 1908, 1146.

[102] Liberty Hyde Bailey, *The State and the Farmer* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908), 17.

[103] See John M. Gillette, "The Drift to the City in Relation to the Rural Problem," *American Journal of Sociology* 16 (1911): 664; for additional commentary on factors contributing to the rural exodus, see David Kinley, "The Movement of Population from Country to City," in *Cyclopedia of American Agriculture*, volume IV, edited by Liberty Hyde Bailey (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1909): 113-19.

[104] A Farmer Boy, "Why the Boy Leaves the Farm," *Wallaces' Farmer*, October 23, 1903, 1399; "Why Boys Leave the Farm," *Prairie Farmer*, January 5, 1905, 2; Gillette, "The Drift to the City."

[105] "The Exodus of Farmers," 1146.

[106] William Rossiter, "The Decrease in Rural Population," *American Monthly Review of Reviews* 34 (July 1906): 80.

[107] Rossiter, "The Decrease in Rural Population," 80.

[108] Katherine Hempstead, "Agricultural Change and the Rural Problem" (Ph.D. diss, University of Pennsylvania, 1992), 101-121.

[109] Theodore Roosevelt, "Letter to Prof. L. H. Bailey Creating the Commission on Country Life," 24.

[110] Roosevelt, "Letter to Bailey," 41.

[111] Roosevelt, "Letter to Bailey," 41.

[112] Theodore Roosevelt, letter to Liberty Hyde Bailey, August 14, 1908. Liberty Hyde Bailey Papers, #21-2-3342. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

[113] Liberty Hyde Bailey, letter to Theodore Roosevelt, August 15, 1908. Liberty Hyde Bailey Papers, #21-2-3342. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

[114] Roosevelt later added as commissioners C. S. Barrett, President of the Farmers Union in Union City, Georgia; and W. A. Beard, editor of the *Great West Magazine*. According to Clayton Ellsworth, Roosevelt included them to "give greater importance" to the South and Far West. See Ellsworth, "Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission," 162.

[115] According to Ellsworth, these notes represented all but twelve states. See Ellsworth, "Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission," 163.

[116] Reprinted in "Roosevelt Asks Farmers to Meet, Outlines Questions to be Discussed at Local Gatherings Called for Dec. 5," *The New York Times*, November 16, 1908, 4.

[117] Theodore Roosevelt, *An Autobiography* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1913), 429.

[118] *Report of the Commission on Country Life*, 17-18.

[119] Roosevelt, letter to the 60th Congress, 6-7.

[120] "Roosevelt Message on Farmers' Needs," *The New York Times*, February 10, 1909, 2.

[121] "Laugh at Roosevelt Board, House Votes Against Printing Report of Country Life Commission," *The New York Times*, March 3, 1909, 2.

[122] For Chamber of Commerce, see Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, 417; Theodore Roosevelt, "The Break with Taft," in *Talks with T.R.: From the Diaries of John J. Leary, Jr.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 27-28.

Of the CLC's circulars, Ellsworth notes that most of them "fell into hostile hands in the United States Department of Agriculture and were destroyed before they could be published." Once Roosevelt was out of office, the circulars remained with the Department of Agriculture under the Taft administration. However, President Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of Agriculture David F. Houston ordered the remaining circulars to be burned. See Ellsworth, "Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission," 164, 170.

[123] As quoted in Olaf F. Larson and Thomas B. Jones, "The Unpublished Data from Roosevelt's Commission on Country Life," *Agricultural History* 50, no. 4 (1976): 585.

[124] *Report of the Country Life Commission*, 14-15.

[125] Ziegler, "'The Burdens and the Narrow Life of Farm Women.'"

[126] Roosevelt, "Special Message," 3. For "holistic," see Zimmerman and Larson, *Opening Windows Onto Hidden Lives,* 26-27.

[127] *Report of the Country Life Commission*, 47. Concerns about labor-saving technologies persisted in political and popular discourses for the following decade. For examples, see "A Strike of Farmers' Wives," *The World's Work*, June 1913, 144; Herbert Quick, "The Women on the Farms," *Good Housekeeping*, October 1913, 432; Edward B. Mitchell, "The American Farm Woman as She Sees Herself," *Yearbook of the U.S. Department of Agriculture* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914), 311-318; "Some Solid Reasons for a Strike of Farm-Wives," *The Literary Digest*, December 19, 1920, 74.

[128] *Report of the Country Life Commission*, 47.

[129] Roosevelt expressed his views in the closing lines of his letter to Congress: "If the woman shirks her duty as housewife, as home keeper, as the mother whose prime function it is to bear and rear a sufficient number of healthy children, then she is not entitled to our regard." See Roosevelt, letter to the 60th Congress, 9.

[130] Bailey articulated a similar idea in his 1911 manuscript *The Country-Life Movement in the United States* and declared: "It is needful that women in the country come together to discuss woman's work, and also to form intelligent opinions on farming questions in general." See Liberty Hyde Bailey, *The Country-Life Movement in the United States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911), 90.

[131] Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations, *Report of the Commission on Agricultural Research* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908), 15.

[132] Harold T. Pinkett, "Government Research Concerning Problems of American Rural Society," *Agricultural History* 58, no. 3 (1984): 367.

[133] Wunderlich, *American Country Life,* 1-3.

[134] Wunderlich, *American Country Life*, 4-5.

[135] For examples of public discourse that performs these conflations, see Kenyon Butterfield, *Chapters in Rural Progress* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1907); Bailey, *The State and the Farmer*; Theodore Roosevelt, "The Man Who Works with His Hands," speech delivered at the Semi-Centennial Celebration of the Founding of Agricultural Colleges in the United States, Lansing, Michigan, May 31, 1907 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1907).

[136] See Edmund de S. Brunner and J. H. Kolb, *Rural Social Trends* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1933), 17.

[137] Butterfield, *Chapters in Rural Progress*, 5. Note that this quotation performs these very conflations: Butterfield is discussing country life but only names farmers, and yet his manuscript is titled *Chapters in Rural Progress*. For Jefferson, I am referencing the December 20, 1787 letter he wrote to James Madison about the future of U.S. democracy: "I think our governments will remain virtuous for many centuries; as long as they are chiefly agricultural; and this will be as long as there shall be vacant lands in any part of America. When they get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, they will become corrupt as in Europe." See "Letter to James Madison, December 20, 1787," in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. VI (Washington, D.C.: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903), 385.

[138] In the May 1927 editorial for *The Farmer's Wife*, Dan A. Wallace argued that, "the fall of every great nation always began when its rural life became decadent." Dan A. Wallace, "A Program for Agriculture," *The Farmer's Wife*, May 1927, 292.

[139] Politicians urged also farmers to increase production during the war as a patriotic duty. See E. T. Meredith, "Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," in *Yearbook of the U.S. Department of Agriculture* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918), 9-12.

[140] Theodore Saloutos and John D. Hicks, *Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West: 1900-1939* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1951), 91-92; Benjamin Horace Hibbard, *Effects of the Great War Upon Agriculture in the United States and Great Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1919), 27.

[141] William E. Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 100.

[142] Wayne D. Rasmussen, *Taking the University to the People: Seventy-Five Years of Cooperative Extension* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989), vii. The Act is named for Senators Asbury Frank Lever (D-SC) and Hoke Smith (D-GA). Lever introduced to Congress extension bills as early as 1911, but it took until 1914 for Smith-Lever to become law. See Roy V. Scott, *The Reluctant Farmer: The Rise of Agricultural Extension to 1914* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 298-303.

[143] The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 stated that those colleges already receiving benefits, or those which may in the future receive benefits, from the Morrill Acts of 1862 and/or 1890, may also receive agricultural extension work, provided that appropriated funds were handled by the college or colleges of the States or Territories. In order to receive federal appropriations, states needed to provide matching funds. Smith-Lever Act of 1914, Ch. 79, 38 Stat. 372, 7 U.S.C. 341 (1914).

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[144] For Knapp, see Danbom, *Born in the Country,* 173; for Washington, see Earl W. Crosby, "The Roots of Black Agricultural Extension Work," *Historian* 39 (February 1977): 228-47. Interestingly, Crosby argues that Washington paralleled authorities of the Country Life Movement in that he "sought to revitalize rural life from his 'city on a hill,'" and therefore was distanced from the experiences of the rural black people he aimed to assist. See Crosby, "The Roots," 229. For "reach and influence," see Scott, *The Reluctant Farmer*, 4.

[145] Danbom, *Born in the Country*, 174.

[146] Seaman A. Knapp, "The Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work," *Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture*, 1909 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 160.

[147] Gladys Baker highlights the irony of Smith-Lever's agricultural pedagogy: "It is significant that the first general adult-education movement at public expense in the United States was of the newly developed vocational type as distinguished from the classical and liberal-arts education and that it was extended first to the formerly self-sufficing American farmer." See Gladys Baker, *The County Agent* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939), 1.

[148] Historian Ronald Kline goes so far as to identify the extension workers as "agents of modernity." See Ronald R. Kline, "Agents of Modernity: Home Economics and Rural Electrification, 1925-1950," in *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession*, eds. Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vincenti (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997): 237-52.

[149] By this, I mean that a county agent would have been trained at a land-grant state university, which would have received funding from the federal government. In this way, the agent represented the three levels of government. See Baker, *The County Agent*, xiii-xiv, 144.

[150] Liberty Hyde Bailey, *The Holy Earth* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), 142.

[151] Bailey, *The Holy Earth*, 143.

[152] Bailey, *The Holy Earth*, 142.

[153] Bailey, *The Country-Life Movement,* 4.

[154] Katherine Jellison, *Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 16.

[155] Fink, *Agrarian Women*, 27.

[156] Grey Osterud, *Putting the Barn Before the House: Women and Family Farming in Early Twentieth-Century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 242.

[157] Osterud, *Putting the Barn Before the House,* 242.

[158] Thomas Isern's article about photographs of Kansas extension work troubles this idea, as Isern argues that extension agents learned from farmers in the field even as they aimed to teach them. However, this is a scarce argument within literature related to agricultural extension and education. See Thomas D. Isern, "Between Science and Folklore: Images of Extension Work From the Flint Hills of Kansas," *Agricultural History* 60, no. 2 (1986): 267-86.

[159] Jellison, *Entitled to Power,* 15-17; Danbom, *The Resisted Revolution*, 76-87.

[160] For insight into African American agricultural extension and home demonstration work, see Carmen V. Harris, "'The Extension Service Is Not an Integration Agency': The Idea of Race in the Cooperative Extension Service," *Agricultural History* 82 (2008): 193-219; Kathleen C. Hilton, "'Both in the Field, Each with a Plow': Race and Gender in USDA Policy, 1907-1929," in *Hidden Histories of Women in the New South*, eds. Virginia Bernhard, Betty Brandon, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Theda Perdue, and Elizabeth Hayes Turner (Columbia, MO: University

of Missouri Press, 1994), 114-33; Melissa Walker, "Home Extension Work among African American Farm Women in East Tennessee, 1920-1939," *Agricultural History* 70 (1996): 498-99.

[161] Ronald R. Kline, *Consumers in the Country: Technology and Social Change in Rural America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 87-112.

[162] See Cynthia Sturgis, "'How're You Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm?' Rural Women and the Urban Model in Utah," *Agricultural History* 60 (1986): 182-99; Dorothy Schweider, "Education and Change in the Lives of Iowa Farm Women, 1900-1940," *Agricultural History* 60, no. 2 (1986): 200-15; Kline, "Ideology and Social Surveys."

[163] Nancy S. Dye, "Introduction," in *Gender, Class, Race, and Reform in the Progressive Era*, eds. Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 3.

[164] Joan M. Jensen, *With These Hands: Women Working on the Land* (Old Westbury: The Feminist Press, 1981), 141.

[165] Farmers and farm families mostly comprised the Granger population, although not entirely – any rural non-farm people, as well as those interested in rural affairs, also participated in Granges. See Donald B. Marti, *Women of the Grange: Mutuality and Sisterhood in Rural America, 1866-1920* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 2.

[166] Thomas A. Woods, *Knights of the Plow: Oliver H. Kelley and the Origins of the Grange in Republican Ideology* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991), xv.

[167] Jane B. Knowles, "'It's Our Turn Now': Rural American Women Speak Out, 1900-1920," in *Women and Farming: Changing Roles, Changing Structures*, eds. Wava G. Haney and Jane B. Knowles (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), 312; Marti, *Women of the Grange*, 1-9; Carolyn Ostrander, "Latent Abilities: The Early Grange as a Mixed-Gender Site of Rhetorical Education," in Donehower et al., *Reclaiming the Rural*, 107-20.

[168] Reflecting on her first out-of-county trip, Mayo stated: "I knew that people came just out of curiosity to hear a woman speak." See Jennie Buell, *One Woman's Work for Farm Women: The Story of Mary A. Mayo's Part in Rural Social Movements* (Boston: Whitcomb & Barrows, 1908), 22-23.

[169] The three main Alliances were the Northern Alliance of the Midwest and Plains states, which enveloped many Grangers; the Southern Alliance of Texas and the Southwest, which only included white farmers; and the Colored Farmers' Alliance of the South, which included African American farmers. See Danbom, *Born in the Country*, 156-58.

[170] Hofstadter, *Age of Reform,* 61-66.

[171] See Mary Elizabeth Lease, "Less Corn, More Hell! Women and Rural Reform," *Journal of the Knights of Labor* (April 2, 1891): 2; see also Edward T. James, "More Corn, Less Hell? A Knights of Labor Glimpse of Mary Elizabeth Lease," *Labor History* 16 (1975): 408-9.

[172] Jensen, *With These Hands*, 147.

[173] Danbom, *Born in the Country*, 159-160.

[174] James Eaton Tower, "A New Era for Farm Women," *Good Housekeeping*, June 1909, 39-40.

[175] James Eaton Tower, "The Farmer's Wife," *Good Housekeeping*, April 1909, 498.

[176] Tower, "The Farmer's Wife," 498.

[177] Tower, "A New Era for Farm Women," 39.

[178] "What the Wives Say: Extracts from Letters Received in Our Farm Home Inquiry," *Good Housekeeping*, June 1909, 40-43.

[179] At this time, the magazine was named *Harper's Bazar*, not yet *Bazaar*.

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[180] These articles were: "The War on Drudgery," November 1912, 539, 550, 580; "Waylaying Education," December 1912, 601-602, 621; "The Social Significance of a Bumper Crop," January 1913, 15-16, 37; "The Campaign Against Sickness," February 1913, 67-68, 92; "The Waste of Old Women," March 1913, 115-116; and "After the Revolt: The Farmer's Wife Tells How the Bazar Articles Have Helped," May 1913, 235, 248.

[181] As quoted in "Special to the New York Times: Issuing Bulletins for Farmers' Wives," *The New York Times*, March 28, 1915, C5.

[182] "Issuing Bulletins," C5.

[183] "Issuing Bulletins," C5.

[184] For the four reports, see U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Secretary, *Social and Labor Needs of Farm Women*, Report No. 103; *Domestic Needs of Farm Women*, Report No. 104; *Educational Needs of Farm Women*, Report No. 105; *Economic Needs of Farm Women*, Report No. 106 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1915). For the reprinted letters, see "Farm Women Find Life Hard," 19, 58.

Regarding the survey responses, the 2,241 replies amounted to more than 2,241 perspectives. According to a separate USDA report, the number of women represented in the replies "is much larger than the tally of the letters would indicate, as many writers transmitted opinions of their neighbors or of women's clubs, granges, or church organizations." See United States Department of Agriculture, *Social and Labor Needs of Farm Women*, 8.

[185] Some women opted to respond to Houston on their own terms. For instance, farm woman Mary Doane Shelby mailed her response to Houston to *The New Outlook* magazine, which featured it in its December 15, 1915 issue. Shelby told Houston that when she received his bulletin, "I was discourteous enough to throw the letter into the fire without reply." See Mary Doane Shelby, "An Open Letter to Secretary Houston from a Farmer's Wife," *New Outlook*, December 15, 1915, 923-25.

[186] David E. Hamilton, *From New Day to New Deal: American Farm Policy from Hoover to Roosevelt, 1928-1933* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 10.

[187] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1921), 737-743.

[188] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1975), 483, 499.

[189] James H. Shideler, *Farm Crisis, 1919-1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 46-47.

[190] James Mickel Williams, *Our Rural Heritage: The Social Psychology of Rural Development* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925), 236.

[191] Warren G. Harding, "Letter to Hon. Henry C. Wallace, December 30, 1921" in *Report of the National Agricultural Conference, January 23-27, 1922* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), 3.

[192] See "National Rural Life Program," *The Farmer's Wife*, March 1922, 761.

[193] Henry C. Wallace, "Letter to President Harding, February 6, 1922," in *Report of the National Agricultural Conference,* 4.

[194] Wallace, "Letter to President Harding," 5.

[195] Mrs. Charles W. Sewall, "The Farm Woman and the Farm Home," in *Report of the National Agricultural Conference,* 129.

[196] Atkeson, *The Woman on the Farm*, 294.

[197] Dan A. Wallace, "A Word from the Office to You," *The Farmer's Wife*, October 1926, 476.

[198] "A Happy New Year!" *The Farmer's Wife*, January 1920, 213.

[199] As quoted in "A Happy New Year!" 213.

[200] The run of *TFW* under Webb Company was 1906-1939. Its final issue was published in April 1939; it then merged with *Farm Journal* and its content was restricted to a few columns per issue.

[201] Christopher P. Wilson argues that this pattern was manifest in other early twentieth century women's magazines, as editors realized that presenting information as new and exciting was a successful strategy in attracting and retaining audiences that aspired to fit in with modern trends. However, efforts to subtly control women by keeping them in their "place" undercut this guise of "newness." See Christopher P. Wilson, "The Rhetoric of Consumption: Mass-Market Magazines and the Demise of the Gentle Reader, 1880-1920," in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, eds. Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 61.

[202] Janet Galligani Casey, "Farm Women, Letters to the Editor, and the Limits of Autobiography Theory," *Journal of Modern Literature*, 28, no. 1 (2004): 94.

[203] Reminiscences of W. H. [Chick] Kircher, Webb Company Records. Minnesota Historical Society.

[204] Interestingly, I discovered that my tobacco farming great-grandmother Esther Hardesty did the very thing that this editor discounted: she submitted her recipes to newspapers in order to earn extra money for the family, and she was quite successful in her endeavors. The editor would probably be horrified to learn that Hardesty did not actually test the recipes before sending them in; instead, she trusted her own knowledge and capacity for invention. In an interview with John Wearmouth for the Southern Maryland Studies Center Oral History Collection, Hardesty explained of her recipe strategy: "I sent in a recipe or something. I did all kinda things…Got several recipes got a dollar for 'em and never did make 'em. I knew they sounded good and I just sent 'em in." Esther L. Hardesty, interview by John Wearmouth, February 18, 1987, La Plata, Maryland. Courtesy, Southern Maryland Studies Center, College of Southern Maryland, SMSC Oral History Collection.

For an exploration of how farm women needed to be creative in order to earn extra money and sustain the farm enterprise, see Walker, *All We Knew Was to Farm,* 69-97.

[205] James H. Shideler, "'Flappers and Philosophers,' and Farmers: Rural-Urban Tensions of the Twenties," *Agricultural History* 47, no. 4 (1973): 284.

[206] Shideler, "Flappers," 290.

[207] Frank L. McVey, "Editor's Preface," in James E. Boyle, *Rural Problems in the United States* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1921), n.p.

[208] Atkeson, *The Woman on the Farm*, 296.

[209] Atkeson, *The Woman on the Farm*, 9.

[210] Cooper, "Rhetorical Agency as Emergent and Enacted," 439.

[211] Kerschbaum, "On Rhetorical Agency and Disclosing Disability in Academic Writing," 63.

[212] James F. Evans and Rodolfo N. Salcedo, *Communications in Agriculture: The American Farm Press* (Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1974), 3.

[213] See Sally McMurry, "Who Read the Agricultural Journals? Evidence from Chenango County, New York, 1839-1865," *Agricultural History* 63, no. 4 (1989): 1-18.

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[214] C. Beaman Smith and H. K. Atwood, “The Relation of Agricultural Extension Agencies to Farm Practices,” in *Miscellaneous Papers*, Circular No. 117, Plant Industry, USDA (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), 25.

[215] Smith and Atwood, “The Relation,” 23.

[216] Stuart W. Shulman, “The Progressive Era Farm Press: A Primer on a Neglected Source of Journalism History,” *Journalism History* 25, no. 1 (1999): 29.

[217] John J. Fry, *The Farm Press, Reform, and Rural Change, 1895-1920* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 160.

[218] See John J. Fry, “‘Good Farming – Clear Thinking – Right Living’: Midwestern Farm Newspapers, Social Reform, and Rural Readers in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Agricultural History* 78, no. 1 (2004): 34-49. As an example, Fry notes that Henry Wallace only took up farming in adulthood after moving to Iowa from Pennsylvania, where he had served as a Presbyterian minister. When he edited and published *Wallaces’ Farmer* from 1895-1916, Wallace lived in the city of Des Moines and his connection to farming consisted “primarily [of] managing tenants and farm hands” rather than working the land himself. Fry, “Good Farming,” 39.

[219] Fry, *The Farm Press*, 158-160.

[220] Richard T. Farrell, “Advice to Farmers: The Content of Agricultural Newspapers, 1860-1910,” *Agricultural History* 51, no. 1 (1977): 212.

[221] Joseph A. A. Burnquist, “The Story of *The Farmer*, *The Farmer’s Wife*, and the Webb Publishing Company of St. Paul, Minnesota,” in *Minnesota and Its People*, vol. 3 (St. Paul, MN: Webb, 1924), 508, 511.

[222] Interview with Floyd Rupp, n.d., transcript, Box 1. Webb Company Records. Minnesota Historical Society.

[223] Robert Baker, *The Webb Company: The First Hundred Years* (St. Paul: The Webb Company, 1982), 5, 13, 52.

[224] Burnquist, “The Story of the Farmer,” 512.

[225] Baker, *The Webb Company*, 22.

[226] “Do You Want Your Daughter to Marry a Farmer?” *The Farmer’s Wife*, January 1922, 662. The editors regularly described its readers as “real” and “thinking” people, and many of the women who contributed letters adopted this same language when they described themselves or their idea of rural and farm women.

[227] I place “common” in quotation marks in order to highlight that *TFW* always depicted its emblematic version of the farmer’s wife – a white middle-class woman. The magazine did not feature women of color on its covers.

[228] One such expert was Walter R. Ramsey, M.D., who worked as an Associate Professor of Children’s Diseases at the University of Minnesota. His recurring feature was titled, “Are Your Children Healthy?” and appeared throughout the 1920s.

[229] The quotation “woman’s citizenship duties” is from Meredith’s inaugural article, “The Woman Citizen’s Job,” *The Farmer’s Wife*, June 1922, 13. Other examples include: Ellis Meredith, “Fourth of July Message to American Women,” *The Farmer’s Wife*, July 1922, 47, 55; and Ellis Meredith, “Parties, Primaries, Principles,” *The Farmer’s Wife*, August 1922, 74.

A sample of Marjorie Shuler’s legal article are: Marjorie Shuler, “Do Your Laws Protect You?” *The Farmer’s Wife*, April 1927, 208, 272; Marjorie Shuler, “Who Gets Your Earnings?” *The Farmer’s Wife*, May 1927, 308, 331; Marjorie Shuler, “Are Wives Partners?” *The Farmer’s*

Wife, September 1927, 468, 486; and Marjorie Shuler, "Wives and their Pocketbooks," *The Farmer's Wife*, October 1927, 532, 541.

[230] Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings:* The Ladies' Home Journal, *Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 34-38. For insight into white women's participation in the social construction of white American womanhood, see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Captured Subjects/Savage Others: Violently Engendering the New American," *Gender & History* 5, no. 2 (1993): 177-95.

[231] Here is an example of this outlier: In response to a farm woman's letter that argued all women should acquire the newest technologies, Mrs. E. L. D. made clear the contrast between the real and the ideal: "Do you really suppose that women do with labor-saving conveniences, pleasures and so forth because they are so stupid that they don't want them? It is because they haven't the money to buy them." See "Let Us Counsel Together: What Are the Vital Interests of Country Women?" *The Farmer's Wife*, February 1915, 262.

[232] Joan M. Jensen, "Crossing Ethnic Barriers in the Southwest: Women's Agricultural Extension Education, 1914-1940," *Agricultural History* 60, no. 2 (1986): 169-81.

[233] For instance, I located only one article about African American farmers during 1920-1929; that article was written by a white woman who employed African Americans on her plantation and wrote about their participation in agricultural demonstration work as follows: "[T]he beginning of the next season found me very discouraged, for one and all my tenants, like children, refused to continue the experiment and went back to the way their fathers had taught them….I have said that the negroes are like children, and it is be children's methods we must teach them, line upon line, over and over." Lelia Seton Edmundson, "Modernizing Her Plantation," *The Farmer's Wife*, January 1922, 661.

An example of a racist advertisement is one for Columbia Records that depicted two men in blackface alongside a dancing white woman. See Columbia Records advertisement, *The Farmer's Wife*, March 1920, 305.

[234] Casey, "'This is YOUR Magazine,'" 180-182.

[235] Burnquist, "The Story of the Farmer," 512.

[236] Kathryn Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (London: Routledge, 1989), 43; Barbara Sicherman, "Connecting Lives: Women and Reading, Then and Now," in *Women in Print: Essays on the Print Culture of American Women from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, eds. James P. Danky and Wayne A. Wiegand (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 8. For insight into the value of reading to rural and farm women, see Lisa R. Lindell, "'So Long as I Can Read': Farm Women's Reading Experiences in Depression-Era South Dakota," *Agricultural History* 83, no. 4 (2009): 503-27.

[237] Dan A. Wallace, "The Relation of the Press to the Home Life of the Farm," in *The Rural Home: Proceedings of the Sixth National Country Life Conference, St. Louis, 1923* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1924), 95.

[238] Janet Galligani Casey argues that write-in opportunities appear "to have been offered more frequently in *The Farmer's Wife* than in mainstream women's periodicals." See Casey, "Farm Women," 93. An example of one such "woman's column" is the "Hearts and Homes" feature that appeared regularly in *Wallaces' Farmer*. Nancy Cantwell Wallace, Henry Wallace's wife, managed this column.

[239] Casey, "'This is YOUR Magazine,'" 194.

[240] Casey, "Farm Women," 95.

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[241] Reminiscences of W. H. [Chick] Kircher, Webb Company Records. Minnesota Historical Society.

[242] Sales Reports, 1920-1937, Box 1. Webb Company Records. Minnesota Historical Society.

[243] Isabel Bevier and Susannah Usher, *The Home Economics Movement, Part I* (Boston: Whitcomb & Barrows, 1906), 5.

[244] Quoted in Bevier and Usher, *The Home Economics Movement,* 39.

[245] "Report of the Secretary," in *Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture, 1897* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), 19.

[246] "Report of the Secretary," 19.

[247] Clifford B. Gregory, "The Master Farmer Movement," *Rural America*, October 1927, 16.

[248] The fourteen Master Farmers were revealed in the January 14, 1927 issue, and two weeks later, *Wallaces' Farmer* was already publicizing its next Master Farmer contest. For *Wallaces' Farmer*'s description of *Prairie Farmer*'s contest, see "Master Farmers Receive Recognition," *Wallaces' Farmer*, January 1, 1926, 15. For *Wallaces' Farmer*'s first Master Farmer contest announcement and examples of its publicity during 1926, see "Wanted – Twenty Master Farmers," *Wallaces' Farmer*, April 9, 1926, 3; "Farm Communities Enter Master Farmers," *Wallaces' Farmer*, May 28, 1926, 6; "No Publicity for the Losers," *Wallaces' Farmer*, June 4, 1926, 4; "Last Call for Master Farmers," *Wallaces' Farmer*, June 18, 1926, 3; "Fourteen Master Farmers of Iowa," *Wallaces' Farmer*, January 14, 1927, 3, 16.

[249] Dan A. Wallace, "Recognition for Master Homemakers," *The Farmer's Wife*, February 1927, 47.

[250] Wallace, "Recognition for Master Homemakers," 47.

[251] "Do You Know a Master Home Maker?" *The Farmer's Wife*, April 1927, 215. In later contest announcements, the periodical simplified the first criterion to read: "she must be a real farm women." See Bess M. Rowe, "Master Farm Homemakers," *The Farmer's Wife*, April 1928, 7-9. This discourse of farm women as "real" and "thinking" women was common throughout the magazine's run.

[252] "Do You Know a Master Home Maker?" 215, 264.

[253] David Zarefsky, "Rhetoric and the Power of Definition," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2004): 611.

[254] Zarefsky, "Rhetoric," 611.

[255] Edward Schiappa, *Defining Reality: Definitions and the Politics of Meaning* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 3.

[256] Schiappa, *Defining Reality*, 10.

[257] Schiappa, *Defining Reality*, 169.

[258] Chaïm Perelman, "The New Rhetoric: A Theory of Practical Reasoning," in *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, eds. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1990), 1090.

[259] Ada Melville Shaw, "We Wish You a Normal Year," *The Farmer's Wife*, January 1925, 3.

[260] Holt, *Linoleum,* 40.

[261] Sarah Stage, "Introduction: Home Economics: What's in a Name?" in *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession*, eds. Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vincenti (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 2.

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[262] Catherine E. Beecher, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy, for the Use of Young Ladies at Home, and at School* (Boston: T. H. Webb, 1842); Stage, "Introduction," 3. Margaret Flanagan notes that this reorientation of gendered labor was somewhat radical because municipal housekeeping "enabled women to become involved in every facet of urban affairs without arousing opposition from those who believed woman's only place was in the home." See Margaret Flanagan, "Gender and Urban Reform: The City Club and the Woman's City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era," *American Historical Review* 95, no. 4 (1990): 1048.

[263] Holt, *Linoleum,* 17-18.

[264] C. F. Langworthy, "What the Department of Agriculture is Doing for the Housekeeper," in *Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture*, 1913 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914), 143-144.

[265] Martha Foote Crow, "The Young Woman on the Farm," *The Cornell Reading-Courses*, vol. 3, no. 63 (Ithaca: New York State College of Agriculture, 1914): 206.

[266] "Our Page with You," *The Farmer's Wife*, February 1928, 3.

[267] Ada Melville Shaw, "Our Page with You," *The Farmer's Wife*, November 1926, 530.

[268] An enthymeme is a rhetorical syllogism that omits its major or minor premises, or its conclusion. Aristotle explained in Book I of *The Rhetoric* that enthymemes contain few propositions, any of which must be "a familiar fact" such that "there is no need even to mention it; the hearer adds it himself." Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (New York: The Modern Library, 1954), 28.

[269] "A Key to the Door of Recognition," *The Farmer's Wife*, April 1928, 3.

[270] Bess M. Rowe, "A Portrait: The Typical Farm Homemaker," *The Farmer's Wife*, July 1928, 9.

[271] Rowe, "A Portrait," 9, 33.

[272] Isabel Bevier, "Homemaking and Citizenship," January 19-21, 1921, Bevier Manuscripts File, p. 7, Record Series 8/11/20, Box 13, University of Illinois Archives.

[273] Examples of these articles include: Geneva M. Bane, "Accounting for Homemakers," *The Farmer's Wife*, October 1928, 36, 42; Geneva M. Bane, "First Aid to Incomes," *The Farmer's Wife*, November 1928, 30-31; Geneva M. Bane, "Accounting for the Household," *The Farmer's Wife*, February 1929, 34-35.

[274] For an example of later discourses regarding race and the "typical" MFH, Mr. T. Roy Reid, Arkansas Assistant Director of Extension, said this when he spoke at his state's 1929 MFH banquet: "Out of about a quarter of a million white farm women in Arkansas…you have been selected as the type that has done most for Arkansas in building a home." See Bess M. Rowe, "Two Years: They Make the Master Farm Homemaker Movement Truly National," *The Farmer's Wife*, November 1929, 14.

[275] Rowe, "A Portrait," 9, 33.

[276] Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 509.

[277] Ned O'Gorman, "Eisenhower and the Sublime," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94, no. 1 (2008): 49, 50.

[278] Heidi E. Huntington, "Pepper Spray Cop and the American Dream: Using Synecdoche and Metaphor to Unlock Internet Memes' Visual Political Rhetoric," *Communication Studies* 67, no. 1 (2016): 80.

[279] Rowe, "A Portrait," 9,

[280] "Our Page with You," *The Farmer's Wife*, October 1928, 3.

[281] Quoted in Bess M. Rowe, "Ever Widening: Master Farm Homemaker Movement Reaches Far in Its Influence," *The Farmer's Wife*, June 1929, 13.

[282] Some examples are: "Do You Want Your Daughter to Marry a Farmer?" *The Farmer's Wife*, June 1922, 8-9, 22; Anne Gilbert, "A Farmer's Wife Speaks: Why I Wish I Was Back on the Farm," *The Farmer's Wife*, September 1926, 408, 439; Alice Wilson, "Farm Women as I Know Them," *The Farmer's Wife*, May 1929, 11, 60-61; "Town or Country – Which Shall It Be for the Farmer's Daughter?" *The Farmer's Wife*, October 1929, 30-31.

[283] See Susan J. Matt, "Frocks, Finery, and Feelings: Rural and Urban Women's Envy, 1890-1930," in *An Emotional History of the United States*, eds. Peter N. Stearns and Jan Lewis (New York: New York University Press, 1998): 377-95. For insight into how agricultural texts appealed to rural and farm women as consumers, see Mary Anne Beecher, "Building for 'Mrs. Farmer': Published Farmhouse Designs and the Role of the Rural Female Consumer, 1900-1930," *Agricultural History* 73 (1999): 252-62.

[284] Examples include: "The Farmer's Wife Farm House Plan," *The Farmer's Wife*, April 1927, 212-213, 243; "Making Homes Beautiful," *The Farmer's Wife*, August 1927, 420; Victor H. Ries, "Is Your Farm a Home?" *The Farmer's Wife*, February 1928, 70-71; Carroll P. Streetcar, "Dressing Up the Farmstead," *The Farmer's Wife*, April 1929, 15, 34; Bess M. Rowe, "Your Kitchen and You," *The Farmer's Wife*, December 1929, 11, 33.

[285] Richard A. Perry, "The American Farm Woman Comes into Her Own," *The Farmer's Wife*, March 1929, 11.

[286] Perry, "The American Farm Woman," 11.

[287] Sally Sod, as quoted in Grace Farrington Gray, "What Is Success?" *The Farmer's Wife*, January 1927, 11.

[288] To honor Green's request, I will hereafter refer to her as "Sally Sod," except when quoting her or others who identified her by her legal name. January 1927 marked Sod's first appearance in *TFW*. Over the next three years, Sod became a consistent presence in the magazine and authored other pieces including diary entries and personal narratives. Her actual name, Lorretto Hughes Green, was revealed in the May 1927 issue when Field Editor Grace Farrington Gray traveled to Sod's home in Wayne County, Michigan, to gather material for Sod's "Success Story."

[289] Sod, as quoted in Gray, "What Is Success?" 11.

[290] Gray, "What Is Success?" 11.

[291] For examples of these arguments, see Quick, "The Women on the Farms"; Mitchell, "The American Farm Woman as She Sees Herself"; Charles Josiah Galpin, *Rural Life* (New York: The Century Company, 1918), 105-117.

[292] Gray, "What Is Success?" 11.

[293] Sod, as quoted in Gray, "What Is Success?" 25.

[294] Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 411-59.

[295] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 412.

[296] Dan A. Wallace, "Are Women Really People in the Eyes of Our Law?" *The Farmer's Wife*, April 1927, 203.

[297] A Different Jane, "Sally Sod Over-works," *The Farmer's Wife*, July 1927, 394. "Farmerettes" was the term that identified members of the Woman's Land Army of America, an organization of mostly college aged women who lived in large collectives on farms and cultivated food during World War I. For insight into this organization, see Elaine F. Weiss,

Fruits of Victory: The Woman's Land Army of America in the Great War (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2008).

[298] A Different Jane, "Sally Sod Over-works," 395. The original Jane's letter expressed displeasure at the idea of marrying a farmer because she did not want to work outside. Writer Mercy H. Maxwell argued that outdoor labor was fine for women, so long as they used "common sense" and had a "backbone, too!" See Mercy H. Maxwell, "Should I Marry Jim?" *The Farmer's Wife*, April 1926, 204.

[299] The Editors, "'A Different Jane' Stirs up Sally Sod's Champions," *The Farmer's Wife*, September 1927, 474.

[300] Sally Sod the Second, "I Couldn't Keep Still," *The Farmer's Wife*, September 1927, 474.

[301] Hoosier Maggie, "My Blood Fairly Boils," *The Farmer's Wife*, September 1927, 474.

[302] A Back Number, "Work Never Coarsens the Mind," *The Farmer's Wife*, September 1927, 474.

[303] See Carolyn Sachs, *The Invisible Farmers: Women in Agricultural Production* (Totowa, NJ: Roman and Allanheld, 1983), 80-82; Walker, "Introduction," xxv-xxvii

[304] Kristy Maddux, "Religious Dissociation in 2012 Campaign Discourse," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 16, no. 2 (2013): 364.

[305] For an exploration of the histories of farm women's labor in the U.S., see Carolyn E. Sachs, *Gendered Fields: Rural Women, Agriculture, and Environment* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

[306] As quoted in Michele Kennerly, "Getting Carried Away: How Rhetorical Transport Gets Judgment Going," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (2010): 270.

[307] Kennerly, "Getting Carried Away," 288.

[308] Debra Hawhee, "Looking Into Aristotle's Eyes: Toward a Theory of Rhetorical Vision," *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 14, no. 2 (2011): 160.

[309] Kennerly focuses on what she calls civic phantasia as a means of collapsing space and making possible the conditions for judgment. See Kennerly, "Getting Carried Away," especially page 270. See also Ned O'Gorman, "Aristotle's *Phantasia* in the *Rhetoric*: *Lexis*, Appearance, and the Epideictic Function of Discourse," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 38, no. 1 (2005): 16-40.

[310] Mrs. Z. Y., "Jane – or Sally!" *The Farmer's Wife*, November 1927, 637.

[311] Mrs. E. P. E., "I'm Just Me," *The Farmer's Wife*, December 1927, 656.

[312] O'Gorman, "Aristotle's *Phantasia*," 20.

[313] Hawhee, "Looking," 159.

[314] One example came from Harriet Farmer, who proudly stated that she had never worked outside and that her children were all the better for it: "My children have a foundation in *good literature, religious education and appreciation of beauty and truth* which they never would have obtained had I been working in the fields, or doing chores, or raising poultry as many of my neighbors do" [emphasis original]. See Harriet Farmer, "These Laughing Families," *The Farmer's Wife*, December 1927, 668.

[315] F. W. Beckman, "Farm Life As I See It," *The Farmer's Wife*, March 1927, 136.

[316] "The Stability of the Country," *The Farmer's Wife*, May 1920, 395; Roosevelt, letter to the 60th Congress, 9.

[317] Pep, "A Half-Made Success," *The Farmer's Wife*, March 1927, 154.

[318] Pep, "A Half-Made Success," 154.

[319] Pep, "A Half-Made Success," 154.

[320] Pep, "A Half-Made Success," 154.

[321] Perhaps gesturing toward feeling shame at not being a mother, Jones indicated in her letter that she preferred to be known by this name, not her legal name. This was an extremely rare move in *TFW*'s farm women's letters, for women who identified themselves with a nickname or pseudonym always did so in name alone, never at the additional stated request of the author.

[322] Jenny Jones, "What About These Others?" *The Farmer's Wife*, May 1927, 298.

[323] Jones, "What About These Others?" 298.

[324] Jones, "What About These Others?" 298.

[325] Jones, "What About These Others?" 298.

[326] Casey, *A New Heartland,* 40.

[327] A Different Jane's Sympathizer, "Here It Is, in Print," *The Farmer's Wife*, November 1927, 592.

[328] A Different Jane, "A Different Jane Replies," *The Farmer's Wife*, January 1928, 14.

[329] O'Gorman, "Aristotle's *Phantasia*," 23-27.

[330] "Our Page with You," *The Farmer's Wife*, January 1929, 3.

[331] Sally Sod, "Sally Sod Has Her Washer," *The Farmer's Wife*, May 1928, 16.

[332] Sod, "Sally Sod Has Her Washer," 16. Her power washer even played a starring role in one of Sod's later article for TFW. See Sally Sod Herself, "Thanksgiving at the Sod House," *The Farmer's Wife*, November 1928, 16, 47-48.

[333] Harriet Farmer, "These Laughing Families," *The Farmer's Wife*, December 1927, 668.

[334] Some examples include: Carroll P. Streetcar, "Dressing Up the Farmstead," *The Farmer's Wife*, April 1929, 15, 34; Bess M. Rowe, "Ever Widening: Master Farm Homemaker Movement Reaches Far in Its Influence," *The Farmer's Wife*, June 1929, 13, 22; Asia M. Watson, "Master Farm Homemaking," *The Farmer's Wife*, September 1929, 15-16; Bess M. Rowe, "Two Years: They Make the Master Farm Homemaker Movement Truly National," *The Farmer's Wife*, November 1929, 12, 14; Bess M. Rowe, "Your Kitchen and You," *The Farmer's Wife*, December 1929, 11, 33.

[335] Geisler, "How Ought We to Understand the Concept of Rhetorical Agency?" 10-11.

[336] Lisa M. Gring-Pemble, "Writing Themselves into Consciousness: Creating a Rhetorical Bridge Between the Public and Private Spheres," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84, no. 1 (1998): 46.

[337] Jeffrey T. Grabill and Stacey Pigg, "Messy Rhetoric: Identity Performance as Rhetorical Agency in Online Public Forums," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (2012): 101.

[338] Motter, "Yeoman Citizens," 8.

[339] Quoted in Geisler, "How Ought We To Understand the Concept of Rhetorical Agency?" 12.

[340] Kenyon L. Butterfield, "Needed Readjustments in Rural Life Today," *Rural America*, December 1925, 4. This publication reprinted Butterfield's earlier address.

[341] Kenyon L. Butterfield, "Why Readjustment?" *Rural America*, October 1925, 2.

[342] Frederick Palmer, "America From a Mountain Top," *Harper's Magazine*, September 1920, 461.

[343] Anne Martin, "Woman's Inferiority Complex," *The New Republic*, July 20, 1921, 211.

[344] Martin, "Woman's Inferiority Complex," 211.

[345] Henry A. Wallace, grandson of CLC member Henry Wallace, Sr., edited the publication from 1947-1948 after President Truman fired Wallace from his position as the U.S.

Secretary of Commerce. Biographers John C. Culver and John Hyde write that at this time, Wallace was "the nation's most famous liberal." Concerned about U.S. involvement in Soviet relations and the prospect of atomic warfare, Wallace used his tenure at *The New Republic* to publicize his views against Truman's foreign policies. See John C. Culver and John Hyde, *American Dreamer: The Life and Times of Henry A. Wallace* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 431-32; on Wallace's firing from Truman's cabinet, see also Denise M. Bostdorff, *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine: The Cold War Call to Arms* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 31-37.

[346] Alfred Adler, *Understanding Human Nature*, trans. Walter Beran Wolfe (New York: Greenberg Publisher, Inc., 1927). On what he described as the fallacy of women's inferiority, Adler wrote that because male dominated cultures did not prioritize girls' intelligence, it was not shocking that those girls developed into women who, "because of [their] lack of training in childhood, actually believe[d] in [their] own incapability." And even though Adler identified the very idea of women's inferiority as false, he made clear that centuries of patriarchal thought and practice had consequences: "The obvious advantages of being a man have caused severe disturbances in the psychic development of women as a consequence of which there is an almost universal dissatisfaction with the feminine role. The psychic life of woman moves in much the same channels, and under much the same rules, as that of any human beings who find themselves the possessors of a strong feeling of inferiority because of their situation in the scheme of things." See Adler, *Understanding Human Nature*, 130-31, 133.

For other examples of inferiority complexes in print culture, see Dana Burnet, "The Inferiority Complex," *Collier's: The National Weekly*, January 26, 1924, 3-4, 28-30; James H. Leuba, "The Weaker Sex: A Scientific Ramble," *The Atlantic*, April 1926, accessed January 7, 2017, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1926/04/the-weaker-sex-a-scientific-ramble/304037/; One of Them, "Women Alone in New York," *The New York Times*, December 24, 1922, 53.

[347] Adler, *Understanding Human Nature*, 132-133. Here is how Adler summarized this gendered mode of thought: "One of the bitter consequences of the prejudice concerning the inferiority of women is the sharp division and pigeon-holing of concepts according to a scheme: Thus 'masculine' signifies worth-while, powerful, victorious, capable, whereas 'feminine' becomes identical with obedient, servile, subordinate. This type of thinking has become so deeply anchored in human thought processes that in our civilization everything laudable has a 'masculine' color whereas everything less valuable or actually derogatory is designated 'feminine.' We all know men who could not be more insulted than if we told them that they were feminine, whereas if we say to a girl that she is masculine it need signify no insult. The accent always falls so that everything which is reminiscent of woman appears inferior."

[348] For an example of suffrage rhetoric, see Carrie Chapman Catt, "Man's Egotism Must Take Fall for Woman's Good," *Urbana Daily Courier*, November 9, 1923, 2. Catt argued: "We've got to end the inferiority complex if we expect to take our place in politics." For an example of how farm women discussed inferiority complexes, see "On Being a Homemaker," *Wallaces' Farmer*, January 1, 1926, 16. The anonymous author of this article argued that the farm woman's approach to motherhood could affect the psychological development of her children. Citing a fiction story of how a woman could unknowingly cultivate in her children negative self-perceptions, the author summarized: "As a result [of] timid Helen living with her all-efficient mother, gradually built up habits of lack of assurance, of being afraid to venture on

anything and in general she was self-deprecatory, or as we express it nowadays, she grew into an inferiority complex."

[349] Kenyon L. Butterfield, "The Outlook from the Farm Home," *Rural America*, March 1926, 2.

[350] *The Farm Woman Answers the Question* (St. Paul, MN: The Farmer's Wife, 1926), 7. This manuscript holds the conference proceedings that constitute the primary unit of analysis for this chapter.

[351] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1930* (Washington, D.C.: Government Publishing Office, 1930), 45.

[352] *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 7.

[353] See the appendix for a complete list of conference participants and audience members. I offer additional biographical details later in this chapter.

[354] Rowe, "What Are Farm Women Thinking About?"

[355] Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Femininity and Feminism: To Be or Not to Be a Woman," *Communication Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1983): 104.

[356] Campbell, "Femininity and Feminism," 105.

[357] A few studies explore consciousness raising practices beyond the 1970s. One example is Lisa M. Gring-Pemble's analysis of nineteenth century letters between Antoinette Brown Blackwell and Lucy Stone, which argues that their letters enacted a mode of consciousness raising ahead of the women's rights movement. See Lisa M. Gring-Pemble, "Writing Themselves into Consciousness: Creating a Rhetorical Bridge Between the Public and Private Spheres," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84, no. 1 (1998): 41-61. On the evolution of consciousness raising and its "post-feminist" formations, see Stacey K. Sowards and Valerie R. Renegar, "The Rhetorical Functions of Consciousness-Raising in Third Wave Feminism," *Communication Studies* 55, no. 4 (2004): 535-52.

[358] Motter and Singer, "Review Essay: Cultivating a Rhetoric of Agrarianism," 451.

[359] Fink, *Agrarian Women,* 21-22, 189.

[360] Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 1 (1973),:79.

[361] Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Consciousness-Raising: Linking Theory, Criticism, and Practice," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2002): 60.

[362] Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation," 79.

[363] Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation," 83.

[364] Tasha N. Dubriwny, "Consciousness-Raising as Collective Rhetoric: The Articulation of Experience in the Redstockings' Abortion Speak-Out of 1969," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91 (2005): 396-401.

[365] See Dubriwny, "Consciousness-Raising as Collective Rhetoric," 413; Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation," 79.

[366] Dubriwny, "Consciousness-Raising as Collective Rhetoric," 418.

[367] Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric*, vol. 1 (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1989), 13-14.

[368] Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 13.

[369] Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 13-14.

[370] Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 11-12.

[371] Sara Hayden, "Negotiating Femininity and Power in the Early Twentieth Century West: Domestic Ideology and Feminine Style in Jeannette Rankin's Suffrage Rhetoric," *Communication Studies* 50, no. 2 (1999): 89.

[372] Hayden, "Negotiating Femininity," 89.

[373] Bonnie J. Dow and Mari Boor Tonn, "'Feminine Style' and Political Judgment in the Rhetoric of Ann Richards," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79, no. 3 (1993): 291-96.

[374] Dow and Tonn, "'Feminine Style' and Political Judgment," 286-87.

[375] For examples of such scholarship, see Bonnie J. Dow, "Feminism, Difference(s), and Rhetorical Studies," *Communication Studies* 46, no.1-2 (1995): 106-17; Tammy R. Vigil, "Feminine Views in the Feminine Style: Convention Speeches by Presidential Nominees' Spouses," *Southern Communication Journal* 79, no. 4 (2014): 327-46.

[376] Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles, "Gendered Politics and Presidential Image Construction: A Reassessment of the 'Feminine Style,'" *Communication Monographs* 63, no. 4 (1996): 348.

[377] According to Gibson and Heyse, Palin crafted a public persona that was bolstered by appeals to domestic issues, motherhood, and the feminine style; however, Palin undermined that persona by connecting herself to John McCain and the Republican Party's hypermasculine worldviews. See Katie L. Gibson and Amy L. Heyse, "'The Difference Between a Hockey Mom and a Pit Bull': Sarah Palin's Faux Maternal Persona and Performance of Hegemonic Masculinity at the 2008 Republican National Convention," *Communication Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (2010): 235-56.

[378] Gibson and Heyse, "'The Difference Between a Hockey Mom and a Pit Bull,'" 238.

[379] Kenyon L. Butterfield, "President's Address: The Past and the Future of the Country Life Movement," in *Rural Organization: Proceedings of the Third National Country Life Conference, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1920* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1921), 7.

[380] Shideler, "'Flappers and Philosophers,' and Farmers," 283-99.

[381] For the Farm Bloc, see Danbom, *Born in the Country,* 189; for an overview of the Farm Bloc's transformation during and beyond the 1920s, see Patrick G. O'Brien, "A Reexamination of the Senate Farm Bloc, 1921-1933," *Agricultural History* 47, no. 3 (1973): 248-63. Regarding criticism of the farmer-less Farm Bloc, an example is George W. Waters, Jr.'s speech at the Maryland Bankers' Association's annual meeting in 1922. President of the association, Waters, Jr., declared that if farmers had greater representation in the Farm Bloc, they might overcome their own "inferiority complex" that resulted from deferring to "the city man and the business man" and "be put on [their] feet" in terms of economics and politics. As quoted in "New Capper-Tincher Bill Introduced," *Wallaces' Farmer*, June 9, 1922, 714.

[382] See Charles L. Stewart, "Migration To and From Our Farms," in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science: The Agricultural Situation in the United States* (Philadelphia: The American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1925), 60.

[383] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1925* (Washington, D.C.: Government Publishing Office, 1926), 582.

[384] For automobile ownership, see U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1959: General Report*, volume 2, *Statistics by Subjects* (Washington, D.C.: Government Publishing Office, 1960), 220; for radio ownership, see U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Publishing Office, 1930), 648.

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[385] See Kline, *Consumers in the Country,* 15-18.

[386] Holt, *Linoleum,* 21. For an overview of the history of Rural Free Delivery, see "Rural Free Delivery," *United States Postal Service*, accessed January 15, 2017, http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/rural-free-delivery.pdf.

[387] Dan A. Wallace, "The Country Life Movement," *The Farmer's Wife*, April 1926, 206.

[388] Rowe, "What Are Farm Women Thinking About?" 219.

[389] Those Committee members not in attendance were Mrs. Carl Williams of the *Oklahoma Farmer and Stockman* farm publication, from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Judge Xenophon Caverno of Canalou, Missouri; Dr. Edmund de S. Brunner of New York's Institute of Religious and Sociological Research; and Francis R. Cope, Jr., a Harvard graduate who experimented with farming and conservation techniques at his orchard in Dimock, Pennsylvania.

[390] *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 7.

[391] *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 7-8.

[392] *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 8.

[393] Examples of these publications include: Annette Chase Dimock, "Milk, Eggs and Better Farm Children: Balanced Ration for Humans," *The Rural New Yorker*, July 25, 1914, 960; Annette Chase Dimock, "The Household: Your Going to Market Business," *Today's Magazine for Women*, August 1914, 22.

[394] *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 10. My research also reveals that Farmer previously served as the President of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). Long after the conference occurred, Farmer continued her work in public relations by editing the Georgia UDC's newsletter and contributing to newspapers; her December 24, 1939, article for the *Atlanta Constitution* that praised the recent premiere of *Gone With the Wind* is a vivid example of how her publicity skills and southern heritage intersected. See Miriam J. Petty, *Stealing the Show: African American Performers and Audiences in 1930s Hollywood* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 47-48.

[395] One example is Dora H. Stockman, *Farmerkin's Farm Rhymes* (Lansing: Henry R. Pattengill, 1911).

[396] See Elizabeth H. Giese, *Michigan Women's Suffrage: A Political History* (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan Political History Society and the Michigan Women's Studies Association, 1995), 21-22.

[397] *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 20. I also retrieved some of these details from The Barker and Faulconer Fayette County Public Education Photographs, *Kentucky Digital Library*, accessed December 6, 2016, http://kdl.kyvl.org/catalog/xt7nk931368m_24_7/viewer.

[398] *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 13. Between her wartime service and the conference, in early February 1921, Edinger gave birth to her and her husband's first child; the boy only survived one hour. See "Infant Son Dies in Butte," *The Dillon Examiner*, February 16, 1921, 4.

[399] See "Society: Federation Honored," *The Dillon Examiner*, February 24, 1926, 7.

[400] *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 8.

[401] See "Rural Extravaganza Scheduled Today: Farmer Pageant to Feature at Bailey Tonight," *The Cornell Daily Sun*, February 14, 1923, 5. At the time of the article's printing, Powell had received requests from sixteen other state agricultural colleges to stage her pageant.

[402] For instance, Schuttler previously served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Missouri Better Roads Association.

[403] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1925* (Washington, D.C.: Government Publishing Office, 1926), 592-93.

[404] During its tenure from 1924-1967, the hotel was a popular place for hosting celebrities, politicians, and other well-known public figures including Marilyn Monroe, Babe Ruth, Nat King Cole, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In January 1963, the hotel hosted the National Conference on Religion and Race, at which Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke to commemorate the centennial anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. See Dick Hoffmann, "Rev. King: Take Stand against Prejudice," *Daily Herald*, January 17, 1963; see also "Edgewater Beach Hotel," *The Edgewater Historical Society*, accessed October 25, 2016, http://www.edgewaterhistory.org/ehs/local/edgewater-beach-hotel.

Only one month prior to the Edgewater Beach Hotel conference, Chicago's Hotel Sherman hosted the inaugural Better Farm Homes conference; at this event, farm men and women, engineers, architects, and home specialists discussed the problems and possibilities of farm homes. Mrs. H. M. Dunlap of Savoy, Illinois, was one of the representative farm women who spoke at this conference. See "Tells of Farm Wives' Revolt from Humdrum: Things of Spirit Demanded, Mrs. Dunlap Says," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 19, 1926, 21.

[405] Schuttler, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 9.

[406] Schuttler, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 9.

[407] Schuttler, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 9.

[408] Schuttler, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 9.

[409] Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation," 79.

[410] Schuttler, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 9.

[411] Schuttler, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 13.

[412] Roosevelt, letter to Bailey, 24.

[413] Schuttler, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 9.

[414] Mrs. Julian A. Dimock, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 10.

[415] One such example is Florence E. Ward, "The Farm Woman's Problems," United States Department of Agriculture Department Circular 148 (Washington, D.C. November 1920). This report was based on 10,044 surveys of farm women from the North and West that home demonstration agents conducted between June and October 1919. The idea that outsiders had over-investigated farm women extended also to print culture. Mary Meek Atkeson, a well-regarded author and university professor, penned an especially sharp article for *The Farmer's Wife* in which she called on farm women to protest city writers who depicted them in the popular press as poor and tired. Atkeson's condemnation is worth quoting at length: "But now, thanks to the magazines and the daily press, the country woman has been shown that physical effort is a disgrace and a mark of stupidity. City writers visit the poor country homes, look about them and throw up their hands in horror. 'No bath-tubs, no electric lights, no steam heat!' they cry. 'What a horrible condition!' And without waiting for any explanation they dash off five thousand words or so about 'the poor farm woman.'" Mary Meek Atkeson, "My Ideas on the 'Tired Farm Woman,'" *The Farmer's Wife*, January 1923, 259, 270.

[416] Dimock, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 10.

[417] Mrs. C. D. Hoover, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 10-11.

[418] Hoover, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 11.

[419] Roosevelt, "Special Message," 9.

[420] Dow and Tonn "'Feminine Style' and Political Judgment," 296.

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[421] *Report of the Country Life Commission*, 47. As the section on "Woman's Work on the Farm" continued, it identified women's organizations as one solution to the problem of women's isolation. Bailey also viewed women's organizations as central to the development of rural and farming communities. In his later work on the Country Life Movement, he asserted: "It is needful that women in the country come together to discuss woman's work, and also to form intelligent opinions on farming questions in general." See Bailey, *The Country-Life Movement,* 90.

[422] Dow and Tonn, "'Feminine Style' and Political Judgment," 291.

[423] In this way, these discourses invoked expediency logics that maintained the notion that men and women were inherently different; as such, women should be granted rights so that they could use their feminine qualities to positively influence society. See Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 14.

[424] Mrs. Isaac Edinger, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 22.

[425] Others argued that non-U.S. people should be restricted to urban labor so that the farms could retain its "good" U.S. citizen workers. As one article in *Wallaces' Farmer* noted: "Admitting foreigners who are willing to work for low wages will unquestionably enable us to hold a larger number of our farm-hands back on the farm at a lower wage than would otherwise be possible." See "Wages of Farm Labor in 1923," *Wallaces' Farmer*, January 12, 1923, 37.

[426] Edinger, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 22.

[427] Examples of these types of claims can be found in: "The Key," *Wallaces' Farmer*, December 10, 1920, 2762; "Studying for Citizenship," *Wallaces' Farmer*, March 26, 1920, 992; and "New Citizens," *Wallaces' Farmer*, March 10, 1922, 346. This final article punctuated the exigence of Americanization efforts as such: "Even with the present restrictions on immigration, 70,000 foreigners are coming into our country each month. Where they settle in colonies and keep up their old country habits, they become a menace to America. If they settle by families among Americans, a duty devolves on the community to make of them the right kind of Americans."

[428] "Women's Interests," *Wallaces' Farmer*, February 13, 1920, 557.

[429] Mrs. Robert C. Dahlberg, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 22.

[430] Dahlberg, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 22. These exchanges emerged during a discussion on the things, broadly construed, that farm women should appreciate. In that context, Dahlberg's statement intimated that farm women should appreciate the non-native laborers with whom they came into contact because those laborers might expand the women's own sense of culture.

[431] Clark, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 22.

[432] Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation," 79.

[433] Stewart, Scott, and Dimock, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 23. Dimock's response echoed Charlotte Perkins Gilman's earlier proposed solution to the rural problem of isolation. Called "Applepieville," Gilman envisioned that farm communities would thrive if they were better organized: main civic centers like stores, libraries, and post offices would cohere in the middle, and farms would radiate outward from that common center. For Gilman, this type of landscape architecture would provide residents with regular opportunities to interact with each other and, for women especially, to perform their labor together and in public spaces. See Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Applepieville," *The Independent*, September 25, 1920, 365.

[434] Schuttler, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 32.

[435] Cutler, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 32.

[436] Cutler, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 32.

[437] Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 13-14.

[438] Dow and Tonn, "'Feminine Style and Political Judgment," 297.

[439] Dahlberg, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 33.

[440] Dow and Tonn, "'Feminine Style' and Political Judgment," 295.

[441] Mrs. Ira E. Farmer, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 10.

[442] By this, I mean that farmers benefit from agrarianism as a heuristic because, as the independent yeomanry, they were viewed and upheld as a paragon of national identity since the Jeffersonian era. However, the double bind of agrarianism is that its principles are often incompatible with farmers' material realities; the mythic frame, therefore, is often not represented in farmers' lived experiences.

[443] Dan A. Wallace, "Looking Forward," *The Farmer's Wife*, January 1924, 279.

[444] John M. Murphy, "Inventing Authority: Bill Clinton, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Orchestration of Rhetorical Traditions," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83, no. 1 (1997): 71.

[445] Her story is quite striking. Edinger confessed that her house caught fire the day after she received the conference invitation, and she did not have time to mend her clothes before traveling to Chicago. She then revealed that she noticed other non-conferencing women at the Edgewater Beach Hotel casting judgmental looks at her as she walked through the hotel corridors, which made her feel out of place.

[446] Edinger, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 11.

[447] The most explicit example of this constitutive discourse is Managing Editor Ada Melville Shaw's August 1923 editorial, which asserted of the farm woman: "In short, she lives a well-rounded, surely-anchored, normal life centered about her own family group and in her home community. She is *natural* and when we cleave to nature we cleave to that which is normal, right, beautiful." See Ada Melville Shaw, "To You Who Are Real Women," *The Farmer's Wife*, August 1923, 63. Dan Wallace also participated in this discourse. Drawing a clear contrast between city and country life, Wallace declared: "Ideal hoe life, which is one of the great problems of the city, is best exemplified today on the farms of America because farm people still have time to think." Dan A. Wallace, "To the Happier New Year," *The Farmer's Wife*, January 1926, 8.

[448] Edinger, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 11.

[449] As agricultural prices plummeted during the early 1920s and voices announced the need for a rural "reconstruction," *The Farmer's Wife* declared: "There never has been a time like the present when farm people have thoroughly organized to help themselves." See "A Happy New Year for Farm Women," *The Farmer's Wife*, January 1921, 283. When *TFW* reported on the conference in its May 1926 issue, it announced, "This is the era of self-help." See "Farm Women Answer Our Question," *The Farmer's Wife*, May 1926, 272.

[450] Fink, *Agrarian Women*, 28-29.

[451] Farmer, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 17. For greater insight into farmers' historically hesitant dispositions toward outside assistance, see Roy V. Scott, *The Reluctant Farmer: The Rise of Agricultural Extension to 1914* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970).

[452] Cutler, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 17.

[453] Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 13.

[454] Popular during the 1920s, Fitter Family contests occurred at county and state fairs. Families would voluntarily undergo medical evaluation and those deemed "fittest" were awarded with ribbons, medals, and prestige, similar to how judges awarded the best livestock. These

practices represented a residue of earlier American eugenics efforts in that they attempted to typify or normalize the white body as the ideal specimen of citizenship. For a discussion of Fitter Family contests, see Steven Selden, "Transforming Better Babies into Fitter Families: Archival Resources and the History of the American Eugenics Movement, 1908-1930," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 149, no. 2 (2005): 199-225; Laura L. Lovett, "'Fitter Families for Future Firesides': Florence Sherbon and Popular Eugenics," *The Public Historian* 29, no. 3 (2007): 69-85.

[455] Powell, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 17.

[456] Mrs. H. M. Aitken, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 18.

[457] The U.S. Census Bureau notes that the causes of death related to childbirth amounted to 15.1 percent of all deaths in 1910; in 1920, those same causes of death were responsible for 17.6 percent of the population loss. See *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1925,* 75. While these statistics are alarming, they also, for a variety of reasons, underreported the actual number of women who died during or because of childbirth. For instance, the husbands and families of rural and farm women who labored and/or delivered their children at home might have been delayed in, or avoided entirely, reporting their wife's deaths.

[458] Statistics regarding historical rural maternal mortality are difficult to locate due to less record-keeping practices during this time and among these people. One data compilation I discovered noted that for cities containing less than 10,000 inhabitants and rural areas, the percentage of women who died during childbirth were as follows: in 1915, 5.5 percent; in 1920, 7.4 percent; in 1925, 5.5 percent; and in 1929, 6.2 percent. See Forrest E. Linder and Robert D. Grove, *Vital Statistics Rates in the United States, 1900-1940* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1947), 622.

[459] "Report of the Commission on Country Life" Drafts, Liberty Hyde Bailey Papers, #21-2-3342. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Box 24.

[460] Roosevelt, letter to Bailey, 24.

[461] Dubriwny, "Consciousness-Raising as Collective Rhetoric," 415.

[462] Rowe, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 18.

[463] Dimock, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 18.

[464] Aitken, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 25.

[465] Dan A. Wallace, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 25.

[466] A few examples include: Dan A. Wallace, "The Organization of Agriculture," *The Farmer's Wife*, April 1922, 799; Dan A. Wallace, "The Farm Woman's Responsibility," *The Farmer's Wife*, July 1922, 35; Dan A. Wallace, "Some Thoughts on the Times," *The Farmer's Wife*, December 1922, 215; Dan A. Wallace, "Real Help for Agriculture," *The Farmer's Wife*, March 1925, 105.

[467] Wallace, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 25-26.

[468] For instance, at President Harding's 1922 National Agricultural Conference, Mrs. Charles W. Sewall noted in her speech about the farm home that "we farm women will have to keep up the morale of the farm men until some of these reforms which are so emphasized and so needed are put into motion." See Sewall, "The Farm Woman and the Farm Home," 130.

Another example of Wallace's earlier argument along these lines can be found in Dan A. Wallace, "Your Share in Steadying Rural Life," *The Farmer's Wife*, October 1923, 131. Wallace asserted that, as "helpmates" to their farmer husbands, farm women were uniquely positioned as "the inspiring force that keeps the family going forward."

[469] Schuttler, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 26.

[470] Chappell, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 26.
[471] Dimock, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 26.
[472] Montmarquet, *The Idea of Agrarianism*, 234.
[473] Murphy, "Inventing Authority," 72.
[474] Wagar, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 27.
[475] Farmer, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 27.
[476] Griswold, *Farming and Democracy*, 36.
[477] Joan M. Jensen, "Telling Stories: Keeping Secrets," *Agricultural History* 83, no. 4 (2009): 439.
[478] Edinger, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 28.
[479] Cutler, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 29.
[480] Blakeman, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 29.
[481] Frysinger, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 31.
[482] Tipton, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 32.
[483] Stewart, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 33.
[484] Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation," 104.
[485] Hoover, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 34.
[486] *Report*, 47.
[487] Campbell, "Femininity and Feminism," 105.
[488] Wallace, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 34.
[489] Gore, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 34.
[490] Campbell, "Consciousness-Raising," 56.
[491] Wallace, "The Country Life Movement," 206.
[492] Roosevelt wrote in his autobiography of Congress' rejection of his request for $25,000: "The reply made by Congress was not only a refusal to appropriate the money, but a positive prohibition against continuing the work." See Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, 430.
[493] Wallace, "The Country Life Movement," 206. Wallace's father, Henry Wallace, made similar remarks in his memoir about the long-term effects of the CLC: "In short, the commission stimulated inquiry into country life conditions on all lines, the effect of which has been continuous. It was really the first step in awakening interest in the problem of developing a rural civilization worthy of the people in the country, upon which the permanent prosperity of the nation so largely depends." See Henry Wallace, *Uncle Henry's Own Story of His Life: Personal Reminiscences*, vol. III. (Des Moines: Wallaces' Publishing Company, 1919), 103-4.
[494] Mary E. Stuckey, "Jimmy Carter, Human Rights, and Instrumental Effects of Presidential Rhetoric," in Parry-Giles and Hogan, *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, 294.
[495] On the CLC culminating in the Smith-Lever Act, see Walker, *All We Knew Was to Farm,* 100. On the Smith-Hughes Act, see Danbom, *Born in the Country*, 170. On the broad support for this act among competing political and public interests, see John Hillison, "The Coalition that Supported the Smith-Hughes Act, or a Case for Strange Bedfellows," *Journal of Career and Technical Education* 11, no. 2 (1995): 4-11. The legacy of the Smith-Hughes Act is the Future Farmers of America, a national organization that formed in 1928 to prepare students for successful careers and lives in agriculture. The organization is still active today. See "FFA Mission and Motto," *Future Farmers of America*, accessed February 8, 2017, https://www.ffa.org/about/who-we-are/mission-motto. For the ACLA, see "Needs of Rural Life

are Told to Coolidge," *The New York Times*, November 14, 1926, 2; Wunderlich, *American Country Life,* especially the introduction and chapter one.

[496] Butterfield, "President's Address," 3.

[497] Gilman, "That Rural Home Inquiry," 120.

[498] "Beaverhead Women Hold Semi-Annual Conference," *The Dillon Examiner*, May 26, 1926, 1.

[499] Annabel Long Edinger, "Conference of American Farm Women in Chicago," *The Dillon Examiner*, May 26, 1926, 4.

[500] For the text of her address, see Mrs. G. Thomas Powell, "My Experience as a Farm Mother," in American Country Life Association, *Farm Youth: Proceedings of the Ninth National Country Life Conference, Washington, DC, 1926* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 29-34.

[501] Mrs. Ivon Dallas Gore, "Report of Home and Community Work in Western Region," in *Annual Administrative Report of the American Farm Bureau Federation, from November 30, 1925 to December 1, 1926* (Chicago: The American Farm Bureau Federation, 1926), 32.

[502] Schuttler, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 36.

[503] In June 1926, the ACLA reported on the conference in its monthly publication. See "What's on the Farm Woman's Mind?" *Rural America*, June 1926, 3-6.

[504] Dubriwny, "Consciousness-Raising as Collective Rhetoric," 395.

[505] Henry Israel, *The Farm Woman Answers the Question*, 34.

[506] Deborah Fink, *Open Country, Iowa: Rural Women, Tradition and Change* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 8.

[507] I want to note here that I am not suggesting that including more women in public, political contexts solves gender problems that are systemic. Instead, I am noting that the Chicago conference provided a rhetorical context for voices underrepresented in Roosevelt's original inquiry to speak.

[508] Campbell, "Femininity and Feminism," 103.

[509] Murphy, "Inventing Authority," 85.

[510] Hogg, "Including Conservative Women's Rhetorics," 404.

[511] "A Forum on 'Extension,'" *The Farmer's Wife*, May 1932, 14.

[512] I use the term "source" to acknowledge that scholars recognize various hosts, or sources, from which rhetorical agency emerges: humans, discourses, material objects, and others.

[513] Zarefsky, "Public Address Scholarship in the New Age," 79.

[514] Jodie Nicotra, "The Seduction of Samuel Butler: Rhetorical Agency and the Art of Response," *Rhetoric Review* 27, no. 1 (2008): 38-53.

[515] Jane Bennett, quoted in Cooper, "Rhetorical Agency as Emergent and Enacted," 421.

[516] Michael Leff, "Tradition and Agency in Humanistic Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 36, no. 2 (2003): 141.

[517] Royster and Kirsch, *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*, 147.

[518] Nicotra, "The Seduction of Samuel Butler," 47, 52.

[519] Geisler, "Teaching the Post-Modern Rhetor," 111.

[520] Twelve Southerners, *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1930); see also Bob Holladay, "The Gods That Failed: Agrarianism, Regionalism, and the Nashville-Chapel Hill Highway," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (2005): 284-307.

[521] Hogg, "Including Conservative Women's Rhetorics," 399.

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Appendix A: List of Conference Participants and Attendees

<u>American Country Life Association Committee on the Farm Woman Movement:</u>

1) Mrs. Charles Schuttler, Farmington, Missouri
2) Mrs. H. W. Lawrence, Monroeville, Ohio
3) Mrs. Dora H. Stockman, East Lansing, Michigan
4) Miss Grace E. Frysinger, Washington, D.C.
5) Miss Anna M. Clark, New York, New York
6) Miss Bess M. Rowe, St. Paul, Minnesota

<u>Members of the Conference of Farm Women:</u>

1) Mrs. Julian A. Dimock, East Corinth, Vermont – *Representing Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont*
2) Mrs. Nellie E. Blakeman, Oronoque, Connecticut – *Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island*
3) Mrs. G. Thomas Powell, Glen Head, Long Island – *New York, New Jersey, Maryland*
4) Mrs. Gilbert Scott, Elkins, West Virginia – *Pennsylvania, West Virginia*
5) Mrs. L. C. Chappell, Lykesland, South Carolina – *Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina*
6) Mrs. Ira E. Farmer, Atlanta, Georgia – *Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi*
7) Mrs. Sidney Stewart, Calhoun, Louisiana – *Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas*
8) Mrs. R. E. Tipton, Lexington, Kentucky – *Kentucky, Tennessee*
9) Mrs. Edith Wagar, Carleton, Michigan – *Ohio, Michigan, Indiana*
10) Mrs. Gene Cutler, Logan, Iowa – *Iowa, Missouri, Illinois*
11) Mrs. Robert C. Dahlberg, Springfield, Minnesota – *Wisconsin, Minnesota*
12) Mrs. Isaac Edinger, Divide, Montana – *North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana*
13) Mrs. Nelson Berger, Nehawka, Nebraska – *Kansas, Nebraska*
14) Mrs. Ivon Dallas Gore, Santaquin, Utah – *Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Colorado*
15) Mrs. C. D. Hoover, Santa Cruz, California – *California, Oregon, Washington*
16) Mrs. H. M. Aitken, Beeton, Ontario – *Canada*

<u>Special Guests at the Conference:</u>

1) Mr. Henry Israel, Executive Secretary, American Country Life Association, New York, New York
2) Miss Leonore Dunnigan, Field Editor, *The Farmer's Wife*, St. Paul, Minnesota
3) Mr. Dan A. Wallace, Directing Editor, *The Farmer's Wife*, St. Paul, Minnesota

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