

The Evolution of Gender Roles in FFA: An Analysis of the Covers of the FFA New Horizons Magazine from 1955 to 2008

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Introduction/Need for Research

The National FFA Organization, previously known as the Future Farmers of America, was founded in 1928. This organization educates future generations to prepare them to handle the challenges of feeding a growing population (Flatt, 2019). The dispute over who could join immediately followed the creation of the FFA. At the 1930 FFA Convention, it was voted that women were to be excluded from membership by the delegates (Flatt, 2019). However, some local chapters overlooked this and allowed women to participate in FFA activities. In 1949, women could qualify to earn a white FFA jacket by being an FFA “Sweetheart” since they were not allowed to wear the traditional blue corduroy. In 1969, women were allowed to obtain membership in FFA (Flatt, 2019; Moore, 2018). Female membership in FFA has grown and evolved over the past 50 years. What used to be a male-dominated program, the National FFA Organization reported that 43% of its membership is female (Flatt, 2019).

The way of woman is depicted in *FFA New Horizons* can be tied to gender stereotyping due to the roles they are displaying. Gender stereotyping are the roles and attributes assigned to a gender (Lawton, 2009).

The FFA Originally titled, *The National Future Farmer*, the magazine was created by the National FFA Organization in 1952. In 1989, the magazine was renamed *FFA New Horizons*. This magazine documents and presents current activities and events in the agricultural industry for FFA members, their families, and supporters (FFA New Horizons, 2017). The magazine has documented the growth and expansion of the agricultural industry over the past 70 years (*FFA New Horizons*, 2017). By analyzing the covers of *FFA New Horizons* in the past 56 years, we can shed light on the evolution of gender roles in FFA.

Methodology

Interpretive historical research methods (Schrag, 2021) and image analysis (Friel, 2000) were used to analyze the cover photos of the *FFA New Horizons Magazine* from 1952 to 2008. The time frame was selected based on access availability of the magazines online via the IUPUI University Archives Electronic Documents Collection (National FFA Organization, 2023). Data collection began by reviewing the covers of the *FFA New Horizons Magazine*. The initial data collection included 312 covers from volumes 1-55 from 1952-2008. Ninety-three issues contained covers included with at least one female and were selected for analysis. Next, the selected covers were analyzed for the following inclusion criteria: includes at least one woman above the age of 12 and at least one woman who has significant position on the cover. In the end, 83 covers met the inclusion criteria. Each cover was examined using the following four statements which were created and adapted from *Goffman's Frame Analysis* (Jameson, 1976; Lawton, 2009):

1. At least one man is present on the cover with a female,
2. The woman on the cover is doing something related to agriculture,
3. An example of a feminine touch is present on the cover (a feminine touch is defined as a woman using her fingers to caress or holds an object gently (Lawton, 2009),
4. The woman is displayed as an object of beauty.

Results

Table 1

Frequency of Image Analysis Statements Present in FFA New Horizons (n = 83)

Statements	1952 – 1959 (n = 8)	1960 – 1969 (n = 11)	1970 – 1979 (n = 8)	1980 – 1989 (n = 12)	1990 – 1999 (n = 23)	2000 – 2008 (n = 23)	Total
A man is present on the cover	8	11	2	4	13	10	48
The woman on the cover is doing something related to agriculture.	2	2	6	10	15	6	41
An example of a feminine touch is present on the cover.	2	4	0	4	4	0	14
The woman is displayed as an object of beauty	2	6	0	0	0	0	8

Conclusions/Implications/Recommendations

The women on the covers were depicted to hold a variety of roles including: an FFA member, a supportive family member, an instructor, an FFA sweetheart, and a state FFA officer. In the 1950s, women were pictured as objects of beauty, acting dependent and supportive. Until the 1970s, women were only pictured with a man and depicted completing actions or activities with a man’s assistance. Before the 1970s, women were never pictured wearing an FFA jacket unless it was the FFA sweetheart jacket. Relatedly, after 1969, when women were allowed to join FFA on the national level (Flatt, 2019), females began to be depicted as FFA members and in more independent roles. Early in the magazine, women were rarely pictured completing agricultural-related tasks, but that changed in the 1970s. The agricultural roles women were depicted doing were working with plants and animals, specifically horses. On the contrary, there was one cover that had women working with machinery. Besides this example, women were not shown with welding or woodworking like men, which relates to the roles and jobs dealing with machinery, welding, or woodworking are depicted as masculine jobs (Donelan, 1992). Overall, the roles of women in FFA have grown over the past 56 years as depicted by the FFA New Horizons. As we have found, gender stereotypes towards the role women play in FFA exist, but the characterization of women have changed from roles of beauty to being involved in agriculture and more independent. Overall, women are still being depicted in more feminine-related roles when it comes to agricultural jobs or activities. Additional historical research on the entirety of the magazine is recommended to provide more context on the role of women in agriculture and FFA throughout the decades.

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