In the Midwest, there are a large number of farms and farmland for crops and animals. A good amount of the land is owned by family farms. The families living on these farms rely on the crops and animals on their farms to bring in an income so they can support their families. In the 1980’s there was an epidemic that ruined many farms in the Midwest, and all over the United States, known as the farm crisis. During this time many farms couldn’t provide a stable income for the families living there. It was during this time, many farm families started looking for employment off the farm to make money for the family to live on. In the book “Beyond the Amber Waves of Grain,” the authors explain and talk about the change in labor on these family farms and how that effected the families working them. How did the farm crisis effect the division of labor on family farms?

For collecting and classifying data, the authors used a wide variety of characteristics that related to farm families and the responsibilities they had. These include total income, employment (on and off the farm), number of hours worked per week, age, education, number of children and much more. With these variables they look at family farms to see the change in work being done off the farm verses on the farm over a five year span. They could also look at the change in decision-making responsibilities and a change in the division of labor. They could also compare farm families just working on farm verse farm families where either the operator, the spouse, or both of them, took jobs off the farm for income.

They found that the responsibilities of decision-making was a little different. When it came to new things around the house or buying more land the decision we in the hands of both the operator of the farm and the spouse. When it came to farming practices or what crops to grow the operator had the final say. When it came to the division of labor there was still gender specific roles for work done on the farm. They found that men typically spent more hours working on the farm then their spouses. The men did the outdoors and more labor-intensive work while the women still did more house maintenance and gardening.

With the data they collected, they could see the difference in responsibilities and labor if the operator or the spouse gets a job off the farm. The first change was the