

The Rural Youth of Ross County, Ohio: Their Level of Living and Social Achievement

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FOREWORD

This bulletin is one of a series presenting the findings of the Ross County Rural Youth Survey for which field work was done during the last 9 months of 1940. Information was recorded on survey schedules through interviews with 1,602 rural youths 18 to 27 years of age. Collection of information was made under the immediate supervision of J. Donald McMurray of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. Warren E. Schmidt of the Ohio Agricultural Extension Service aided in the preliminary work of getting the survey started and in preliminary editing and coding of schedules. Final editing, coding, and tabulation were done by Lois E. Meeker and Robert L. McNamara of the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station and a staff of workers supplied by the NYA Student Aid Program at The Ohio State University. Professional and technical assistance was given at all stages of the survey by A. R. Mangus of the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station. Constant assistance to the entire study was extended by Fred R. Keeler, Ross County Agricultural Extension Agent, and by Donald Rehl, Assistant Agent. These men kept the many phases of the study in efficient orderliness and made suggestions concerning the statistical analyses and methods of presentation. Valuable assistance was given by J. I. Falconer, Chairman of the Department of Rural Economics and Rural Sociology of The Ohio State University and Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station. He kept the administrative threads of the study in order, made timely suggestions concerning operative procedures, and critically read the original manuscripts of the reports. Assistance was also extended by O. E. Baker and Nat T. Frame, both of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, whose suggestions, advice, and counsel were made all the more valuable by their close contacts with similar youth surveys conducted simultaneously in other States.

The following reports based on this Survey have been issued as mimeographed bulletins of the Department of Rural Economics and Rural Sociology of The Ohio State University and Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station in cooperation with the Ohio Agricultural Extension Service and the United States Bureau of Agricultural Economics:

The Rural Youth of Ross County, Ohio: Their Education and Training. Department of Rural Economics and Rural Sociology Mimeograph Bulletin No. 140. August 1941.

The Rural Youth of Ross County, Ohio: Their Home and Family and Community Life. Department of Rural Economics and Rural Sociology Mimeograph Bulletin No. 141. August 1941.

The Rural Youth of Ross County, Ohio: Their Employment and Occupations. Department of Rural Economics and Rural Sociology Mimeograph Bulletin No. 142. September 1941.

THE RURAL YOUTH OF ROSS COUNTY, OHIO: . THEIR LEVEL OF LIVING AND SOCIAL ACHIEVEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

One important element of the so-called rural youth problem is the widespread existence of social and economic inequalities among young people at any given time. Basic are differences in wealth and income among youth and among their parents. Associated are wide differences in extent of participation by young people in the use of goods and services which the present civilization has made available to those who can purchase them. The inequalities characteristic of rural youth usually arise not so much as a result of open competition among young people themselves, but more as a result of differences in levels of living among their parental families.

These basic economic inequalities among rural youth are of great importance in themselves. Of even greater importance, however, is the fact that they tend to generate in young people social attitudes of inferiority and superiority, and to array them in social classes with vastly different chances of attaining, during their youth at least, many of the life goals generally considered desirable and worth while.

At any particular time and in any rural locality, youth, like other persons, occupy different positions on a scale of living, positions which have come to be thought of as higher or lower in comparison with each other. This observation does not imply that rural people are stratified into rigid social castes from which none can escape, for over a period of time, some individuals rise to higher levels of living and others fall to lower levels. The present study is, however, concerned with the fixed status of a larger number of individuals at a given time, rather than with the changing positions of particular persons over a period of time.

Differences in achievement and in opportunities for achievement by rural young people of different levels of living form the main theme of this bulletin. Its major purpose is to show how closely associated with level of living are the chances of achievement by youth of maximum education, good health and health services, and of various types and degrees of home, family, occupational, community, and personal adjustment.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY YOUTHS

Of the 1,602 youths in the Ross County survey on which this report is based,¹ 56 per cent were male, 44 per cent female. Approximately 53 per cent lived on farms, 47 per cent in small villages of less than 2,500 population or in nonfarm homes in the open country. One third were 18 and 19 years old; 56 per cent were less than 22; and 74 per cent were less than 24 years old. About 71 per cent of the young men and 51 per cent of the young women were single, and 77 per cent of the young men and 61 per cent of the young women were living in their parental homes. The remainder had established, and were living in, their own homes.

¹Foreword.

METHOD

The method used in the present bulletin is a very simple one. It consists essentially in relating the achievements or attainments of youths in education, health, employment, home, family, community living, and personal adjustment to a simple measure of level of living. A previous Ohio study² has demonstrated the usefulness of certain household furnishings, equipment, and conveniences as measures of level of living. The presence or absence in the home of 10 items was found to be particularly useful in discriminating between families of different economic levels. These 10 items were: radio, telephone, electric current, washing machine, bathroom, separate dining room, central furnace heating, refrigeration, piano, and daily newspaper. Each youth included in the Ross County survey was asked to report which of these were present in, and which were absent from, the home in which he lived.

Extent to which household conveniences were present in homes of youth.—Of all youths included in the Ross County survey, nearly 8 per cent had none of these 10 items in the homes in which they lived, while 4 per cent had all of them. Radios and daily newspapers were found most often; bathroom and central heating were found in relatively few homes.

Of each 100 rural youths—

78 had radios
71 had daily newspapers
61 had washing machines
50 had refrigeration
49 had electric current
47 had separate dining room
30 had pianos
29 had telephones
11 had bathrooms
9 had central furnace heating
8 had none of these items

Classification of youth into level-of-living classes.—On the basis of their residence in homes furnished with various numbers of items of household conveniences, the rural youths included in the survey were classified into four level-of-living groups. To these groups, the descriptive terms "more advantaged," "less advantaged," "disadvantaged," and "greatly disadvantaged," were applied. The highest level, or "more advantaged," class was comprised of those living in homes having from 7 to 10 of the items. The next lowest level-of-living class, called "less advantaged," consisted of those residing in homes with five or six conveniences. The third highest level was composed of those termed "disadvantaged," those who lived in homes having only three or four conveniences. Finally, the lowest class, termed "greatly disadvantaged," consisted of those residing in homes having none or only one or two of the items of household convenience. This procedure resulted in the subdivision of the 1,602 rural youths into 4 advantaged groups, or level-of-living classes, each of which had approximately one-fourth of the total number of persons (table 1).

²Mangus, A. R., and H. R. Cottam. September 1941. Level of living, social participation, and adjustment of Ohio farm people. Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin No. 624.

TABLE 1.—The rural youth of Ross County, Ohio, classified into level-of-living classes

Level-of-living class	Number	Per cent
Total	1,602	100.0
More advantaged (7-10 items)	425	26.5
Less advantaged (5-6 items)	401	25.1
Disadvantaged (3-4 items)	365	22.8
Greatly disadvantaged (0-2 items) ..	411	25.6

CONSTANT FACTORS

In interpreting the relationships between levels of living, as here defined, and the various social factors, it should be stressed that these relationships are not affected to any important extent by differences in age or sex, or by farm or rural nonfarm residence of youths at the different levels. The average age of the young people in the four advantage groups did not differ appreciably. Slightly less than one-third of those in each group were 18 or 19 years old, and a little more than one-fourth were 24-27 years old. The remainder, a little more than two-fifths of each group, were 20-23 years of age (table 2).

TABLE 2.—Age of Ross County rural youth by level-of-living classes

Level-of-living class	Number				Per cent			
	Total	18-19 years	20-23 years	24-27 years	Total	18-19 years	20-23 years	24-27 years
All youths	1,596	505	669	422	100.0	31.6	42.0	26.4
More advantaged	423	133	182	108	100.0	31.4	43.1	25.5
Less advantaged	400	121	171	108	100.0	30.3	42.7	27.0
Disadvantaged	364	121	146	97	100.0	33.2	40.1	26.7
Greatly disadvantaged	409	130	170	109	100.0	31.8	41.6	26.6

The number of males per 100 females among all youths included in the survey was 127. The sex ratio among those in the four level-of-living groups did not vary more than 9 points from that average.

The percentage of youths in the different advantage groups who lived in farm homes did not show any extreme variation. About half of those in each of the three lower groups lived on farms, while the other half of each class lived in rural nonfarm homes. Of those in the more advantaged group, 59.8 per cent were farm residents.

LEVEL OF LIVING AND SCHOOL GRADE ATTAINMENT

The close relationship between level of living, as indicated by number of home conveniences, and the social achievement of rural young people is well illustrated by the school grade attainment of those permanently out of school. The total body of out-of-school youths included in the present study numbered 1,450. Of these, 47.7 per cent had advanced through high school or beyond; 25.2 per cent had gone to high school but had not graduated; and 27.1 per cent had not completed any high school grade. This pattern of educational attainment differed very widely among the different level-of-living classes, or advantage groups.

School grade attainment.—Of the more advantaged youths, comprised of those living in homes with seven or more of the selected conveniences, 76.6 per cent were high school graduates; 14.9 per cent had some high school training short of graduation; and only 8.5 per cent had no high school training. This educational level is in sharp contrast to the grade attainment of the greatly disadvantaged youth. Of these, only 14.6 per cent finished high school, and 54.7 per cent dropped out of school after completing only eight or fewer grades. The remainder, 30.7 per cent, went to high school but did not graduate. Between these extremes were found those classified as disadvantaged and less advantaged, and the average school grade attainment was in direct proportion to levels of living (fig. 1 and appendix table 1).

Of each 100 more advantaged rural youths—

76.6 graduated from high school
14.9 went to high school but did not graduate
8.5 did not go to high school

Of each 100 less advantaged rural youths—

57.1 graduated from high school
25.8 went to high school but did not graduate
17.1 did not go to high school

Of each 100 disadvantaged rural youths—

44.6 graduated from high school
29.3 went to high school but did not graduate
26.1 did not go to high school

Of each 100 greatly disadvantaged rural youths—

14.6 graduated from high school
30.7 went to high school but did not graduate
54.7 did not go to high school

Although young women, on the average, advance farther in school than do young men, the patterns of relationship between grade attainment and level of living were much the same for both sexes. Of the male youth, the proportion of high school graduates varied from 11.6 per cent to 71.8 per cent among the four advantage groups. The proportion of graduates among the female youth ranged from 18.4 to 82.6 per cent of the different advantage groups.

Reason for leaving school.—Why do rural young people drop out of school? A variety of answers was offered to this query, but most young persons said that they left school either because of a financial reason, because of lack of interest in school, because they were needed at home, or because they felt that their schooling was complete upon high school graduation. Of the 1,410 out-of-school youths who responded to this question, nearly equal proportions were in each of the four social and economic classes. As might be expected, a "greatly disadvantaged" young person was more than four times as likely to leave school for financial reasons, and twice as likely to leave school because of lack of interest or because he was needed at home, as because of a feeling of completion upon graduation. Contrasted was the response of the "more advantaged" youth, more than half of whom expressed a feeling of completion upon graduation, 2.6 times the proportion dropping out of school for financial reasons, 5.4 times the proportion leaving because of a lack of interest, and more than 6 times the proportion leaving because of home demands.

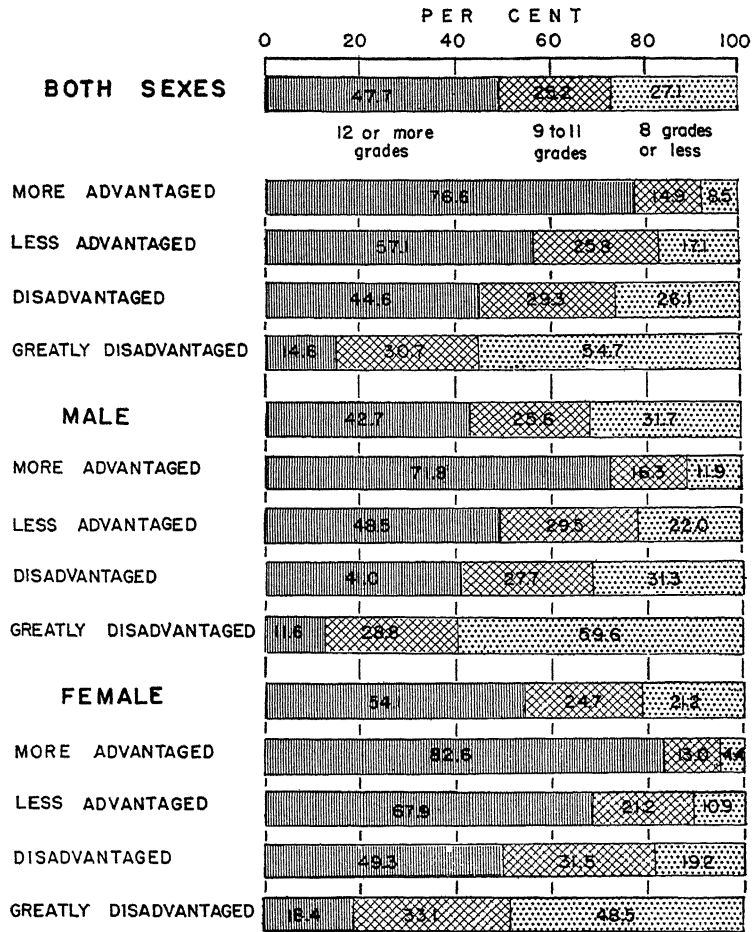


Fig. 1.—School grade attainment of out-of-school rural youth of Ross County and level-of-living class

Young men and women followed the same general pattern in their reasons for leaving school, but since girls are more likely to remain in school for a longer time, the proportion of out-of-school girls expressing a feeling of completion upon graduation was greater than that of boys (table 3).

LEVEL OF LIVING AND EMPLOYMENT AND OCCUPATION

The chance of youths' being employed at full-time jobs of any kind was closely associated with their level of living. Their chance of obtaining employment at the higher occupational levels also depended to a considerable degree upon the advantage group to which they belonged.

TABLE 3.—Reason for leaving school and levels of living, rural youth of Ross County, Ohio

Reason for leaving school	Number					Per cent				
	Total	More advantaged	Less advantaged	Disadvantaged	Greatly disadvantaged	Total	More advantaged	Less advantaged	Disadvantaged	Greatly disadvantaged
Both sexes	1,410	349	348	333	380	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Financial difficulty	391	70	70	107	144	27.8	20.0	20.1	32.1	37.9
Lack of interest	208	33	59	51	65	14.8	9.5	17.0	15.3	17.1
Needed at home	188	28	42	43	75	13.3	8.0	12.1	12.9	19.7
Feeling of completion upon graduation	465	180	147	99	39	32.9	51.6	42.2	29.8	10.3
All other reasons	158	38	30	33	57	11.2	10.9	8.6	9.9	15.0
Male	800	195	198	193	214	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Financial difficulty	237	35	41	69	92	29.7	18.0	20.7	35.8	43.0
Lack of interest	143	26	42	31	44	17.9	13.3	21.2	16.1	20.6
Needed at home	126	20	33	31	42	15.8	10.3	16.7	16.1	19.6
Feeling of completion upon graduation	246	97	72	56	21	30.8	49.7	36.4	29.0	9.8
All other reasons	48	17	10	6	15	5.8	8.7	5.0	3.0	7.0
Female	610	154	150	140	166	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Financial difficulty	154	35	29	38	52	25.2	22.8	19.3	27.2	31.3
Lack of interest	65	7	17	20	21	10.7	4.5	11.4	14.3	12.7
Needed at home	62	8	9	12	33	10.2	5.2	6.0	8.6	19.9
Feeling of completion upon graduation	219	83	75	43	18	35.9	53.9	50.0	30.6	10.8
All other reasons	110	21	20	27	42	18.0	13.6	13.3	19.3	25.3

EMPLOYMENT CONDITION

Male youth.—A study of the employment pattern of all male youth included in the survey made during the last 9 months of 1940 showed that 54.6 per cent were employed at full-time jobs; 22.5 per cent were employed at part-time work; 16.2 per cent were unemployed and seeking jobs; and 6.7 per cent were in school or for other reasons were not available for employment. Striking variations from this average pattern were found among the several level-of-living classes. From lowest to highest of the four classes, the percentage of young men fully employed ranged from 36.3, to 53.1, to 60.3, and to 68.8. On moving up the level-of-living scale, it was found that the proportion of men partially employed declined from 37.7 per cent to 10.0 per cent, and the proportion totally unemployed, from 21.2 per cent to 11.7 per cent (fig. 2 and appendix table 2).

Stated in terms of probabilities, the chance for a rural male youth to be fully employed, under conditions existing in 1940, was nearly twice as great for those in the more advantaged group as for those in the greatly disadvantaged group. Conversely, the chance of being totally unemployed and seeking work was nearly twice as great for the greatly disadvantaged as for the more advantaged male youth. The chance of being only partly employed was nearly five times greater for those in the lowest class than for those in the highest.

Female youth.—Equally striking differences in employment pattern were found among the female youth in the several advantage groups. The proportion of young women who were not in the labor force, that is, who were not working or seeking work outside their own homes, varied from 47.2 per cent of those classed as more advantaged to 71.5 per cent of those at the bottom of the level-of-living scale. On the other hand, the proportion employed full time at jobs other than homemaking increased from only 5.0 per cent of the greatly disadvantaged to 31.2 per cent of the most advantaged girls (fig. 2 and appendix table 2).

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

There were 1,150 youths who were employed or who had been employed at gainful jobs. When these workers were classified according to the kind of work they were doing or had done, the general occupational pattern was as follows:

Of each 100 workers—

18.6	were white-collar workers
6.9	were farm operators
13.6	were skilled nonfarm workers
13.2	were farm laborers working away from home
10.8	were farm laborers on their home farms
32.1	were unskilled nonfarm workers including domestic servants
4.8	were unclassified workers

Striking departures from this average occupational pattern were found among the different advantage groups, though the proportions engaged in agriculture and in nonagricultural occupations did not differ greatly in the several groups. The differences are shown in detail in table 4. The proportion of white-collar workers, mostly clerical employees, was more than six times greater among the more advantaged youth than among the most disadvantaged, being 31.9 per cent for the first group, only 5.9 per cent for the

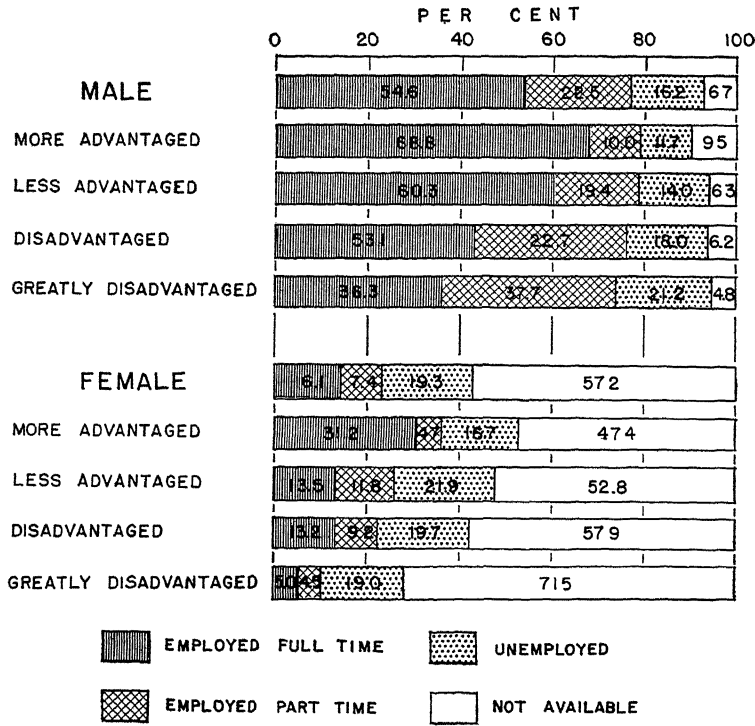


Fig. 2.—Employment condition and level-of-living class, Ross County rural youth

TABLE 4.—Current or last employment of Ross County rural youth by level-of-living class

Current or last employment	Number					Per cent				
	Total	More advantaged	Less advantaged	Disadvantaged	Greatly disadvantaged	Total	More advantaged	Less advantaged	Disadvantaged	Greatly disadvantaged
Total.....	1,150	310	287	267	286	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Agricultural:	355	101	73	83	98	30.9	32.6	25.4	31.1	34.3
Farm operator ..	79	32	17	19	11	6.9	10.3	5.9	7.1	3.9
Farm laborer:	276	69	56	64	87	24.0	22.3	19.5	24.0	30.4
At home.....	124	55	38	16	15	10.8	17.8	13.2	6.0	5.2
Working out ...	152	14	18	48	72	13.2	4.5	6.3	18.0	25.2
Nonagricultural:	795	209	214	184	188	69.1	67.4	74.6	68.9	65.7
White-collar.....	214	99	65	33	17	18.6	31.9	22.6	12.4	5.9
Skilled.....	156	41	46	41	28	13.6	13.2	16.0	15.4	9.8
Unskilled.....	243	30	63	61	89	21.1	9.7	22.0	22.8	31.1
Domestic service.	127	20	26	35	46	11.0	6.5	9.1	13.1	16.1
Other.....	55	19	14	14	8	4.8	6.1	4.9	5.2	2.8

second. On the contrary, the chance of being an unskilled nonfarm worker was three times greater for the greatly disadvantaged than for the more advantaged. The proportion of farm laborers working out increased with each of the four steps down the level-of-living scale, from 4.5 per cent of the more advantaged to 25.2 per cent of the greatly disadvantaged. At the same time, the proportion of farm laborers on their home farms showed an opposite trend, a reflection of the fact that the advantaged farm youth lived on the better farms, while the disadvantaged lived more often on the smaller and poorer farms, where their labor was not needed. One in every 10 of the more advantaged youths was a farm tenant or owner, but that ratio was considerably less for the other advantage groups, being only 3.9 per cent for the greatly disadvantaged (table 4).

ATTITUDES OF EMPLOYED YOUTH TOWARD THEIR JOBS

Only a minority of the male youth who were fully employed at the time of the Ross County survey thought highly of the jobs they held.

Of each 100 employed male youths—

15.5 said their jobs offered great opportunity for advancement
 58.5 said their jobs offered only limited opportunity
 16.8 said they were in dead-end jobs
 9.2 had no opinion

The jobs held by male youth in the higher level-of-living classes were considered much better than those held by youths in the lower classes. Of those classed as more advantaged, only 6.9 per cent considered themselves in dead-end jobs, and 25.2 per cent thought that their jobs offered great opportunities for advancement. In sharp contrast were those classed as greatly disadvantaged. Only 2.4 per cent of these felt that their jobs offered great opportunities, while 40.5 per cent said that they were in blind alleys. The complete picture of attitudes of the different classes of employed male youth toward their jobs is shown in table 5.

TABLE 5.—Fully employed rural male youth of Ross County by level-of-living class and attitude toward their jobs

Attitude toward job	Number					Per cent				
	Total	More advantaged	Less advantaged	Disadvantaged	Greatly disadvantaged	Total	More advantaged	Less advantaged	Disadvantaged	Greatly disadvantaged
Total	489	159	134	112	84	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Dead end	82	11	13	24	34	16.8	6.9	9.7	21.4	40.5
Limited opportunity	282	91	93	58	44	58.5	57.2	69.4	51.8	52.3
Great opportunity	76	40	16	18	2	15.5	25.2	11.9	16.1	2.4
Don't know	45	17	12	12	4	9.2	10.7	9.0	10.7	4.8

LEVEL OF LIVING AND HEALTH

Good health, along with educational training, an opportunity to work, and satisfactory leisure-time activities, is usually regarded as the rightful heritage of youth in America. The extent to which this advantage is not being realized in full measure points up the problem of youth.

Dental service.—The degree of regularity of dental care used as a measure of health revealed wide differences between the level-of-living groups. For the rural youth as a whole, 67.3 per cent had visited a dentist within the 3 years preceding the interview, and 41.3 per cent had obtained dental care within the past year. However, 16.8 per cent had not received dental services for 3 years or longer, and an additional 15.9 per cent had never been to a dentist. The chance of receiving dental service was greater for girls than for boys, but regardless of sex, it was greater for the advantaged than for the disadvantaged classes.

For the more advantaged boys, the chance of receiving dental service regularly, that is, once a year, was more than three times greater than for the greatly disadvantaged boys. Also, only 4.1 per cent of the more advantaged boys reported that they had never been to a dentist, but 37.2 per cent of the greatly disadvantaged boys had always been without dental services.

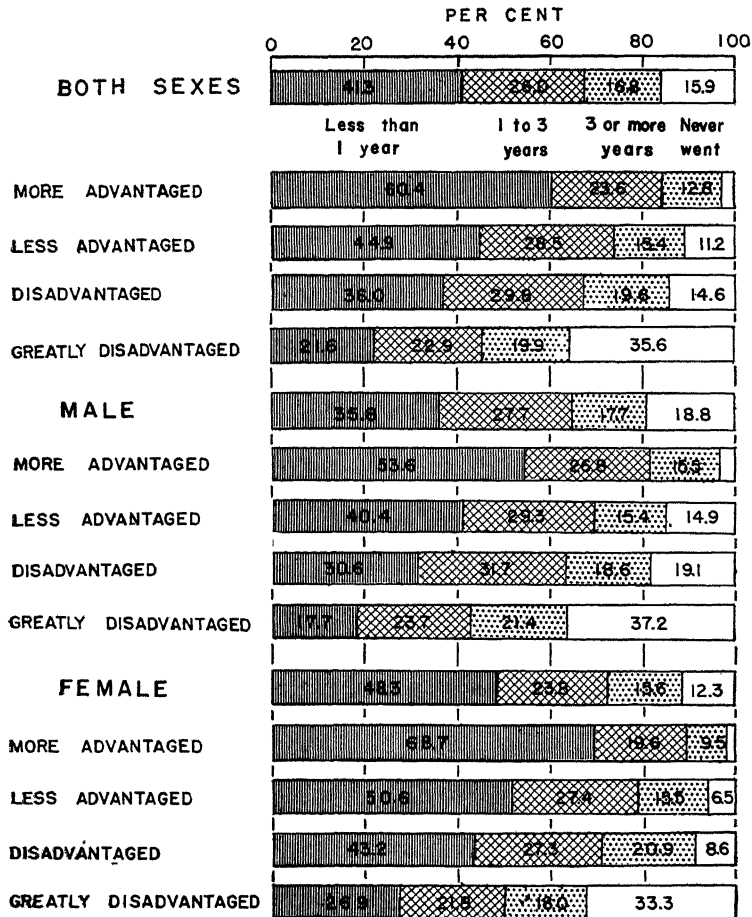


Fig. 3.—Time since last visit to dentist by Ross County rural youth and level-of-living class

Among the girls, the relatively favorable position of the more advantaged group is seen in the fact that more than two-thirds received regular dental service and that only a negligible proportion had never been to a dentist. The chances for regular dental service were progressively poorer through the other level-of-living groups, so that only about one-fourth of the greatly disadvantaged received regular dental service, and one-third had never been to a dentist (fig. 3 and appendix table 3).

Self-ratings of health.—Most youth, about 78 per cent, rated their own health as good or excellent; about 20 per cent thought themselves in fair health; and only 2 per cent felt that they were in poor health. Boys, generally, rated their own health higher than did girls, although the difference was not great.

The close relation of level of living and health is clear from the fact that 90.5 per cent of the more advantaged rural young men rated their own health excellent or good, that this proportion declined to 83.7 per cent for the less advantaged group, to 77.8 per cent for the disadvantaged, and to 74.7 per cent for the greatly disadvantaged. The relation between level of living and health was even more pronounced among the rural young women. Although 88.9 per cent of the more advantaged girls rated their own health excellent or good, the proportion declined to 80.2 per cent and to 73.0 per cent for the less advantaged and disadvantaged groups, respectively, and declined still further, to little more than half (54.2 per cent) for the greatly disadvantaged group (table 6).

TABLE 6.—Self-rating of health by Ross County rural youth and level-of-living class

Self-rating	Number					Per cent				
	Total	More advantaged	Less advantaged	Disadvantaged	Greatly disadvantaged	Total	More advantaged	Less advantaged	Disadvantaged	Greatly disadvantaged
Both sexes	1,583	419	397	359	408	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Excellent	142	63	42	26	11	8.9	15.0	10.6	7.3	2.6
Good	1,100	313	284	246	257	68.5	74.7	71.5	68.5	63.0
Fair	308	41	67	79	121	19.5	9.8	16.9	22.0	29.7
Poor	33	2	4	8	19	2.1	.5	1.0	2.2	4.7
Male	886	230	220	207	229	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Excellent	79	32	25	14	8	8.9	13.9	11.4	6.8	3.5
Good	645	176	159	147	163	72.9	76.6	72.3	71.0	71.2
Fair	151	21	35	43	52	17.0	9.1	15.9	20.8	22.7
Poor	11	1	1	3	6	1.2	.4	.4	1.4	2.6
Female	697	189	177	152	179	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Excellent	63	31	17	12	3	9.0	16.4	9.6	7.9	1.7
Good	455	137	125	99	94	65.3	72.5	70.6	65.1	52.5
Fair	157	20	32	36	69	22.5	10.6	18.1	23.7	38.5
Poor	22	1	3	5	13	3.2	.5	1.7	3.3	7.3

LEVEL OF LIVING AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

The extent of one's participation in community life has been found to be an important measure of the satisfactions obtained from life. This section seeks to show the relationship between the extent of rural youths' participation in organized groups and the degree of social and economic advantage possessed.

Membership.—About two of every five boys and three of every five girls interviewed were members of one or more organized social groups. However, great differences in group membership were found in the four advantage

groups. For example, as many as 70.6 per cent of the more advantaged boys, but only 13.5 per cent of the greatly disadvantaged, were members of organized social groups. Thus, the chance of more advantaged boys' having group memberships was over five times that of the greatly disadvantaged. Likewise, the fact that 84.9 per cent of the more advantaged girls were members of one or more organized groups, contrasted with only 25.7 per cent of the greatly disadvantaged, demonstrates that social participation goes along with a favored level of living (fig. 4 and appendix table 4).

Attendance.—Slightly larger proportions of rural youth, both boys and girls, attended meetings of organized groups than were affiliated as members. Attendance, like membership, varied with level-of-living class. Sixty per cent of the more advantaged boys attended meetings of organized groups, but for the less advantaged and disadvantaged, these proportions declined to 55.4 per cent and 40.5 per cent, respectively, and only 37.8 per cent of the greatly disadvantaged boys were attendants at group meetings. Although the proportions were somewhat higher, there were the same relationships between advantaged classes for girls.

It should be noted that in the two lowest level-of-living classes, the proportions of boys and girls who attended meetings exceeded the proportions who were members of organized groups. As a matter of fact, the proportions of greatly disadvantaged youth, both boys and girls, who attended meetings were two to three times greater than the proportions who were members. This finding may mean that the type of social organization which attracted the attendance of the greatly disadvantaged, and, to a lesser degree, the disadvantaged, was informal in character, maintained a loose authority pattern with relatively little emphasis on membership, and may have provided an opportunity for social expression on a more spontaneous, less formal basis (fig. 4 and appendix table 4).

LEVEL OF LIVING AND MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

Two basic adjustments that older youths have to make are occupational and marital. Problems of occupational adjustment of Ross County rural youth have already been indicated. This section deals with the subject of marriage and children of these youth. To what extent had the young men and women of different material levels of living married, and to what extent had they already begun families of their own? More specifically, the aim of this section is to show the differential marriage rates and differential fertility ratio among the youths of different advantage groups.

Marital condition.—The percentage of Ross County youths 18 to 27 years old who had married was very different for male and female youths, since women generally marry younger than do men. Only 28.1 per cent of the young men were married, including a few who were widowed, separated, or divorced. On the other hand, nearly half (48.6 per cent) of the young women were, or had been, married. Among both men and women, the marriage rate was in inverse ratio to levels of living.

Of the greatly disadvantaged group of young men, 37.7 per cent were married, a ratio 2.6 times greater than that for the most advantaged group, of whom only 14.7 per cent were married. The relationship between marriage rate and level of living was similar for young women. Among members of that sex, the percentage married was only 28.6 for the most advantaged, but it rose progressively to 65.5 among those in the most disadvantaged group. The

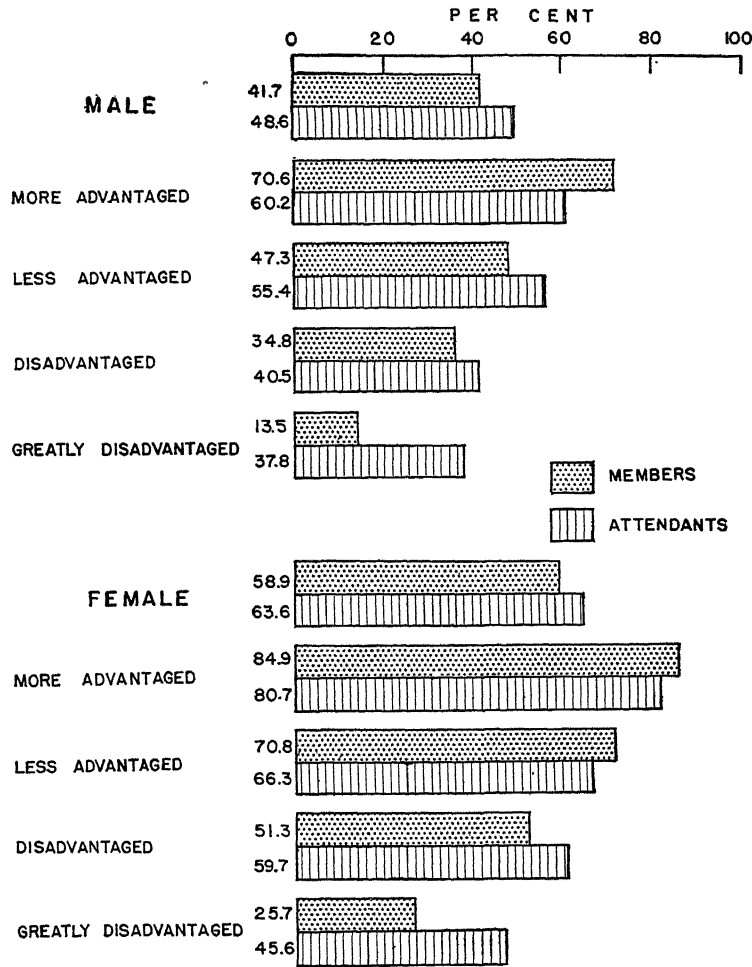


Fig. 4.—Membership and attendance in organized groups and level-of-living class, Ross County rural youth

chance of a young woman of the age period involved here being married was 2.3 times greater if she belonged to the most disadvantaged class than it was if she belonged to the most advantaged group. If she were less advantaged or disadvantaged as classified by this study, her chances of being married were intermediate (fig. 5 and appendix table 5).

Fertility.—For purposes of measuring differential fertility among young women of different advantage groups, the number of children borne by the young women per 100 of their total number in each group was used. Disregarding level of living, each 100 young women had borne an average of 58 children. This fertility ratio was, however, nearly four times greater for the greatly disadvantaged women, who generally marry younger, than for the

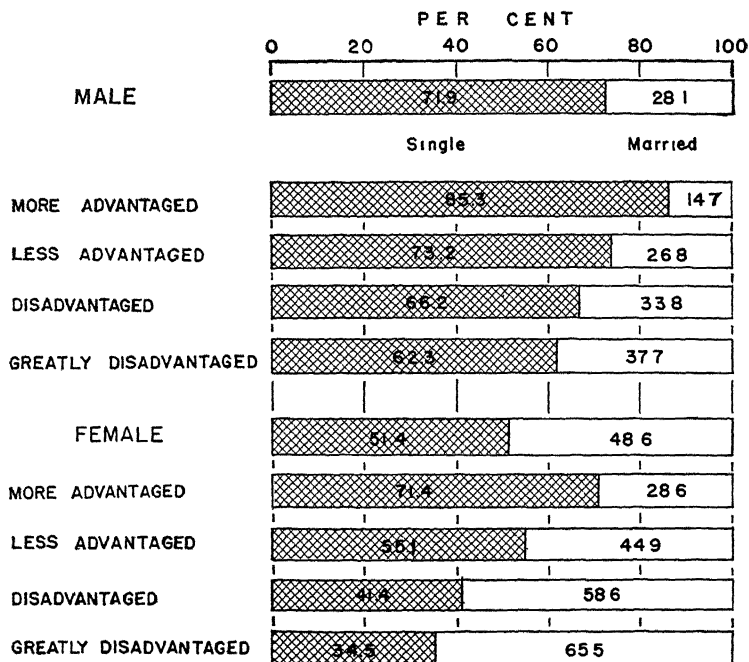


Fig. 5.—Marital condition and level-of-living class, Ross County rural youth

most advantaged, who tend to marry later and to limit the number of their children.³ Among the greatly disadvantaged, the fertility ratio was 98, or approximately one child for every young woman in that advantage group. In contrast, the fertility ratio was only 25 among the more advantaged, or only one child for every four young women in that group. Among the less advantaged, there was one child for every two young women, and among the disadvantaged, there were two children for each three young women; the fertility ratios for these groups were 49 and 66, respectively (fig. 6).

Since the age differences among these advantage groups were not significant, it appeared certain that the effective rate of reproduction was much greater among the lower social and economic status groups than among the more privileged classes. Although the women here considered were still in the earlier years of the childbearing period, the differences in fertility among those in the different advantage groups were already too great to expect that the differences would be overcome by the end of the childbearing period. The economic burden of child-rearing fell most heavily upon those least able to bear it, a fact which emphasizes a great need for some plan of equalizing this economic burden.

³In computing fertility ratios, marital status was disregarded.

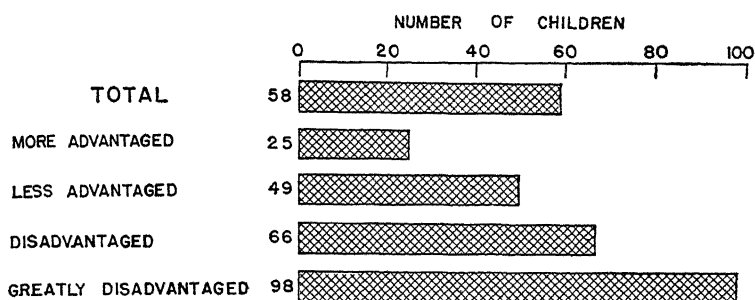


Fig. 6.—Number of children per 100 rural young women 18-27 years of age and level-of-living class, Ross County, 1940

LEVEL OF LIVING AND ATTITUDE TOWARD THE FUTURE

The preceding pages have indicated some of the problems faced by rural young people in the year 1940. Main concern was with some of the immediate problems confronting the age group usually referred to as older rural youth. Some attempt was made, however, to ascertain what the young people themselves thought about their prospects for the future. Young men and women live in the present, but they are generally more concerned with their possibilities for future achievement. How did these youth of 1940 feel about their personal future, and what were some of their immediate obstacles?

Attitude toward the future.—Of the youth as a whole, nearly two-thirds (64.0 per cent) looked to the future with enthusiasm, optimism, or satisfaction; 14.1 per cent were indifferent; and 21.9 per cent were worried or discouraged.

Rural youth of the more advantaged class were 1.5 times more likely to have great faith in the future, that is, to be enthusiastic, optimistic, or satisfied, than were the youth of the greatly disadvantaged class. Also, greatly disadvantaged youth were three times as likely to be worried or discouraged as were the more advantaged class.

Young women were somewhat more inclined to regard the future favorably than were young men. Still the larger proportions of enthusiastic, optimistic, and satisfied attitudes among the advantaged classes, and of worry and discouragement among the disadvantaged classes for both sexes remain similar to the pattern described for the total youth group (fig. 7 and appendix table 6).

Greatest personal problem.—Although a majority of rural youth reported no personal problem of importance, 36.8 per cent indicated that their most serious problems were getting a job and economic security. Other problems, such as social popularity and boy-girl relationships, were of minor importance.

The level-of-living classes in which these youths lived had a direct bearing on the incidence of personal problems reported. Fully two-thirds (67.0 per cent) of the more advantaged class reported no personal problem, and only 18.2 per cent were concerned about getting a job. Nearly the same proportions held for the less advantaged youth. Disadvantaged youth were about equally divided between those with, and those without, personal problems, but more than one-fourth of these young people were worried about getting a job. It was among the greatly disadvantaged that the consequences of inadequate

training and unemployment made their greatest inroads; of this class, 60.4 per cent were concerned with some personal problem, and almost all were concerned about getting a job or their economic security.

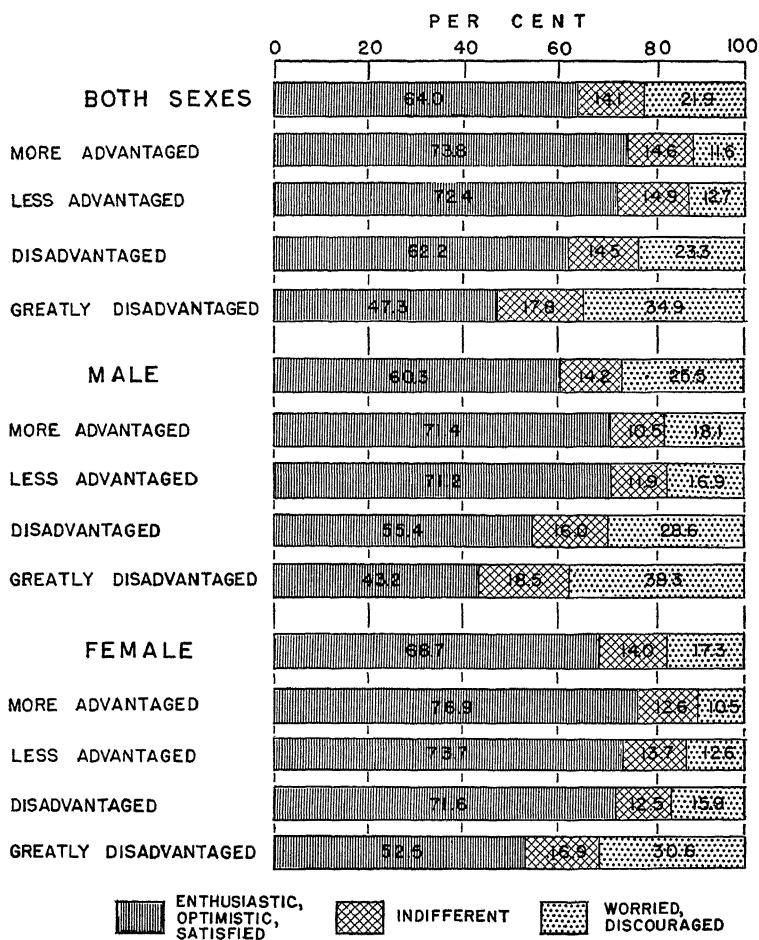


Fig. 7.—Level-of-living and attitude toward the future, Ross County rural youth

The pattern described was true of both boys and girls. Particularly striking was the finding that greatly disadvantaged boys were nearly three times more likely to be concerned about getting a job than were more advantaged boys. About 1 of every 10 girls in all groups reported social adjustment problems other than occupational or economic. These related largely to problems of home and family life (table 7).

TABLE 7.—Kind of personal problem concerning Ross County rural youth and level-of-living class

Greatest personal problem	Number					Per cent				
	Total	More advantaged	Less advantaged	Disadvantaged	Greatly disadvantaged	Total	More advantaged	Less advantaged	Disadvantaged	Greatly disadvantaged
Both sexes	1,530	402	386	348	394	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
None	860	269	251	184	156	56.2	67.0	65.0	52.9	39.6
Getting a job	421	73	74	98	176	27.5	18.2	19.2	28.2	44.7
Economic security	143	30	33	39	41	9.3	7.4	8.6	11.2	10.4
Other problems ..	106	30	28	27	21	7.0	7.4	7.2	7.7	5.3
Male	862	224	214	202	222	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
None	449	143	134	100	72	52.1	63.8	62.6	49.5	32.4
Getting a job	311	51	51	75	134	36.1	22.8	23.8	37.1	60.4
Economic security	62	14	17	19	12	7.2	6.3	7.9	9.4	5.4
Other problems ..	40	16	12	8	4	4.6	7.1	5.7	4.0	1.8
Female	668	178	172	146	172	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
None	411	126	117	84	84	61.5	70.8	68.0	57.5	48.8
Getting a job	110	22	23	23	42	16.5	12.4	13.4	15.8	24.4
Economic security	81	16	16	20	29	12.1	9.0	9.3	13.7	16.9
Other problems ..	66	14	16	19	17	9.9	7.8	9.3	13.0	9.9

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this bulletin, attempt has been made to point up a little-known feature of the situation of rural young people. Many studies have emphasized the disadvantages experienced by youth as compared with other age groups. For example, much stress has properly been given the disproportionate pressure of unemployment upon young workers during the prewar years, when the proportion of jobless was twice as great among them as among those older and more experienced. Here, the endeavor has been to emphasize that gross inequalities are found among youths themselves, that very wide gradations of privilege, advantage, and opportunity exist among rural youth, and that these extend to practically all areas of living, including education, employment, health, social participation, attitudes, marital condition, and fertility.

This study has shown that numerous and wide differences in living standards are found among rural youths when they are divided into different advantage groups on the basis of presence or absence of certain facilities and conveniences in their homes. The proportion of high school graduates was found to be 1.3 to nearly 5 times greater among the most advantaged youth than among those in lower level-of-living classes. The likelihood of the young male workers' having full-time employment at the time they reported was 1.1 to 1.9 times greater for the more advantaged than for those at lower levels in the scale of living. Among the four level-of-living classes established for this study, the proportion of youths who received regular dental care ranged from 21.6 per cent to 60.4 per cent. The proportion of male youth who belonged to one or more organized groups ranged from 70.6 per cent for the most advantaged down to only 13.5 per cent for the least advantaged; for girls, the range was from 84.9 to 25.7 per cent. The most disadvantaged young women, who had married in larger proportions, had borne, on the average, nearly four times more children than the more advantaged. The frequency of attitudes of satisfaction, optimism, or enthusiasm among youths increased as their level of living increased, while attitudes of worry, fear, or discouragement had an inverse relationship to level of living.

Level of living	Per cent of youth who—						Number of children per 100 women
	Completed high school education	Had full-time employment (boys)	Had regular dental care	Were members of organized group		Had favorable attitude toward future	
				Boys	Girls		
More advantaged	76.6	68.8	60.4	70.6	84.9	73.8	25
Less advantaged	57.1	60.3	44.9	47.3	70.8	72.4	49
Disadvantaged	44.6	53.1	36.0	34.8	51.3	62.2	66
Greatly disadvantaged	14.6	36.3	21.6	13.5	25.7	47.3	98

Such wide gradation in privilege, advantage, and opportunity among rural youth is not considered a healthy condition. The war emphasizes the need for strengthening the foundations of democracy, and in doing this, the equalizing, as much as possible, of opportunities and life chances of youth is of great importance.

Although the war itself has now created new opportunities for most youth, great numbers are ill-prepared for their new role in the war. About 45 per cent of the drafted men examined throughout the Country prior to 1942 were found physically or mentally unfit for the army. Five per cent of those examined were rejected because they lacked a fourth grade education. It is reported that large numbers inducted into the armed services have little conception of the meaning of democracy and very little notion of what the war is all about. The finding that three of every five of the greatly disadvantaged young men studied in Ross County had not gone to high school and that a similar proportion were unemployed or held only part-time jobs indicates how lack of skills and established work habits is a disadvantaging factor to many youths in the war effort.

In war and in peace, there is a continuing need for strengthening democracy by equalizing opportunities among young people, including the oncoming youth, in whose hands the future will rest. No concrete program of action for such equalization is attempted here. Some general directions for such a program can be indicated, however.

SOME BASIC NEEDS SUGGESTED BY PRESENT STUDY

Education.—The present crisis has focused renewed attention on the internal strengths and weaknesses of American rural life. It seems clear that large segments of poorly educated citizens weaken the nation in time of war, and that an educated citizenry is an indispensable asset to democracy in peace or war. Although the youth have had more formal education than their elders, more than one-half of the less prosperous youth under consideration in this report had not advanced beyond the elementary grades, and only 15 per cent were high school graduates. This low level of achievement signifies that many youths have lacked incentives for making the most of their opportunities for schooling.

Equalization of educational opportunity calls for improvement in educational programs. Such programs should be worked out to meet objectives appropriate to the times. All youth of the future should be trained for many aspects of life, including work, family life, health, use of leisure time, and citizenship. Of greatest importance is the need of programs for motivating

young people for educational achievement and for insuring them the opportunity to attend school regardless of the economic circumstances of their parents. Apparently one of every four Ross County rural youths considered his education ended upon completion of the eighth grade, but education in a democracy should not be thought of on an age or grade basis. Provisions for continuing self-education through adequate public library and other educational services are needed to serve out-of-school youth.

Employment.—Unemployment is being wiped out by the demands of agriculture and other war industries and by the induction of young men into the armed services. Very few of the 22.5 per cent of the boys who were working part time and the 16.2 per cent who were totally unemployed in Ross County in 1940 are still without full employment. There has also been a great increase in the proportion of young women employed since the survey was made. These statements are substantiated by a follow-up survey made in March and April, 1942, of those youths included in the original Ross County survey made during the last 9 months of 1940. The results of the follow-up study, published in 1942, indicate that 50 per cent of the young men and 38 per cent of the young women in the 1940 survey had moved away from the rural parts of Ross County by the time the restudy was made. The rate of departure was not greatly different among the four advantage groups. Nearly 20 per cent of all the young men had been inducted into the armed forces of the Nation; the other migrant youths had found employment in industries located in near-by cities. In some areas, the youth who had remained in rural areas were insufficient in numbers to supply the increased needs for farm employment to meet production goals. Even now, however, there are thousands of oncoming youths in the nation who are wondering what their chances of employment will be when they reach maturity and when the war is over. The maintenance of full employment for all, both in war and in peace, is a major need of this time.

Health.—War has made people particularly conscious of deficiencies in health and physical fitness. Opportunities to maintain health and fitness are unequally distributed among rural young people. The present study shows that only 21.6 per cent of the greatly disadvantaged class received regular dental care, but such care was reported by nearly three times this proportion for the more advantaged class. In addition, the wide variation among the youth in the ratings of their own health indicated a need for improved public health services, for periodic physical and dental examination, adequate public recreational programs, extended health education programs, and more adequate provisions for financing medical care.

Social participation.—The mental and social health of youth depends upon group participation. A major problem preventing equal participation is the unfortunate set of attitudes of superiority and inferiority that develop between young people of different material levels of living. No great unity of thought and action can arise from situations like those found in this study, where only about half the young people were either members of, or attendants at, organized group meetings, and where the proportion of group membership among the young men ranged from 13.5 per cent of the least advantaged class to 70.6 per cent of the most advantaged class. Now that the war effort has made wide participation and understanding critically important, the opportunity is at hand to make participation a vital part of a long-range program.

In particular, improved community recreation programs are needed which will ensure active participation for all rather than audience observation by most. Full incentive and opportunity for youth to form voluntary leisure-time

organizations regardless of economic status and to develop programs of interest to all participants need extension. At all times, but especially now, voluntary participation in worth-while community service projects might well be a major phase of a youth program in any locality.

Family life.—Population trends have greatly affected the rural family and family living. Of particular importance, is the distortion in the size of the family that has arisen as a result of the unequal way in which practices of family limitation have spread. The Ross County youth survey showed that the smallest families were in the group best able economically to provide for children and that the largest families were those most disadvantaged economically and socially. For example, the fertility ratio was nearly four times greater for the greatly disadvantaged women than for the most advantaged. There is widespread need of a sane program for equalizing the economic burden of child-rearing, for providing youth with sound education for family life, and for enhancing the stability of the family through promotion of satisfactory marital, parental, and filial relationships for all economic groups.

Attitudes.—Favorable attitudes of young people toward life may be an indication of how well youth are faring, of the extent to which they are realizing the goals they deem worth while. The serious handicaps of the least advantaged in other fields, such as schooling, employment, and health, all seem to be reflected in their attitudes, since more than a third of the lowest social and economic group were worried or discouraged about what the future will mean to them. This number was more than three times the proportion of unfavorable attitudes among the more advantaged class of youth. Normal social outlets and an equal opportunity to learn, to work, and to assume a position of increasing responsibility in the community should go far toward placing young people within sight of the values which rank high in their estimation and toward greatly improving their outlook on life.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX TABLE 1.—School grade attainment of out-of-school rural youth of Ross County and level-of-living class

Level of living	All youth				Male youth				Female youth			
	Total	12 grades or more	9-11 grades	8 grades or less	Total	12 grades or more	9-11 grades	8 grades or less	Total	12 grades or more	9-11 grades	8 grades or less
Total	1,444	689	364	391	812	347	208	257	632	342	156	134
More advantaged	363	278	54	31	202	145	33	24	161	133	21	7
Less advantaged	356	203	92	61	200	97	59	44	156	106	33	17
Disadvantaged	341	152	100	89	195	80	54	61	146	72	46	28
Greatly disadvantaged ...	384	56	118	210	215	25	62	128	169	31	56	82
Per cent distribution												
Total	100.0	47.7	25.2	27.1	100.0	42.7	25.6	31.7	100.0	54.1	24.7	21.2
More advantaged	100.0	76.6	14.9	8.5	100.0	71.8	16.3	11.9	100.0	82.6	13.0	4.4
Less advantaged	100.0	57.1	25.8	17.1	100.0	48.5	29.5	22.0	100.0	67.9	21.2	10.9
Disadvantaged	100.0	44.6	29.3	26.1	100.0	41.0	27.7	31.3	100.0	49.3	31.5	19.2
Greatly disadvantaged	100.0	14.6	30.7	54.7	100.0	11.6	28.8	59.6	100.0	18.4	33.1	48.5

APPENDIX TABLE 2.—Employment condition and level-of-living class, Ross County rural youth

Level of living	Male					Female				
	Total	Em- ployed full time	Em- ployed part time	Unem- ployed	Not avail- able	Total	Em- ployed full time	Em- ployed part time	Unem- ployed	Not avail- able
Total.....	895	489	201	145	60	701	113	52	135	401
More advantaged	231	159	23	27	22	192	60	9	32	91
Less advantaged	222	134	43	31	14	178	24	21	39	94
Disadvantaged	211	112	48	38	13	152	20	14	30	88
Greatly disadvantaged	231	84	87	49	11	179	9	8	34	128
Per cent distribution										
Total.....	100.0	54.6	22.5	16.2	6.7	100.0	16.1	7.4	19.3	57.2
More advantaged . .	100.0	68.8	10.0	11.7	9.5	100.0	31.2	4.7	16.7	47.4
Less advantaged	100.0	60.3	19.4	14.0	6.3	100.0	13.5	11.8	21.9	52.8
Disadvantaged	100.0	53.1	22.7	18.0	6.2	100.0	13.2	9.2	19.7	57.9
Greatly disadvantaged	100.0	36.3	37.7	21.2	4.8	100.0	5.0	4.5	19.0	71.5

APPENDIX TABLE 3.—Time since last visit to dentist by Ross County rural youth and level-of-living class

Level of living	All youth					Male youth					Female youth				
	Total	Less than 1 year	1 to 3 years	3 or more years	Never went	Total	Less than 1 year	1 to 3 years	3 or more years	Never went	Total	Less than 1 year	1 to 3 years	3 or more years	Never went
Total	1,468	606	382	246	234	826	296	229	146	155	642	310	153	100	79
More advantaged	399	241	94	51	13	220	118	59	34	9	179	123	35	17	4
Less advantaged	376	169	107	58	42	208	84	61	32	31	168	85	46	26	11
Disadvantaged	322	116	96	63	47	183	56	58	34	35	139	60	38	29	12
Greatly disadvantaged ..	371	80	85	74	132	215	38	51	46	80	156	42	34	28	52
Per cent distribution															
Total	100.0	41.3	26.0	16.8	15.9	100.0	35.8	27.7	17.7	18.8	100.0	48.3	23.8	15.6	12.3
More advantaged	100.0	60.4	23.6	12.8	3.2	100.0	53.6	26.8	15.5	4.1	100.0	68.7	19.6	9.5	2.2
Less advantaged	100.0	44.9	28.5	15.4	11.2	100.0	40.4	29.3	15.4	14.9	100.0	50.6	27.4	15.5	6.5
Disadvantaged	100.0	36.0	29.8	19.6	14.6	100.0	30.6	31.7	18.6	19.1	100.0	43.2	27.3	20.9	8.6
Greatly disadvantaged	100.0	21.6	22.9	19.9	35.6	100.0	17.7	23.7	21.4	37.2	100.0	26.9	21.8	18.0	33.3

APPENDIX TABLE 4.—Membership and attendance in organized groups and level-of-living class, Ross County rural youth

Level of living	Male					Female				
	Total	Members		Attendants		Total	Members		Attendants	
	Number	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Total	892	372	41.7	434	48.6	703	414	58.9	447	63.6
More advantaged	230	163	70.6	139	60.2	192	163	84.9	155	80.7
Less advantaged	222	105	47.3	123	55.4	178	126	70.8	118	66.3
Disadvantaged	210	73	34.8	85	40.5	154	79	51.3	92	59.7
Greatly disadvantaged	230	31	13.5	87	37.8	179	46	25.7	82	45.8

APPENDIX TABLE 5.—Marital condition and level-of-living class, Ross County rural youth

Level of living	Male			Female		
	Total	Single	Married	Total	Single	Married
Total	883	635	248	694	357	337
More advantaged	231	197	34	192	137	55
Less advantaged	220	161	59	176	97	79
Disadvantaged	204	135	69	152	63	89
Greatly disadvantaged	228	142	86	174	60	114

Per cent distribution						
Level of living	Total	Single	Married	Total	Single	Married
Total	100.0	71.9	28.1	100.0	51.4	48.6
More advantaged	100.0	85.3	14.7	100.0	71.4	28.6
Less advantaged	100.0	73.2	26.8	100.0	55.1	44.9
Disadvantaged	100.0	66.2	33.8	100.0	41.4	58.6
Greatly disadvantaged	100.0	62.3	37.7	100.0	34.5	65.5

APPENDIX TABLE 6.—Level of living and attitude toward the future, Ross County rural youth

Level of living	All youth				Male				Female			
	Total	Enthusiastic, optimistic, satisfied	Indifferent	Worried, discouraged	Total	Enthusiastic, optimistic, satisfied	Indifferent	Worried, discouraged	Total	Enthusiastic, optimistic, satisfied	Indifferent	Worried, discouraged
Total	1,571	1,005	222	344	878	529	125	224	693	476	97	120
More advantaged	416	307	48	61	226	161	24	41	190	146	24	20
Less advantaged	394	285	50	59	219	156	26	37	175	129	24	22
Disadvantaged	357	222	52	83	206	114	33	59	151	108	19	24
Greatly disadvantaged	404	191	72	141	227	98	42	87	177	93	30	54
Per cent distribution												
Total	100.0	64.0	14.1	21.9	100.0	60.3	14.2	25.5	100.0	68.7	14.0	17.3
More advantaged	100.0	73.8	14.6	11.6	100.0	71.4	10.5	18.1	100.0	76.9	12.6	10.5
Less advantaged	100.0	72.4	14.9	12.7	100.0	71.2	11.9	16.9	100.0	73.7	13.7	12.6
Disadvantaged	100.0	62.2	14.5	23.3	100.0	55.4	16.0	28.6	100.0	71.6	12.5	15.9
Greatly disadvantaged	100.0	47.3	17.8	34.9	100.0	43.2	18.5	38.3	100.0	52.5	16.9	30.6