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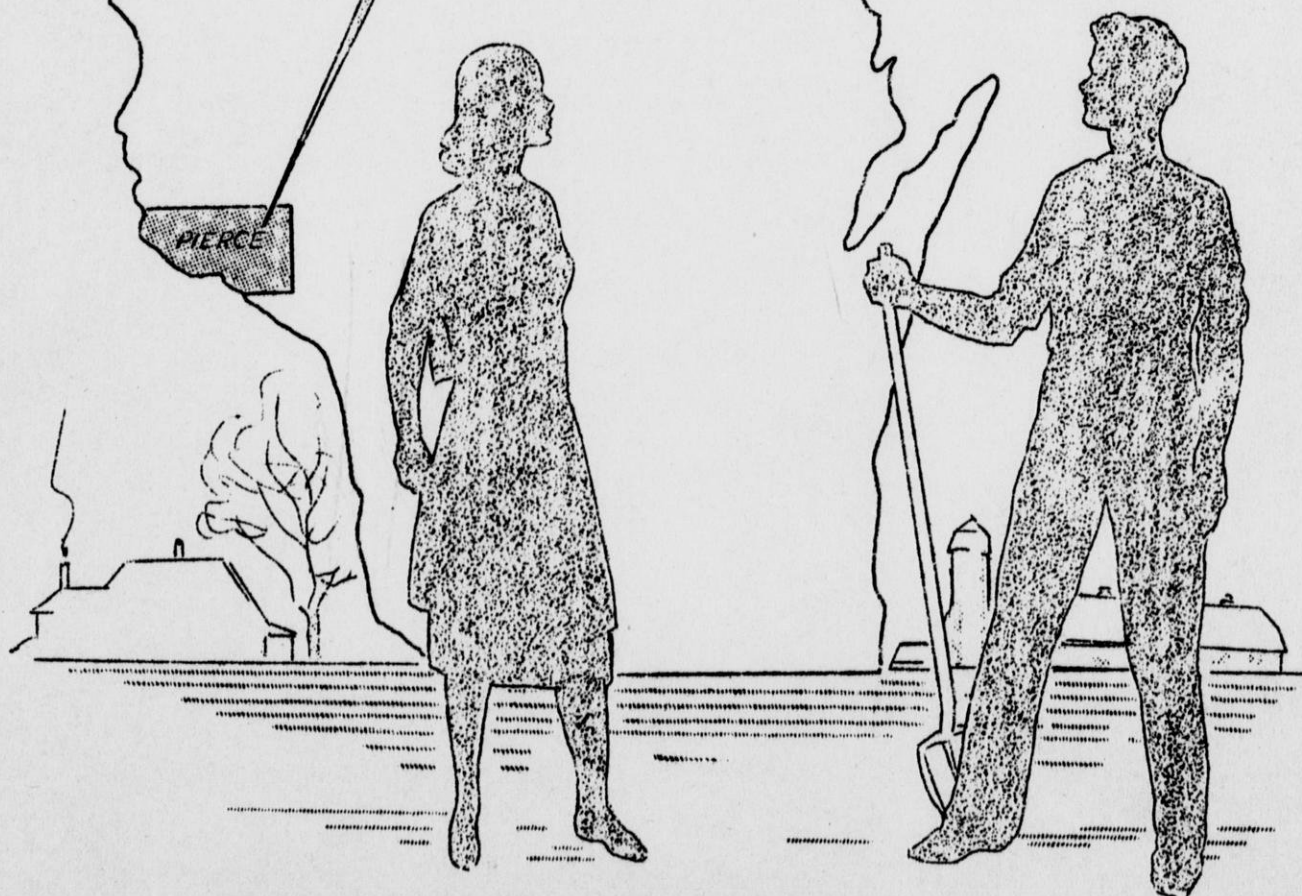
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# RURAL YOUTH

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## PIERCE COUNTY

Department of Rural Sociology  
 Agricultural Extension Service  
 College of Agriculture  
 Madison, Wisconsin



## RURAL YOUTH UNDER PRE-WAR CONDITIONS: PIERCE COUNTY, WISCONSIN

Who They Are; What They Are Doing; What They Would Like

1940 - 1941

Rural leaders in Pierce County, Wisconsin, as a part of their agricultural and land use planning program, decided that they needed to know more about the young people in their county. As a result of this desire this study of rural youth was undertaken in the winter and early spring of 1940. Assistance was enlisted from the College of Agriculture, a representative committee was brought together within the county to work out the general plans for the survey, a schedule was drawn up, and with the assistance of a volunteer committee in each school district included in the survey, the field data were gathered.\*

### Who Was Included in the Study?

This was designed as a study of young people in Pierce county from 14 to 27 years of age inclusive, and out-of-school. Although it was not so designed at the time, subsequent events made this a study of rural youth under pre-war conditions.



\*The major responsibility at this stage of the study was carried by Vernon Peroutky, Ass't. Co. Agr. Agent; with some assistance from J. Donald McMurray of the Bureau of Agr. Econ., USDA; H. G. Seyforth, Co. Agr. Agent; Edna Langseth, Co. Home Dem. Agent; and A. F. Wileden, Rural Sociology Dept. of the College of Agriculture. The tabulations were later made under the supervision of Don S. Anderson of the Agr. Econ. Dept., College of Agriculture, and member of the Land Grant College, BAE Committee. This report was prepared by A. F. Wileden, Rural Sociology Dept.; with the assistance of H. G. Seyforth, Pierce County Agric. Agent; Don S. Anderson, Agr. Economics Dept.; and Byron Jorns, Agr. Journalism Dept., Wisconsin College of Agriculture.



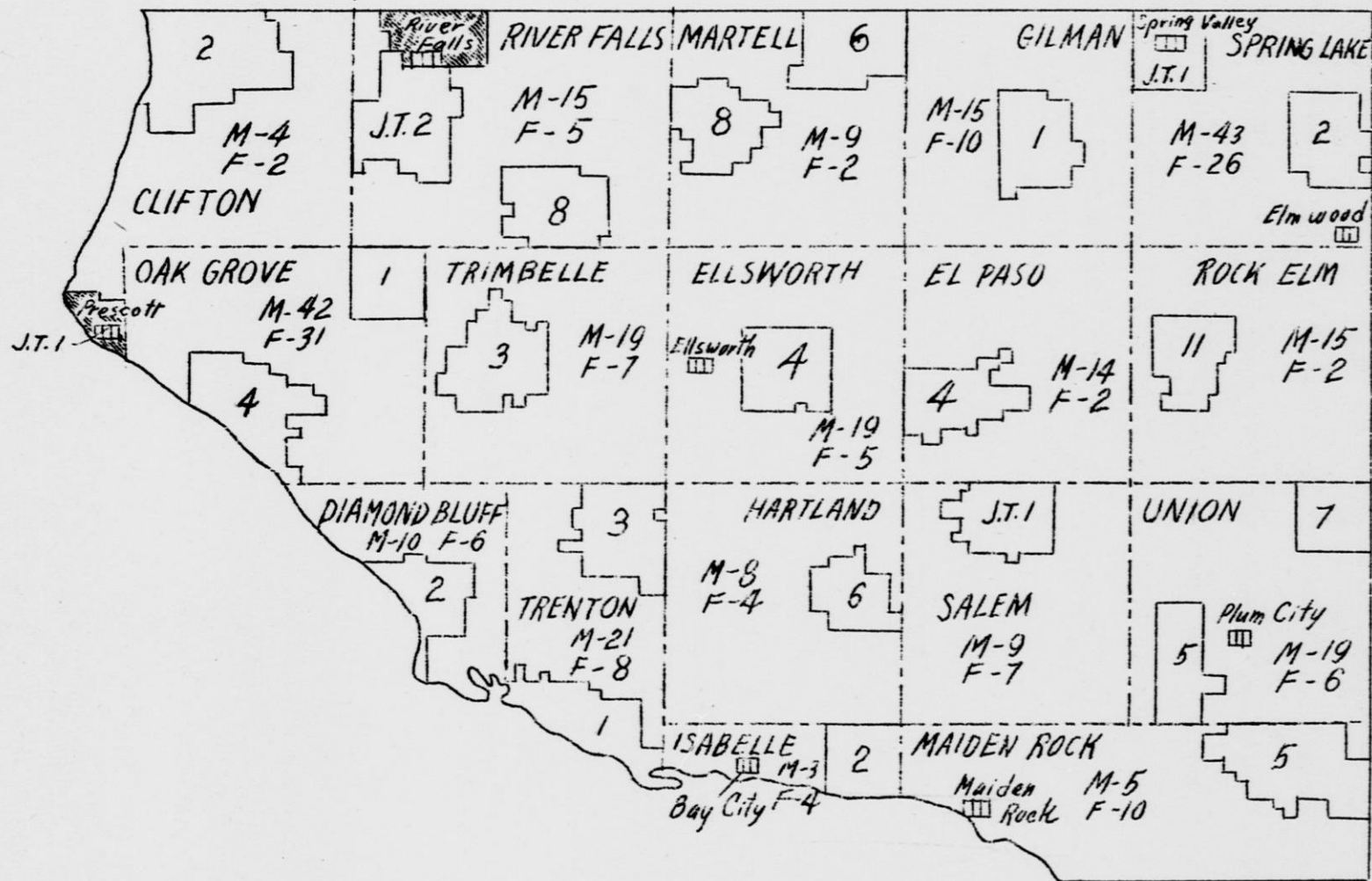
The sample included 24 school districts - This study attempted to gather data from all of these young people living in 24 of the county's 116 school districts. This was believed to be about a 20% sample of the county and to fairly illustrate the situation in the entire county. Factors watched in selecting the districts for study included types of farming areas, nationality, mortgage indebtedness, soil types, religious groupings, nearness to towns and cities influence of the river and river fishing, and topography. The 24 school districts included two of the eight incorporated villages in the county.

All told 407 usable replies were secured in this study. These ranged from 6 to 58 replies per school district. They came from every township in the county ranging from 7 in Isabelle to 73 in Oak Grove.

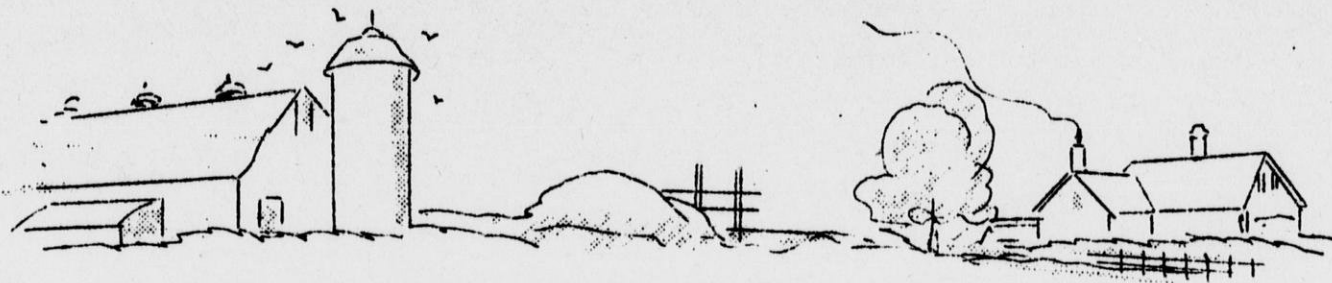
There were about twice as many males as females - When the returns were all in, the analysis revealed about twice as many males as females. The replies included 270 males and 137 females. It is noted that the proportion of girls living on farms is much larger in the 14-20 years of age group (about 73%) than in the 21 - 27 years of age group (about 44%).



About half have always lived in the same school district - Fifty-two percent of these young people had always lived in the same school district in which they were then living. Farm youth, however, had moved less than village youth, and the males had moved less than the females. Furthermore, while there was practically no difference for the males, the females in the 21 - 27 age group had moved from their original school district much more than the 14 - 20 age group.



24 SCHOOL DISTRICTS included in  
 PIERCE COUNTY OUT-OF-SCHOOL RURAL YOUTH SURVEY  
 - 1940 -



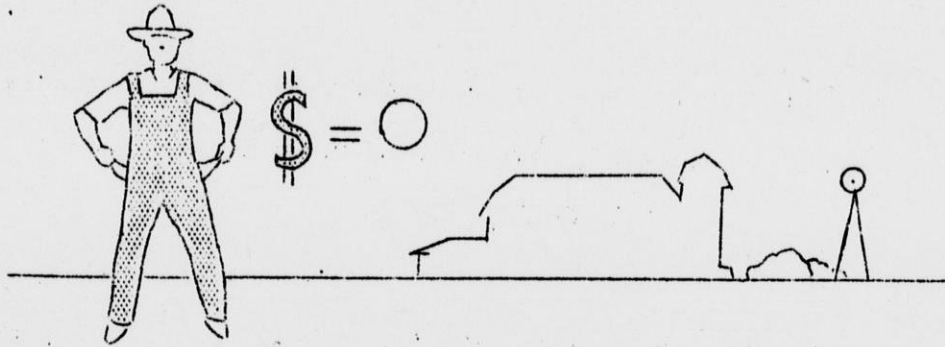
Most of the fathers of these youth were farmers - Sixty-two percent of all the youth said that their fathers were farmers by occupation. Eighty-three percent of the youth living on farms said their fathers were farmers, while 18% of the youth living in villages said their fathers were farmers. The only other occupation of parents that ranked high in the comparison was that 11.5 per cent of the village youth reported their fathers to be merchants or salesmen.

Fathers' farms range from 20 to 139 crop acres - Of the fathers who run farms, over three-fourths range from 20 to 139 crop acres. In the class of farms 20 - 59 crop acres there is an average of 44.3 crop acres per farm, in the 60 - 99 class there is an average of 75.5 crop acres, and in the 100 - 139 class there is an average of 112.8 crop acres. The average total number of crop acres per farm for all youth reporting was 98.6 acres.

About one-fifth were married - About 21 percent of these young people were married. The proportion for the females was almost one out of three and for the males one out of six although the aggregate numbers were 40 and 41 respectively. The proportion married was higher for farm than for village girls but about the same for farm and village boys. Naturally the proportion of married youth was highest in the upper age groups, but about one-seventh of the females 20 or less years of age were married.

#### Employment

Other studies of youth have indicated that employment constituted a serious problem. Attention was, therefore, given to securing data in that field in this study.



Most young people are working at their parent's home, without cash payment

- About 62% of the unmarried youth were working at their parent's home, three-fourths of them, according to their replies, without cash payment. There were, of course, many more farm than village youth working at their parent's home, and of those who were, a higher proportion worked without regular wages. Even some married youth reported working at their parent's home, about half of these without cash payment.

Most of these young people worked at home because they were "needed at home". This was the case of about 35% of the farm males, about 30% of the farm females, and about 62% of the village females. On the other hand about 62% of the village males said they were not working away from home because they were "unable to find work".

Most of young men farming on their own were hired men - About 58 percent of the young men farming on their own were hired men, 22% were renters, 11% were owners, and 7% were sharing the farm. The proportion of hired men was higher for the unmarried youth whereas of the renters the proportion was higher for the married youth. The average number of crop acres per farm was about 77.

Over half of all the youth reported some work with pay during the past twelve months - Of the 342 youth who replied to this question, about 62% reported some work with pay during the past twelve months. For the male farm youth this was principally farming and for male village youth it was farming and office work.



For farm girls it was mostly housework, but for village girls office work ranked equally important with housework.

Most of male youth had had farming experience, females housework - An attempt was made to discover what previous occupations these youth had followed. About 59% of the farm males and 35% of the village males had had farming experience. The building trades and trucking also ranked high for the village males. Also about 82% of the farm females and 50% of the village females had done housework. Office work ranked second highest with the females having engaged about 44% of the village girls and 22% of the farm girls.

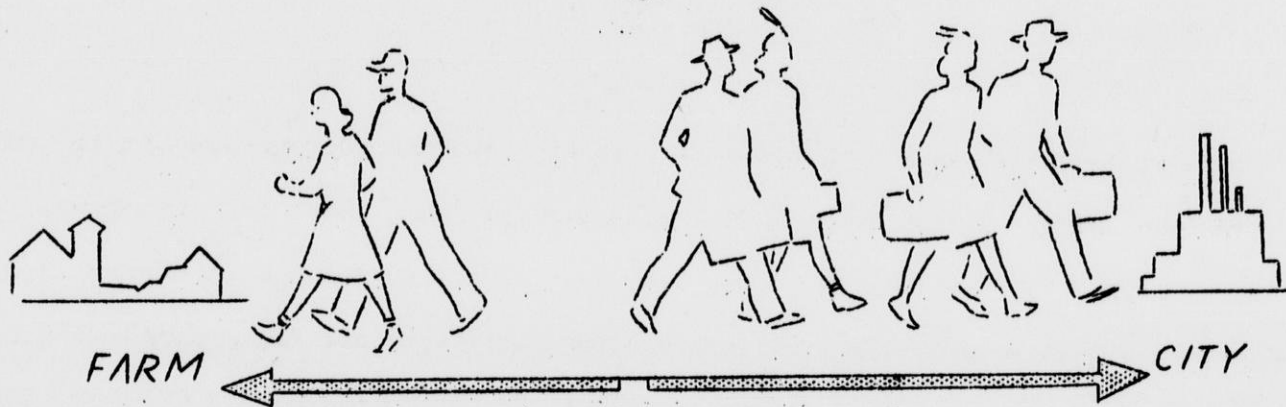
Only about 15 percent of all of these youth had participated in any government work project---FERA, CWA, WPA, NYA, or CCC. Slightly more of the males had participated than females, and slightly more of the farm than village males.

Amount of cash income is very low - Over 70% of all of these youth reported an annual income of less than \$400. Almost half of these was less than \$100. The males had a slightly higher average income than the females, and the village youth was slightly higher than for farm youth.

About one-third carry life insurance - About 32% of these youth carried some form of life insurance. More male youth carry insurance than female, 37% as compared with 20%, and more village youth of both sexes carry insurance than farm youth.

Farming, housework, office work, and military service are the preferred occupations - An inquiry was made as to what occupation these youth would most like to follow. There was a variety of replies and some youth gave more than one preference. The most frequent was for farming including about 34% of all of the males and about 45% of the farm males. The village males preferred aviation, army, and





and many with truck or bus driving almost as popular. For females the most frequent preference of village girls was office work as expressed by 39%, and of farm girls was housework expressed by 36%.

Almost two-thirds were satisfied with their present employment opportunities - An inquiry was made as to whether these youth were satisfied in their present position. It was significant to discover that almost two-thirds said they were satisfied, but about one-third reported that they were not satisfied. Fewer boys were satisfied than girls, and fewer village youth than farm youth.

#### Recreation and Leisure

The importance of recreation and social life ranked high in the thinking of these young people.

Listening to radio, going to movies, and reading are the leisure time activities in which most take part - About 92% of all of these young people report listening to the radio, 84% report going to movies, and 82% reading newspapers. The participation of village youth is slightly higher than farm youth in each of these activities. When the males and females are compared, the participation of the females is slightly higher than for the males. The highest participants of all are the village females.

Over half feel they want more recreation activities than they are now getting

- About 53% of all of these young people indicated that they wanted more recreation activities than they were getting. About 60% of the females expressed this desire, and about 50% of the males. This desire was slightly higher for the village youth than for the farm youth, and slightly higher for the youth under 20 years of age than the youth over 20 years of age.

Hunting and fishing, hobbies most desired by males; cooking and sewing by females - An expression was sought of what interests or hobbies these youth would most like to develop if they had an opportunity. The most pronounced preference was expressed by the females, 70% indicating cooking and 68% sewing. These were the popular preferences for females both under and over 20 years of age, and living on the farm or in the village.

Of the males about 55% expressed a preference for hunting and 54% a preference for fishing. Baseball also ranked high being about 40%, and mechanics 34%. These were the most frequent preferences of all male youth whether living on farms or in village and regardless of age. However, basketball also ranked high among village youth.

Very few are making use of a recreation hall, but most of them would use one if it were available - The number of recreation halls available is very limited, and only about 13% reported they were using such facilities at the present time. The males were using them slightly more than the females, and the village more than the farm youth, reflecting probably both their location and facilities available.

However, about 77% of all of these young people say they would use such a hall if it were available. The males express a slightly greater desire to use



them (83%) than the females (74%). Also, although they already have more such facilities available, village youth express a somewhat greater willingness to use them than farm youth, the proportions being 86% as compared with 72%.

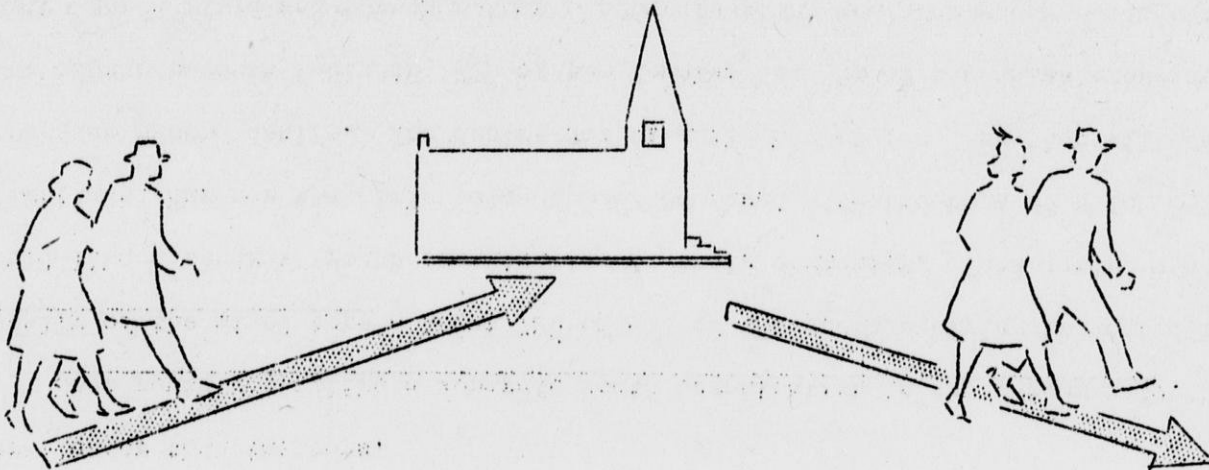
#### Organization and Public Affairs

To what extent do youth share in the group and civic life of the communities in which they live? This survey included inquiry in that field.

Over half report no organizations with programs of interest to young people - About 61% of these young people reported that there were no organizations in their community with programs of interest to young people. This proportion was about the same for farm and village youth. Of those available, about 18% said they were church young people's societies, and 16% said they were 4H clubs.

Church and church organizations receive the most support from youth - However, although they do not have programs of special interest to them, youth do attend meetings of a number of organizations. About 50% report attending church, and about 27% attend church young peoples groups. These percentages are about the same for both sexes. However, more village youth than farm youth report church attendance, the figures being about 59% as compared with 45%. On the other hand more farm than village youth take part in church young peoples groups, the figures

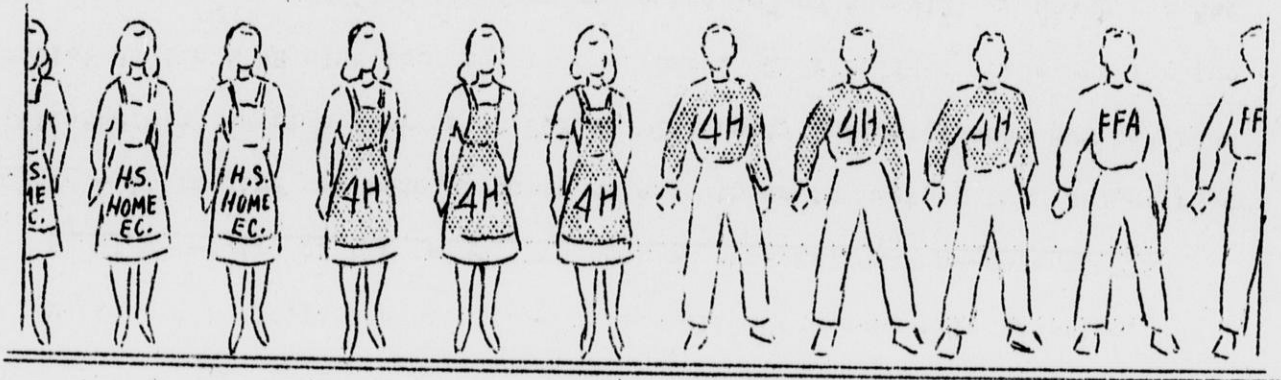




being 33% as compared with 17%. These comparisons again are about the same for both sexes. About 20% of these young people, including 25% of the males and 12% of the females report attending no organization meetings of any kind.

About one-fourth have some group leadership responsibility - About 26% of all of the youth reporting indicated some sort of office in at least one organization. This was twice as high for the females (40%) as for the males (20%), and just a trifle higher for village (30%) than farm youth (25%). This organization leadership responsibility was highest in church young people groups (13%), Sunday school (10%), and church (3%). These figures are based on 144 replies, about one-third of the youth included in the study. It is probable that those who have no leadership responsibilities are the ones who did not answer this question.

About one-third of the males have been 4H members, and one-seventh FFA members - An inquiry was made of these male youth as to whether they had ever been affiliated with 4H club work or an F.F.A. The reply indicated that 32% had been affiliated with a 4H club for one or more years. Over half of these was for two years or less. About 38% of the farm males and 18% of the village males had had 4H affiliations.



About 15% had had F.F.A. affiliation, being about 17% of the farm males and 11% of the village males. Two-thirds of these had been for two years or less.

About three-tenths of the females have been 4H members, and one-fourth have been high school home economics club members - A similar question asked of the girls indicated that a lower proportion (29%) had been 4H members and a higher proportion (25%) had been high school home economics club members. This proportion of 4H members was higher for farm girls (35%) and lower for village girls (21%), but high school home economic club membership was lower for farm girls (19%) and higher for village girls (33%). Girls seem to have stayed in both 4H and home economics club work longer than the boys.

Most youth would like a separate youth organization in their community, usually of the mixed type - About 72% of all of the youth replying indicated they would like a separate youth organization in their community. This desire was slightly higher for the girls being 86% as compared with the boys of which 65% expressed such a desire. The desire was slightly higher for farm than village youth. Most of these youth including 72% of the females and 55% of the males expressed the desire for a mixed group rather than a separate young men's or young women's group.

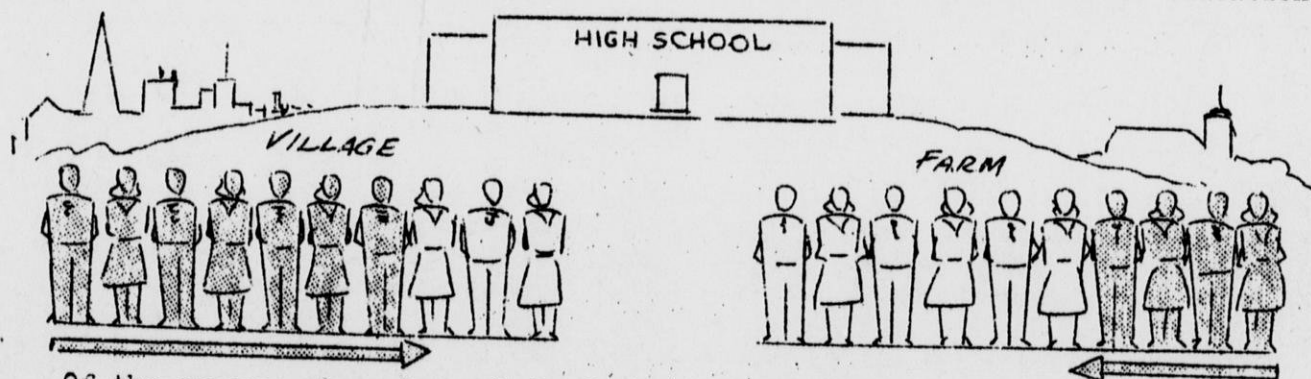
These youth would like such groups to emphasize recreation and sociability, approximately one-third of all youth replying indicating each of these fields. About one-sixth expressed a desire for emphasis on sports, education, or cooperation.

About all youth over 21 years of age vote - One hundred and ninety-eight of the youth over 21 years of age answered the question as to whether they vote as citizens of the U. S. About 95% indicated that they did vote, this ratio being about the same for farm and village youth. Only one of the youth reported that he was not a citizen of the U. S.

### Education

Although this was a study of out-of-school youth, the attempt was made to discover how much schooling these youth had had and why they did not go farther.

Seventy-two percent of village youth, but only 45% of farm youth went to high school - Slightly over half of all of these youth went to high school. Of these 51%, about 32% or about two-thirds graduated. However, over 72% of the village youth went to high school, over two-thirds of them graduating, whereas only 45% of the farm youth went to high school of which only a little over half graduated. Reversely about 55% of the farm youth stopped their education with the eighth grade or less, while only 25% of the village youth were limited to this amount of formal education.



Of the reasons given for not further continuing their formal education, 35% said they were needed at home (this included 42% of the farm youth and 19% of the village youth), 28% said they were financially unable to go (this embracing 36% of the village youth and 25% of the farm youth), and 25% said they had no desire to go.



About one-seventh have had specialized education, often beyond high school - Fifty-six, or about 14% of all the youth included in this study, reported some form of specialized education. Of these 41% reported attending a State Teachers College, and 23% reported attending College or University. About 20% reported attending an Agricultural Short Course. State Teachers College attendance ranked high among both farm and village youth. On the other hand, village youth attend college or university while farm youth attend the Agricultural Short Course.

Some of the reasons for not continuing their specialized education are different from not continuing in high school. "Financially unable" still ranks as being important, but "secured a job" is also an important deterrent. "Needed at home" is still important with farm youth.

Agriculture and home economics are the most frequent vocational courses - Less than one-third of all of the youth included in the survey reported some training in special vocational courses beyond the elementary school. Of these about 75% of the males reported such training in agriculture. This was higher for farm than village youth. About 69% of the females reported training in home economics. This was about the same for farm and village youth. Another field that ranked almost equally high among males and females and farm and village youth was physical education. Commercial training ranked high among the females and among village youth.

Very few report special out-of-school (adult) education training - Only 33 of the 407 youth included in this study reported any form of special out-of-school or adult educational training. Of those that had such training the only form reported with any noticeable frequency was "evening classes" about 61% or 20 of the 33 reporting such participation. Only 5 were reached by home economics extension groups, 4 by University extension classes, and 4 by Workers Education classes.

#### Home and Family

We have already indicated that about one-fifth of the youth included in this study were married. Whether married or not practically all of them are a part of

some family situation. Data was also sought, therefore, on their parents' family situation as well as their own if they had one.

Of the youth who were married, about two-thirds were parents - About 65% of the married youth had children of their own. A higher proportion of the married farm youth than village youth had children, the figures being 68% as compared with 58%. Almost all of these were young children, under 5 years of age. It was interesting to note that 75% of the married youth replying were reared on farms, and about 70% of their husbands or wives were reared on farms. Even about one-third of the married village youth and their husbands or wives were reared on farms.

About one-third of parents' families speak a language other than English; mostly German - About 65% of these youth report that no language other than English is spoken in their parent's family. This was about the same in the families of farm and village youth. The remaining one-third of the parents' families speak one or more foreign languages. About half of those, or 17% of the total, spoke German. The next in importance was Norwegian, spoken more largely by the village parents, followed by Swedish and then Bohemian, spoken by farm parents.

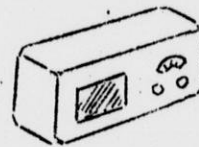
Most of these youth come from large families - Inquiry as to the size of the parents' families revealed that about 53% of these youth came from families of five or more children. About 11% came from six child families, 10% from eight child families, and 9% from ten to twelve child families. The size of the parents' families of farm youth are larger than of village youth, about 57% of the farm as compared with 45% of the village youth coming from families of 5 or more children. The modal size of the parents' family of farm youth was 4 children as compared with 3 children for parents' families of village youth.

About four-fifths of youth report both parents living - About 79% of all of these youth report that both their mother and father are living. About another 11% report that their mother is living. A trifle higher proportion of village than farm youth report both of their parents living, as well as their mother living. About 1% of all of the youth included in this study report both parents dead.

Over half express a responsibility to their parents - About 58% of all of these youth express a responsibility to their parents. Of the farm youth 66% expressed such a responsibility and of the village youth 42% expressed it. The principal expressed forms among farm youth was to "replace hired help" and "do housework". Among village youth it was to "give financial help" and "do housework".

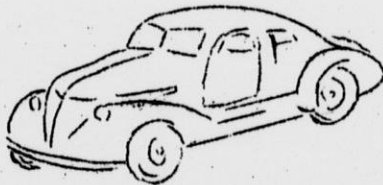
Radio, automobile, and electric lights are principal conveniences in parent's home - Although there are some differences between farm and village youth as to the conveniences in their parents' homes,

for all youth they ranked in frequency as follows: 94% had a radio; 86% had



94%

86%



an automobile, 61% had electric lights, and 55% had electric appliances. It was interesting to note, however, that the

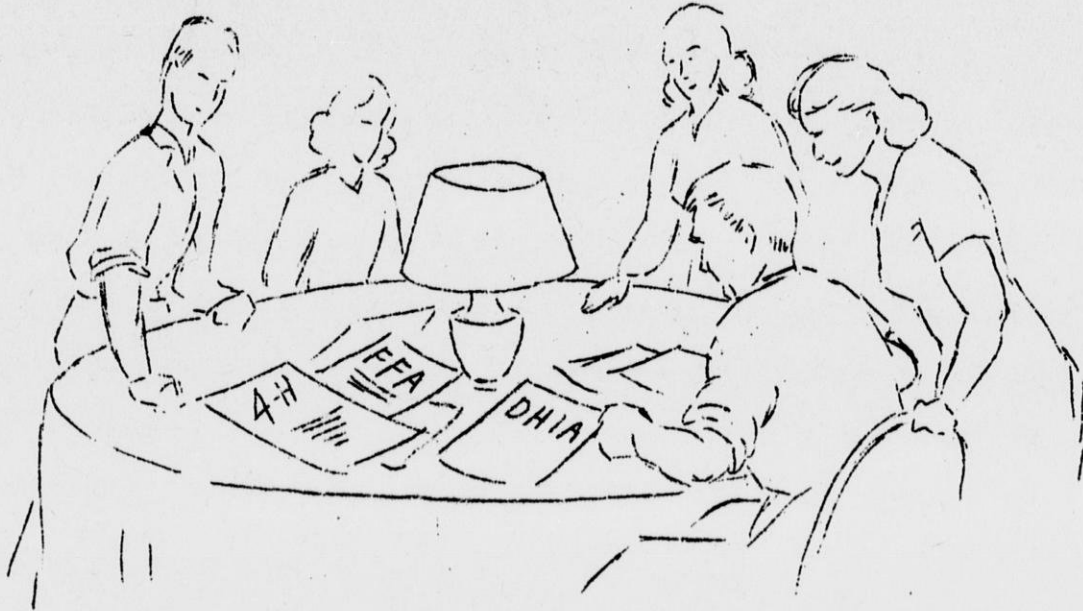
parents' homes of farm youth had the most automobiles, phonographs, and organs; while the parents' homes of village youth had the most radios, electric lights, electric appliances, telephones, running water in the house, pianos, and furnaces.



61%

About all of the families do some things together - About 96% of all these youth reported that their family performed at least one of a list of several activities together. This proportion was about the same for the families of farm and village youth. The most common of these, reported by about 70% of all of the youth, was taking picnics and trips together. About 67% reported talking over family finances, 62% talking over household problems, and 60% talking business affairs. Singing together, playing games together, and talking over children's educational plans were reported in less than half of the families. The one noticeable distinction between





the families of farm and village youth was that about 70% of the families of farm youth talked over business problems together, whereas this was reported in only 41% of the families of village youth.

#### Summary of Principal Needs

An attempt was made to discover what the youth themselves believed their principal problems and needs to be. This was asked as one final question without a check list or any guidance in replying. About 40% of all of the youth included in this study took the time to write out an answer to this question.

Recreation, recreation facilities, employment, and organizations for youth given as principal needs - About 48% of all of these youth said that more recreation and social life was one of their principal needs. About 38% indicated the need for recreation facilities (including transportation), 26% indicated employment opportunities, and 24% asked for organizations for youth. These preferences were about the same for farm and village youth, but their order of importance was different. While farm youth put more recreation and social life first, employment opportunities second, and organizations for youth third; the village youth put recreation facilities first, more recreation and social life second, and community buildings third. The need for employment opportunities did not rank near as important for village as

for farm youth.

When the replies were separated by sexes, it was noticed that the males still put the need for more recreation and social life first, employment opportunities second, and recreation facilities third. The females put more recreation and social life first, recreation facilities second, and community buildings and organizations for youth tied for third importance. It is noticeable that the employment problem is most acute with farm boys.

If all of these expressed principal needs of youth were to be divided into a few main categories, they would be about as follows in the listed frequency of importance: more recreation and social life and recreational facilities, better employment opportunities with increased financial return, more organizations for youth with more opportunities to share in group enterprises, more and better educational opportunities, and improved moral standards and religious concern. Less than 2% of the youth replying indicated that they believed youth in their community had no very pressing needs.

