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ABSTRACT

Because some rural women underutilize their increased schooling while others are disadvantaged by low educational attainment and underdeveloped skills, and in order to help determine policy alternatives to meet rural women's educational needs, the educational attainments and labor force participation of rural white and minority women were studied. In 1975, white nonmetropolitan women completed an average of 12.2 years of school as compared to 8.9 years for black and 7.7 years for hispanic nonmetropolitan women. Very few white women but 19% of the black women and 31.1% of the hispanic women were functionally illiterate. As did their labor force sisters, non-labor force white women averaged a high school education and were consistently better educated than non-labor force white men. White women in the labor force apparently underutilized their education, entering the lower paying, lower skilled positions. In contrast, greater educational attainment appeared to pay off in greater labor force participation for black women, who were nonetheless low on the scale of economic payoffs (perhaps reflecting the triple disadvantage facing rural minority women). Career and vocational education, guidance counseling, education of the disadvantaged, education of farm women, and improved socio-economic conditions can help ensure full usage of rural women's educational attainments. (SB)

RURAL WOMEN AND EDUCATION

by

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INTRODUCTION

The educational status of rural women and the effect of education on their changing work roles are subjects that have received little attention in the research literature (Women's Educational Equity Communications Network, 1978). Although there are 35 million nonmetro women and girls in the United States, not much is known about their educational background or needs. Moreover, a corresponding lack of specific program concern appears to be demonstrated by educators, rural development advocates, and women's education proponents. A recent report by Clarenbach (1977) underscores the failure of these policy-directed groups to focus attention on rural women's educational issues.

The omission comes at a time when rural women are entering the labor force in large numbers, using old skills and learning new ones, in occupations contrasted to traditional roles. Like their urban counterparts, many rural women work to maintain an independent lifestyle or supplement family income. They are likely to participate in the labor force part-time between the ages of 25 to 40 (during the child-rearing years), full-time before and after. Their contributions to family income often make the difference between middle class living and near-poverty (Flora and Johnson, 1978). However, rural female job growth has been concentrated in lower paying clerical, service, and operative occupations which require less education than the more financially rewarding, higher skilled positions (O'Leary, 1978).

It may be the case that rural women are educationally underprepared for some employment opportunities. On the other hand, perhaps their education is adequate but underutilized in terms of participation in rural economic and social development. Without sufficient research, no reasonably informed conclusions can be made concerning the foregoing speculations. In that regard, it will be useful to determine the educational attainment levels of rural women as well as their labor force participation by schooling. Much can be learned in this manner, particularly when data are broken down by racial/ethnic, farm/nonfarm categories. These inquiries will also be helpful in shedding light on possible policy alternatives to meet rural women's educational needs. Such are the several objectives of the following brief study which employs national data from the Census Bureau (1971, 1976, 1978) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (1977). 1/

Educational Attainment: School Years Completed

Whites

There was virtually no difference in educational attainment levels, as measured by median school years completed, between nonmetro and metro White women in 1975 (table 1). No difference existed as well between nonmetro White females and males at that time, each having completed 12.2 school years. The comparisons were little changed from 1970

1/ The data are classified by metro/nonmetro status (see footnotes to table 1 for Census definitons).

Table 1--Median school years completed by persons 25 years and older, by selected categories, 1970 and 1975

Race/ethnicity and metro-nonmetro status	1970		1975	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Years			
Total population				
Metro: 1/	12.3	12.2	12.5	12.4
Central cities	12.1	12.1	12.4	12.3
Suburbs	12.4	12.3	12.6	12.4
Nonmetro: 2/	11.3	11.9	12.1	12.1
Nonfarm	11.6	12.0	12.2	12.1
Farm 3/	9.0	11.0	11.0	12.2
White				
Metro:	12.4	12.3	12.6	12.4
Central cities	12.2	12.2	12.5	12.3
Suburbs	12.5	12.3	12.6	12.5
Nonmetro:	11.7	12.0	12.2	12.2
Nonfarm	12.0	12.1	12.2	12.2
Farm	9.1	11.5	11.4	12.2
Black				
Metro:	10.4	10.9	11.6	11.8
Central cities	10.4	10.9	11.5	11.7
Suburbs	10.3	10.8	12.0	12.0
Nonmetro:	7.3	8.3	7.8	8.9
Nonfarm	7.6	8.4	8.1	8.9
Farm	5.1	7.0	5.9	7.8
Hispanic 4/				
Metro:	NA	NA	10.6	9.8
Central cities	NA	NA	9.7	9.0
Suburbs	NA	NA	11.8	11.2
Nonmetro:	NA	NA	7.3	7.7
Nonfarm	NA	NA	7.4	7.7
Farm	NA	NA	5/	5/

NA = not available

1/ Metro refers to population residing in SMSA's; "central cities" includes (1) largest city in an SMSA and (2) additional city or cities in an SMSA with at least 250,000 inhabitants or a population of one-third or more of that of the largest city and a minimum population of 25,000; "suburbs" (designated as "outside central cities" by the Census Bureau) refers to population residing in an SMSA but outside of central cities.

2/ Nonmetro is defined as population residing outside of SMSA's.

3/ Nonmetro farm refers to population living in nonmetro areas on places of less than 10 acres yielding agricultural products which sold for $250 or more in the previous year, or on places of 10 acres or more yielding agricultural products which sold for $50 or more in the previous year; "nonmetro nonfarm" is defined as population living in nonmetro areas but not on farms.

4/ Hispanic refers to persons reporting themselves as Chicano, Mexican, Mexicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish origin. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

5/ Data base less than 75,000 persons.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1971, 1976.

figures. White farm women, though, did increase their attainment by 0.7 years between 1970 and 1975, the largest gain of any White female group. 2/

Blacks

Data concerning nonmetro Black women were considerably different from that for Whites. In 1975, there was a gap of 2.9 school years between nonmetro and metro Black females, a margin somewhat wider than the 2.6 years which had existed in 1970. The discrepancy for nonmetro Black women living on farms was even more pronounced since they had finished, on average, only an 8th grade education in 1975--a full 4 grades behind their metro sisters and about 4.5 grades behind nonmetro White women. Both nonmetro Black females as a whole and those residing on farms displayed higher educational attainment levels than their male counterparts in 1970 and 1975.

Hispanics

Nonmetro Hispanic women in 1975 were handicapped by the lowest attainment level (7.7 school years), 1.2 and 4.5 years below that for nonmetro Black and nonmetro White females, respectively. They were even well behind metro Hispanic women who achieved only a 10th grade education. Figures for nonmetro Hispanic males were similarly low.

2/ It is possible that the national data obscure the existence of certain nonmetro White groups (like people living in Appalachia or other low income areas) who have lesser attainment records than the majority (Clarenbach, 1977).

Educational Attainment: Functional Illiteracy

Whites

White females, both nonmetro and metro, continue to register low rates of functional illiteracy, conventionally defined as failure to complete at least 5 years of elementary school (table 2). This may not be a completely accurate measure of literacy skill, but in the absence of nationwide standardized test data it serves as a useful approximation. Functional illiteracy, in the conventional sense, therefore is not a problem for most nonmetro White women.

Blacks

Contrastingly, functional illiteracy rates were quite high for nonmetro minority women in 1975. For example, 19.0 percent of nonmetro Black females (farm 31.9) had not completed fifth grade. Their percentages remained 3 to 4 times those of metro Black women and 6 to 10 times more than nonmetro White women's rates. Furthermore, the level for Black females living on farms appears to have increased during 1970-75. Analyzing age categories discloses that functional illiteracy is not merely a characteristic of older Black farm residents (44 years plus) but of younger ones as well (Fratoe, 1979).

Hispanics

Among the three female racial/ethnic groups examined here, nonmetro Hispanics demonstrate the most severe functional illiteracy problem. 31.1 percent of nonmetro Hispanic women in 1975 had finished less than 5 school years, about twice the rate for their metro counterparts. Like the Black case, however, figures for nonmetro Hispanic males were consistently higher.

Table 2—Persons 25 years and older who have completed less than 5 years of elementary school (functional illiterates), by selected categories, 1970 and 1975

Race/ethnicity and metro-nonmetro status	1970		1975	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Percent			
Total population				
Metro:	4.4	4.2	3.7	3.4
Central cities	5.7	5.6	5.3	4.8
Suburbs	3.2	2.9	2.6	2.2
Nonmetro:	8.6	5.7	6.6	4.7
Nonfarm	8.4	5.7	6.6	4.6
Farm	9.6	5.3	7.1	5.1
White				
Metro:	3.4	3.6	2.9	2.8
Central cities	4.4	4.8	4.0	4.2
Suburbs	2.6	2.7	2.2	1.9
Nonmetro:	6.5	4.4	4.9	3.4
Nonfarm	6.4	4.5	4.9	3.4
Farm	7.0	3.5	5.0	3.5
Black				
Metro:	12.3	8.6	10.7	7.0
Central cities	11.7	8.3	10.6	7.1
Suburbs	14.4	10.1	11.0	6.9
Nonmetro:	35.1	20.9	30.2	19.0
Nonfarm	33.2	20.2	28.9	17.8
Farm	49.5	27.3	41.0	31.9
Hispanic				
Metro:	NA	NA	14.8	16.4
Central cities	NA	NA	16.0	18.2
Suburbs	NA	NA	13.2	13.4
Nonmetro:	NA	NA	34.0	31.1
Nonfarm	NA	NA	32.5	30.8
Farm	NA	NA	1/	1/

NA = not available.

1/ Data base less than 75,000 persons.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1971, 1976.

Educational Attainment: High School Graduation

Whites

On the previous two variables nonmetro White women compared favorably with their metro counterparts, showing little difference in attainment. But as regards high school completion the former group trailed the latter by 9.0 percentage points--a gap practically unchanged between 1970 and 1975 despite absolute gains by both groups (table 3). It should be noted that nonmetro White women who were farm residents in 1975 had a high school completion rate as high as their nonfarm sisters, about 58 percent, a clearly better figure than the 47 percent for White farm males.

Blacks

A somewhat larger percentage of nonmetro Black females had graduated from high school in 1975 than 1970, but the margin between them and their metro counterparts actually widened during the period. This was especially the case concerning the farm-metro Black female differential, which inflated from 24.9 to 31.9 percentage points. Only one-fourth of 1975 nonmetro Black women had finished high school (less than one-fifth for farm dwellers), about the same proportion as Black males recorded.

Hispanics

The gap in high school completion levels between nonmetro and metro female Hispanics was smaller than the corresponding one for Blacks, but only because metro Hispanics have not graduated from high school at rates approaching those for Blacks. In 1975, both metro Black and nonmetro White females were graduating at percentages about twice that for nonmetro Hispanic women.

Table 3--Persons 25 years and older who have completed high school or 1 or more years of additional schooling, by selected categories, 1970 and 1975

Race/ethnicity and metro-nonmetro status	1970		1975	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
			Percent	
Total population				
Metro: 1/	59.7	58.7	67.5	65.0
Central cities	54.0	52.8	62.9	59.2
Suburbs	63.5	64.0	70.8	69.6
Nonmetro: 1/	46.2	49.1	53.8	55.6
Nonfarm	47.9	49.7	54.9	55.6
Farm	35.5	44.7	44.7	56.2
White				
Metro:	62.2	60.9	69.5	67.1
Central cities	57.2	55.7	66.2	61.9
Suburbs	65.6	64.9	71.5	70.5
Nonmetro:	48.2	51.6	56.0	58.1
Nonfarm	50.1	52.2	57.3	58.0
Farm	37.2	47.1	46.9	58.8
Black				
Metro:	37.4	40.0	47.2	48.5
Central cities	37.7	39.9	46.3	47.7
Suburbs	36.2	40.6	50.5	51.5
Nonmetro:	19.6	21.4	23.7	26.1
Nonfarm	21.0	22.1	25.3	27.0
Farm	7.9	15.1	9.4	16.6
Hispanic				
Metro:	NA	NA	42.5	38.3
Central cities	NA	NA	37.9	33.9
Suburbs	NA	NA	48.9	45.5
Nonmetro:	NA	NA	25.2	28.0
Nonfarm	NA	NA	26.3	27.5
Farm	NA	NA	1/	1/

NA = not available.

1/ Data base less than 75,000 persons.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1971, 1976.

Labor Force Status

Whites

Given the relatively high educational levels demonstrated by nonmetro White women, one would expect their labor force members to be as well educated as metro residents. Data in Table 4 bear out the assumption, showing that White females in the labor force have attainment levels, measured by median school years, about equal to those for White males no matter what the residence category. All White groups in 1977, male and female, averaged more than a high school education. 3/

An interesting finding is that nonmetro White women not in the labor force also averaged a full high school education, and consistently registered more school years completed than males not in the labor force--2.4 years more in the case of farm dwellers. The figures suggest that nonmetro White women are fairly well educated as a group but some better trained members are not entering the work force, perhaps because of the limited rural job market, insufficient knowledge about existing opportunities, lack of specific job skills, desire to maintain traditional roles outside the formal labor structure, or some combination of factors (Clarenbach, 1977; Dunne, 1979; Fratoe, 1978, U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, 1977).

Blacks

Figures for nonmetro "Black and other" (primarily Black) women in the labor force correspond closely to figures for their White counterparts.

3/ Again, it should be pointed out that the data may mask the existence of low income nonmetro White groups who have less schooling.

Table 4—Labor force status and median years of school completed of persons 16 years and older, by selected categories, 1977

Race and metro-nonmetro status	In civilian labor force 1/		Not in civilian labor force 2/	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Years			
White:				
Metro	12.7	12.6	11.4	12.2
Central cities	12.7	12.6	11.4	12.1
Suburbs	12.7	12.6	11.4	12.3
Nonmetro	12.4	12.5	10.1	12.0
Nonfarm	12.5	12.5	10.2	12.0
Farm	12.3	12.4	9.6	12.0
Black and others:				
Metro	12.3	12.5	10.3	11.0
Central cities	12.3	12.4	10.2	10.9
Suburbs	12.5	12.6	10.6	11.7
Nonmetro	11.1	12.0	9.1	9.5
Nonfarm	11.4	12.0	9.1	9.5
Farm	7.1	3/	3/	9.1

1/ The total of all civilian persons 16 years of age and over classified as employed or unemployed.

2/ All persons not classified as employed or unemployed; persons doing only incidental unpaid family work (less than 15 hours) are also included in this group.

3/ Data base less than 75,000 persons.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1977.

They, too, in 1977 were high school graduates on average. However, nonmetro Black females not in the labor force had fewer school years completed. This indicates the possibility that some nonmetro Black women do not enter the work force because they lack a sufficiently advanced, general educational background as well as a high school diploma, perhaps in addition to the factors just enumerated for nonmetro Whites. 4/

Labor Force Participation

Whites

Generally, labor force participation tends to increase with higher educational attainment for both women and men (Heaton and Martin, 1979; Kopp, 1977). In 1977, labor force participation rose with more schooling in almost all population categories, but climbed more slowly for nonmetro White women than for their male counterparts (table 5). Indeed, at all educational levels the former's participation rates were only from one-half to two-thirds those of the latter's, e.g., 61.8 to 89.5 percent, respectively, for 4-year college graduates. Nonmetro White females residing on farms had the smallest labor force percentages, significantly below other nonmetro Whites, male or female, at the 4-year high school level and beyond.

4/ Unfortunately, labor force data on nonmetro Hispanic women are not available for analysis.

Table 5—Labor force participation rates 1/ of the population 16 years old and over by residence, race, sex, and education 1 attainment, 1977

Race, sex, and metro-nonmetro status	Elementary		High school		College	
	Less than 8 years	8 years	1-3 years	4 years	1-3 years	4 years or more
	Percent					
White male:						
Metro	51.3	53.9	68.6	85.8	82.3	90.6
Central cities	51.0	52.5	67.7	83.0	79.6	88.7
Suburbs	51.6	54.9	69.1	87.3	83.9	91.7
Nonmetro	47.9	56.5	68.7	85.7	80.8	89.5
Nonfarm	46.5	53.1	69.0	85.0	80.3	89.4
Farm	58.1	74.7	64.1	91.2	85.9	91.8
White female:						
Metro	18.0	24.8	41.5	54.3	56.5	64.8
Central cities	18.9	23.7	38.3	54.6	58.7	66.7
Suburbs	17.0	25.7	41.9	54.1	55.1	63.6
Nonmetro	21.5	23.5	39.8	53.5	51.3	61.8
Nonfarm	21.7	24.6	40.5	54.4	52.5	62.7
Farm	18.6	15.8	31.8	44.4	38.7	48.9
Black and other male						
Metro	50.7	56.9	62.3	82.8	79.6	88.4
Central cities	46.4	56.6	61.7	82.6	77.7	86.4
Suburbs	63.0	57.6	64.5	84.8	84.1	91.6
Nonmetro	57.9	63.6	61.3	84.4	72.6	91.3
Nonfarm	54.6	62.3	62.2	84.5	73.2	94.6
Farm	79.1	85.6	45.5	82.8	31.7	72.5
Black and other female						
Metro	25.7	33.4	39.8	61.0	63.7	77.4
Central cities	24.9	33.8	37.0	60.5	62.9	78.8
Suburbs	28.3	32.2	49.7	62.4	65.4	74.9
Nonmetro	26.1	40.4	42.3	66.0	52.3	75.0
Nonfarm	26.1	41.1	43.4	67.4	53.5	74.7
Farm	26.9	35.1	23.6	22.4	38.5	79.5

1/ Percentage of the civilian noninstitutional population in the labor force.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1977.

Blacks

Increased attainment yields an advantage for nonmetro Black women, farm residents excepted. In 1977, participation rates were noticeably higher for college-graduated nonmetro Black females than for their equally educated White counterparts, i.e., 75.0 to 61.8 percent, respectively. Of course, the same also held true for metro females. The figures may underscore Black women's greater utilization of a college degree as they now capitalize on more professional, managerial, and administrative opportunities (Flora and Johnson, 1978). Comparing nonmetro Black women and men, the former had generally lower labor force participation rates, but differences were smaller than in the case of Whites.

Income

Whites

As observed here and elsewhere (Dunne, 1979; O'Leary, 1978), nonmetro women have the tendency to work in lower-paying, lower-skilled, or part-time positions. This may help explain why nonmetro White women are characterized by general incomes smaller than either metro or nonmetro males. It does not explain, though, why nonmetro women earn less than their male counterparts at all educational levels, including the most advanced (table 6). At every level, nonmetro White women's average earnings in 1976 were one-half or less of their male counterparts' average. Revealingly, members of the former group possessing a full 4-year college education actually earned less on average than men in the latter group finishing fewer than 8 school years.

Table 6—Mean earnings of persons 25 years and older by selected categories, 1976

Metro-nonmetro status and school years completed	White		Black	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Dollars			
Metro:				
Central cities:				
Elementary:				
Less than 8 years	8,194	3,739	7,345	3,512
8 years	10,114	4,391	9,111	4,468
High school:				
1-3 years	10,827	4,756	8,933	4,537
4 years	13,018	6,230	9,793	6,663
College:				
1-3 years	13,765	6,920	11,191	7,582
4 years	18,120	8,575	11,522	9,784
5 years or more	21,537	10,575	18,429	13,025
Suburbs:				
Elementary:				
Less than 8 years	8,647	3,623	7,327	1/
8 years	11,060	4,056	1/	1/
High school:				
1-3 years	12,466	4,681	9,405	4,288
4 years	14,479	5,899	10,519	6,582
College:				
1-3 years	15,613	6,522	10,736	7,120
4 years	19,855	7,943	16,240	1/
5 years or more	24,039	10,681	1/	1/
Nonmetro:				
Elementary:				
Less than 8 years	6,541	3,131	4,580	2,225
8 years	7,911	3,661	5,845	2,684
High school:				
1-3 years	9,831	4,068	6,251	3,144
4 years	11,981	4,998	7,778	4,726
College:				
1-3 years	13,048	5,134	1/	5,348
4 years	15,672	6,471	1/	1/
5 years or more	18,267	9,681	1/	1/

1/ Data base less than 75,000 persons.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1978.

Blacks

While nonmetro White females are near the bottom of the hierarchy of individual economic payoffs on educational investment, nonmetro Black women are even worse off. For example, there was about a $300 earnings gap between the two groups at the 4-year high school completion level (1976). Nonmetro Black women who were high school graduates, furthermore, made $3,000 less than nonmetro Black males and $7,000 less than nonmetro White males with the same schooling. The data signify that, despite the importance of schooling to job attainment and earning power, equal education alone does not eliminate race-sex income differences (U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, 1977).

Discussion

One can make certain generalizations from the preceding data:

Nonmetro White women registered fairly high 1975 educational attainment levels in terms of school years completed (12th grade education), proportion of high school graduates (about 60 percent), and low functional illiteracy rates (less than 5 percent). In 1977, those in the work force were comparatively well educated (high school graduates on average), but so were others not labor force members. Nonmetro White females with increased schooling were more likely to be labor force participants but at much lower rates and lower incomes than their male counterparts at every educational level. Thus, higher educational attainment did not "pay off" as well for nonmetro White women.

On the other hand, nonmetro Black and Hispanic women were characterized by lower 1975 attainment levels as regards school years completed

(8th or 9th grade education), proportic of high school graduates (about 25 percent), and larger functional illiteracy rates (20 to 30 percent). Their attainment record, however, was slightly better than that of their male counterparts. In 1977, nonmetro Black females in the labor force averaged a full high school education, but their sisters who were not work force members averaged just 9.5 years. As with Whites, those who had greater schooling were more likely to be labor force participants but at lower rates and lower incomes than males at all educational levels. Income and job "pay offs" for this group were the lowest, conceivably reflecting the triple disadvantage of being nonmetro, minority, and female.

The above summaries point to some obvious differences between educational attainment and resulting work opportunities for nonmetro women versus men. Nonmetro White women, relatively well educated, appear to underutilize their schooling in the labor market compared to men. Many of the former possess the general educational background necessary for skilled white- and blue-collar occupations, yet are either not working or are employed in low-paying positions.

Observers have proposed several reasons for these phenomena, among them the tendency for women to select only a few traditional "female" occupations in an already limited rural job market (Cosby and Charner, 1978; Dunne, 1979); the more depressing effect on women of early marriage plans which makes them forego advanced education or specialized work training (Cosby, 1979); few guidance counseling and job placement services directed to the specific needs of rural women

(Clarenbach, 1977; Dunne, 1979); lack of career/vocational training programs which give women marketable job skills (Dunne, 1979); rarely present child care facilities allowing parents to be employed outside the home (Clarenbach, 1977); isolation from higher educational institutions or training program sites, thus requiring large transportation expenses if transportation is available at all (Dunne, 1979; Westervelt, 1975); and insufficient support from tradition-oriented families convinced that men can best translate schooling into better jobs and higher earnings (Dunne, 1979).

Such possible origins for the disadvantaged work/income position of nonmetro White women apply, of course, as well to their Black counterparts. But nonmetro Black women must contend with additional problems. Their educational attainment levels, unlike majority Whites, are typically low which means they have less training in the fundamental communication and computation aptitudes required for skilled occupations. Most also lack a basic requisite of many jobs--a high school diploma. Finally, they are faced with the peculiar disadvantages stemming from historic racial/ethnic bias and consequent detrimental effects on educational motivation. Similar problems could presumably be said to characterize both females and males in other rural minority groups, e.g., Hispanics, Native Americans, migrant farmworkers, etc. 5/

5/ Low income Whites exhibiting the same general attributes should be included in this category.

Some Policy Directions

The broad conclusions of the present study suggest that some rural women are not fully using their increased schooling while others are disadvantaged by low attainment and undeveloped skills. If the diverse situation is to be resolved in rural women's favor, policies should be considered which apply generally along with others addressing the problems of unique groups. The list below presents several alternative directions, distinct yet not mutually exclusive, intended to help achieve an informed policy process.

Career/Vocational Education

The apparent underutilization of rural White females' education in the labor market may indicate deficiencies in their career/vocational education (C/VE) preparation. C/VE refers to experiences and activities through which students learn about work, encompassing basic academic study, awareness of work values, guidance counseling, exploration of alternative occupations, employment-study programs, job placement services, and training for a primary work role. There is probably a need for focusing on nontraditional career options to increase the range of higher-paying job selection. Specific, marketable job skills can be learned which will equip both younger and older women to enter the existing rural labor market structure. Training in identifying local economic demand and developing entrepreneurial skills to meet such demand are advisable as well (Clarenbach, 1977; Dunne, 1979).

Guidance Counseling

Because counseling is an essential factor in C/VE procedures, it deserves special scrutiny. Rural women could use help in verifying the abilities they already possess along with determining which new ones they will find advantageous. Since they have less natural exposure to the scope of role models and career choices common to their urban counterparts, rural women require access to informational sources that will broaden their awareness (Clarenbach, 1977; Dunne, 1979). Younger women should benefit from guidance programs designed to give them knowledge about the potential consequences of early marriage on educational and occupational attainment (Cosby, 1979). Older adults experiencing conflicts between traditional pressures and desires to adopt innovative work roles may discover sensitive counseling makes a critical difference (Dunne, 1979).

Education of the Disadvantaged

Disadvantaged White and minority rural women could profit as much from the preceding policies as the better educated White majority. However, the disadvantaged (both female and male) have additional exigencies which make them a special target population meriting further attention. In general, they complete fewer school years and receive the least training as adults (Fratoe, 1978, 1979). Without educational upgrading, their opportunities to contribute to rural economic development are limited. Employment training programs like CETA for teenage or adult rural disadvantaged may enrich their vocational preparation but cannot fully overcome the learning deficits arising from inadequate

schooling. Early childhood education, literacy programs, career training, and bilingual teaching where necessary could aid them during their formative years. GED programs for adults seeking a high school diploma would also be helpful (Dunne, 1979; Fratoe, 1978, 1979).

Education of Farm Women

Farm women, whether in the labor force or not, have generally higher attainment levels than farm men. Although increasing numbers of the former are engaged in off-farm occupations, their range of jobs remains limited despite their educational advantage. A large reservoir of farm female talent thereby exists which could be tapped for rural business and public service expansion. Unless nontraditional career guidance information and job placement services for women are made available in rural areas, though, their talents will continue to go untapped. Beyond the foregoing general services, women's learning opportunities could be fostered by encouraging farm girls to participate in field trips where they can meet women who represent a wide variety of career pursuits, teaching vocational skills outside traditional agricultural or homemaking roles (e.g., agribusiness occupations), and developing innovative educational delivery systems like mobile facilities and television to reach women living in isolated open country (Sternbach, 1977; Fratoe, 1979).

Improved Socioeconomic Conditions

Under present conditions, equal educational attainment cannot entirely eliminate work/income differences based on sex. Many rural women with relatively high attainment levels undoubtedly will continue

to work, if employed at all, in less rewarding positions than men recording equal or lower schooling. As some analysts have noted, these facts may reflect such socioeconomic conditions as the restricted rural labor market, traditional role perceptions, unavailable health and child care facilities, poor transportation,, sexual bias in hiring and promotion, or failure to provide equal pay for equal work (Clarenbach, 1977; Dunne, 1979; Flora and Johnson, 1978; Fratoe, 1978). Until rural socioeconomic conditions are improved, work/income "payoffs" on educational investment will probably remain inequitable for women. Thus, policies beyond the educational institution, as well as those within, are important to ensure the full usage of rural women s educational accomplishments in their changing work roles.

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