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Throughout the twentieth century, North Carolina underwent significant social and economic changes, experiencing a decline in small-scale agriculture, an end to racial segregation, and morphing views about roles for women and the nature of youth. This work explores these transitions through the experiences of North Carolina 4-H as it implemented new policies and practices in response to them, focusing primarily on the period from 1926 through 1979. Originally founded with the purpose of instructing rural youth in improved farming and farm-homemaking practices, the organization had by the mid-1960s begun broadening its programming, instructing young people in areas unrelated to agriculture. During this same period, it consolidated its segregated African American and white programs, a process that failed to immediately create meaningful integration. It was more successful in its efforts to remove sex-based restrictions on participation, a process fully completed in the late 1970s. Regardless of the decade, 4-H agents endeavored to shape the character of the youth they served, reflecting both agents' values on appropriate behavior and beliefs, along with an unwillingness to succumb to societal fears over rebellious youth culture. Along with these changes, 4-H remained connected to its agricultural past.

“THE CHANGING NEEDS OF OUR YOUTH TODAY”: THE RESPONSE OF 4-H TO  
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATIONS IN  
TWENTIETH-CENTURY NORTH CAROLINA

by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Considering North Carolina 4-H's work over several decades reveals the scope of influence wielded by the organization. For much of the twentieth century, it affected the lives of thousands of the state's youth with total annual membership in the 1950s reaching levels of over 100,000 and capping out at just over 168,000 in the early 1960s. Initially devised as a way to instruct rural children and adolescents in improved farming and farm homemaking practices, the organization not only provided this demographic with vocational training but also made available opportunities for recreation. As a result, many young people were devoted to participating in club work, both for the practical and entertainment value offered by 4-H. Even in instances where members were less devoted, such as in cases where children joined simply to escape their regular classes at school for an hour each month, they still were exposed to both 4-H agents' and the organization's programming and values.

North Carolina 4-H might not initially appear to be the most likely subject for historical inquiry. After all, the organization is probably best known for sponsoring extracurricular youth clubs in which members take on projects associated with raising animals or learning to sew. Such activities could, on the surface, seem somewhat mundane and of little consequence to southern history. However, when examined in a broader context and over multiple decades, the work of North Carolina 4-H reveals much

not only about the organization itself but also larger historical trends within the state and nation. From economic developments to changing attitudes about race, gender, and the nature of youth, 4-H leaders and agents repeatedly adjusted their attitudes and approaches to club work in order to ensure that it remained relevant to multiple generations of young people. Such willingness to change meant that by the end of the 1970s, the organization had, as part of an effort to attract members from new demographics, undergone extensive restructuring in terms of its curriculum and methods of conducting club work. At the same time, however, it retained elements of its original purpose and structure that had been present since its inception in 1926.

Before examining 4-H's connections to larger historical trends, it helps to have a sense of the way that the organization functioned. Four-H work in North Carolina began in the 1910s with the formation of several small, unaffiliated clubs overseen by the state's Cooperative Extension Service. Initially offering boys the opportunity to learn improved techniques in a single crop, such as corn, Extension agents soon began offering broader instruction in animal husbandry. They also provided rural girls with clubs that at first taught principles of gardening and canning. Such clubs were part of a larger movement taking place in rural areas throughout the United States, as Extension workers seeking to improve farmers' output and standards of living began aiming their messages at children and adolescents. These pioneers of club work realized early on that they had a better chance of shaping the agricultural practices of young people rather than adult farmers who were already set in their ways.



In 1926 these early North Carolina groups united as 4-H clubs. Just as the Federal Extension Service oversaw Extension offices at the state level, a federal 4-H office gave direction and provided partial funding to state 4-H programs. Both the Federal Extension Service and 4-H were under the jurisdiction of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). A state club leader, also an Extension employee, supervised the new 4-H clubs within North Carolina from an office located on the campus of North Carolina State University in Raleigh, one of the state's two land-grant institutions.<sup>1</sup> For the first thirty-seven years of North Carolina 4-H's history, L.R. Harrill filled this particular position. His efforts contributed significantly to the development of the organization, especially in its early years. While Harrill and other staff members at the state level would determine policies and programming for clubs throughout North Carolina, county Extension agents actually conducted club meetings and were the primary points of contact for 4-H'ers, as the club members were known. Although variations did exist, for the most part 4-H clubs met monthly for an hour and, before the 1960s, in a public school during school hours. The educational and recreational opportunities offered by 4-H, combined with the monthly break from classroom instruction, caused the organization's membership to grow almost continuously through the 1950s.

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<sup>1</sup> Both North Carolina State University (NCSU) and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (A.&T.), mentioned in the following paragraph, changed their names throughout the period addressed by this study. Initially, they were known as North Carolina State College and the Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina, respectively. Just as NCSU was the white land-grant institution in North Carolina, A.&T. was established as the land-grant college for African-Americans.

Reflecting larger societal norms, North Carolina 4-H clubs initially practiced both racial and sex segregation to varying degrees. Just as other institutions within southern society were divided by race, 4-H also formed racially homogenous clubs, a practice that lasted through the mid-1960s. Segregation affected the organization not just in terms of individual clubs but at all levels of administration. Separate black and white Extension offices served North Carolina counties. At the state level, the segregated leadership existed for both the black and white 4-H programs, with an administrative office for African Americans located on the campus of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro. Ultimately, though, both programs were overseen by the state club leader in Raleigh. Segregation based on sex was less extensive and did not last as long. The early model of club formation initially resulted in the creation of clubs composed exclusively of boys or girls, a practice that disappeared as the organization became more formalized. Although 4-H would promote certain projects more to one sex or the other through the 1960s, separation by sex was far less rigid than by race.

The 1960s and 1970s functioned as a major turning point in the structure of the organization. New laws at both the state and federal level compelled 4-H to move its meetings outside of public schools and to racially integrate its clubs and administration. Economic changes made farm-based projects less relevant, necessitating a restructuring of programming. Larger societal attitudes challenged traditional views of gender, ultimately affecting the ways in which the organization promoted projects by sex. Four-H agents and leadership also had to adjust to changes in youth culture that emerged during this period. In response to several of these developments, North Carolina 4-H

altered both its institutional policies and the methods by which it served the state's young people.

Studying this particular organization raises awareness of larger developments taking place within the state, the South, and the United States throughout much of the twentieth century because external developments shaped the nature of 4-H club work in North Carolina. During the first half of the twentieth century, farming served as a major occupation for many rural people in the state and the South. As a result, the newly emerging 4-H clubs that formed in the early decades of the century could easily attract and retain members due to their emphasis on teaching farming and farm homemaking techniques. Over time, however, political and technological developments altered the nature of farming in the South, creating a situation in which the region's economy no longer depended so heavily on large portions of the population working in agriculture. In response to these changing economic conditions in North Carolina, the state's 4-H clubs developed new projects and activities that still taught skills of potential use in adulthood as young people coming of age ventured into career areas outside of farming.

In addition to economic developments, 4-H work in North Carolina sheds light on some of the larger social attitudes and developments taking place within the state and the nation. Examining 4-H's policies and practices prior to 1965 reflects many of the ways in which North Carolinians engaged in racial segregation, as well as how such a development created inequitable conditions. Looking at the organization's actions in response to a federal mandate in 1965 to desegregate reveals of some of the ways that a southern institution might endeavor to technically comply with requirements while still

continuing to operate many racially homogenous clubs. Investigating its efforts in addressing the needs of low-income club members elucidates shifts in public opinion regarding poverty and the impoverished. Similarly, club policies and practices with regard to gender also highlight larger societal views regarding appropriate behaviors and eventual career choices for boys and girls. Exploring 4-H's reaction to the evolving youth culture of the twentieth century, as well as its efforts to help shape the character of young people, also provides better understanding of social norms throughout much of the twentieth century. Character building efforts, especially, reveal North Carolinians' stances on issues such as religion and good citizenship practices.

Though 4-H itself never served a majority of North Carolina's youth, examining its trajectory is especially useful for connecting with twentieth century social and economic changes affecting the state due to the nature of such an institution. One of 4-H's main goals centered on providing young people with skills that would assist them as adults, encompassing not only career training, but also building social skills and character within club members. As a result, leaders and agents had considerable incentive to stay apprised of and respond to the social and economic developments transpiring throughout the twentieth century, as these would have profound effects on the future of 4-H'ers. The need to prepare young people for adulthood forced 4-H staff to remain vigilant to changes and to adjust and adapt programming to remain relevant. This process played out more rapidly in some instances than in others. In adapting to the changing nature of southern agriculture, North Carolina 4-H responded quickly to ensure that a new generation of rural youth would have opportunities to excel in life by providing career training in areas

outside of agriculture. On other issues such as race, however, North Carolina 4-H lagged behind state and national trends, taking advantage, whether deliberately or not, of technicalities that allowed clubs to appear desegregated while many continued to remain racially homogenous even into the 1980s.

This particular study of North Carolina 4-H concludes at the end of the 1970s, a time which might initially appear to be an arbitrary stopping point. By 1980, though, many of the most significant changes taking place within the organization were largely complete. Four-H leaders had developed new programming to supplement or replace that associated with agriculture and had also removed gender restrictions connected to projects and awards. Although the organization still had considerable work to do in terms of creating a majority of racially integrated clubs, it had technically undergone a process of desegregation. North Carolina 4-H continued to work in areas related to low income youth as well as cultivating character in club members after 1979, but the foundations for such work were firmly in place by the end of the 1970s. Four-H undoubtedly faced new challenges and developments in the 1980s and beyond, but the years from 1926 through 1979 represent a period in which it both established itself and also underwent considerable restructuring as part of an effort to survive major societal and economic upheaval. While never losing sight of its original agricultural mission, North Carolina 4-H had by 1979 adapted to a much different environment than that in which it first emerged.

While 4-H has served as subject for historical inquiry, the amount of scholarship available on it is somewhat limited. The majority of works explore the organization's

endeavors at the state level. One of the first examples of this kind of research is Clarence R. Keathley and Donna M. Ham's 1977 article, "4-H Club Work in Missouri." Keathley and Ham provide an overview of the institution's activities within the state from its inception in the 1900s through the late 1970s. Their work does connect to some larger historical developments primarily associated with agricultural history. They also address 4-H's efforts at adapting to the changing nature of Missouri's economy which, much like North Carolina's, led to an increase in the state's non-farm population. For the most part, their goal is to detail the organization's trajectory throughout the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

A couple of articles addressing the role of 4-H in Utah took a similar approach to that of Keathley and Ham. Writing in 1983, Daniel A. John describes the history of 4-H in Utah from its origins in the 1910s through the 1940s in his article, "Utah 4-H, A Dynamic Youth Program." For the most part, John does not place the organization's work into a larger historical context; instead, he primarily focuses on internal developments within Utah 4-H over the decades, discussing the early leadership instrumental in implementing club work within the state, as well as some of the organization's early challenges and successes. Eleven years later, Holly Buck also examined the experiences of 4-H clubs in Utah. Her article, "'Amusements and Recreations... Makes Our Working Hours Profitable': Utah 4-H, 1940-1960," explores mid-twentieth century club work in Utah. She describes the ways in which the state's 4-H program provided recreational opportunities to rural Utah youth, many of whom were

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<sup>2</sup> Clarence R. Keathley and Donna M. Ham, "4-H Club Work in Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review* 51, no. 1 (1979): 209-220.

geographically isolated and came from families with limited economic resources. Buck emphasizes the fact that the leisure activities provided by 4-H not only entertained club members but also engaged them in productive uses of their free time as projects promoted activities such as sewing, canning, and raising livestock.<sup>3</sup>

Danny Moore's 2001 work on the development of tomato clubs, which were forerunners of 4-H, for girls in Mississippi in the 1910s provides a broader framework than earlier research for understanding factors contributing to the growth of clubs for farm youth. Although Moore primarily examined a four-year window in the 1910s before the formal establishment of 4-H, he emphasized many of the factors that motivated the early formation of such clubs. These elements included a desire on the part of government workers affiliated with the USDA, as well as other agencies, to improve the overall quality of rural life. As a result, Moore traces the chronology of relevant legislation and policies that made youth clubs possible. Moore considers not only the individuals who were instrumental in the creation of tomato clubs in Mississippi but also the degree to which gender norms and racial segregation factored into the clubs' development. Despite the limited chronological scope of Moore's work, it provides connections to larger political and social issues that some of the other works on 4-H at the state level lack.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel A. John, "Utah 4-H, A Dynamic Youth Program," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (1983): 162-182; Holly Buck, "'Amusements and Recreations... Makes Our Working Hours Profitable': Utah 4-H, 1940-1960," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (2004): 69-84.

<sup>4</sup> Danny Moore, "'To Make the Best Better': The Establishment of Girls' Tomato Clubs in Mississippi, 1911-1915," *Journal of Mississippi History* 63, no. 2 (2001): 101-118.

Writing in 2008, Carmen V. Harris focuses specifically on the issue of racial discrimination with southern 4-H camping programs. Harris explores the role of white-dominated state 4-H administrations and the Federal Extension Service in establishing and maintaining segregated camps. These camps included both regular recreational camping, as well as national encampments designed to not only provide time away from home but also recognize outstanding 4-H'ers from across the nation. Harris places her research on 4-H well within a larger context of African American criticism of and challenges to racial segregation. She argues that the resistance and condemnation offered by the African American community to the development of a blacks-only, southern-based regional camp, created as an alternative to the national whites-only gathering, fell within the context of other African American challenges to legalized segregation. Harris's work additionally addresses the process by which 4-H programs did gradually desegregate. She also discusses some of the negative consequences of integration, including the loss of opportunities for black 4-H'ers as whites tended to be the primary winners of awards after the end of segregation.<sup>5</sup>

While the bulk of researchers have studied state 4-H programs, a few have chosen to examine the development of 4-H at the national level. The first to do so was Franklin M. Reck, whose 1951 book, *The 4-H Story: A History of 4-H Club Work*, examines the national 4-H program from the origins in the youth club movement of the 1900s and 1910s through the 1940s. Reck's work resulted from numerous requests to national 4-H

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<sup>5</sup> Carmen V. Harris, "States' Rights, Federal Bureaucrats, and Segregated 4-H Camps in the United States, 1927-1969," *Journal of African American History* 93, no. 3 (2008): 362-388.



staff for a detailed account of how the organization came to be. As a result, he focuses primarily on recounting the narrative of 4-H's progression. He does, however, provide a degree of connection to national developments, such as the perceived need in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to both improve agricultural techniques in America and stem the flow of rural youth away from farms to urban areas.

Commissioned by the Federal Extension Service, Reck's work does not address some of the issues related to club work that researchers several decades later might find problematic, such as the racial inequality present within clubs at the state and county levels.<sup>6</sup>

Writing three decades after Reck, Herman Wessel and Marilyn Wessel also explored 4-H club work at the national level. Their book, *4-H: An American Idea, 1900-1980: A History of 4-H*, focuses largely on developments within the organization that occurred after the conclusion of Reck's work. Much of their research hones in on the changes 4-H experienced throughout the period following World War II, including the increasing demand for non-farm programming, the need for 4-H to reach out to an urban demographic, and new methods by which 4-H reached club members, including the development of special interest groups and programming delivered via television. Although commissioned to complete their research by the National 4-H Council, Wessel and Wessel approach the topic from a critical perspective. While they in many ways praise 4-H's work with young people, they also openly address some of the

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<sup>6</sup> Franklin M. Reck, *The 4-H Story: A History of 4-H Club Work* (Chicago: National Committee on Boys and Girls Work, 1951).

organization's limitations, including the ways in which it had marginalized both African American and Native American youth. Although Wessel and Wessel do provide far more historical context than many of the other works centered on 4-H, the fact that they wrote their book for the National 4-H Council resulted in the creation of a work with the primary purpose of reporting developments within the organization. As a result, it does not reference a more general historiography of United States history.<sup>7</sup>

Researchers have also addressed the development of a national 4-H program when looking at the larger history of rural life and Extension work. Historians like Marilyn Irvin Holt and Lu Ann Jones, for example, reference the impact that club work, for both youth and adults, had on farm families in their larger explorations of both rural America and farm women's lives in the first half of the twentieth century. In the works of both writers, 4-H plays a more minor role than when compared with other sources discussed. Wayne D. Rasmussen incorporates the origins and expansion of 4-H into his larger examination of the growth of Extension work, providing an overview of how the organization developed. Rasmussen also addresses the ways in which 4-H expanded and adapted to social and economic changes in the twentieth century and touches on topics such as racial integration and the growing numbers of non-farm youth. As with many of the other works, though, Rasmussen's treatment of 4-H is written for an audience focused primarily on 4-H and the Extension Service itself.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas R. Wessel and Marilyn Wessel, *4-H: An American Idea, 1900-1980: A History of 4-H* (Chevy Chase, MD: 4-H National Council, 1982).

<sup>8</sup> Marilyn Irvin Holt, "From Better Babies to 4-H: A Look at Rural America," *Prologue: The Journal of the National Archives* 24, no. 3 (1992): 245-255; Marilyn Irvin Holt, *Linoleum, Better Babies, and the Modern Farm Woman, 1890-1930* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995); Lu Ann

One work does exist on the history of 4-H's presence in North Carolina. Published in 1984, James W. Clark, Jr.'s *Clover All Over: North Carolina 4-H in Action* provides a thorough account of 4-H activity in the state from its origins through the early 1980s. His treatment is strongest when examining the period prior to 1960. While Clark does connect occasionally to larger developments taking place within the state and nation, his primary focus is on relating the events that transpired within the organization itself. As a result, much of his work provides a descriptive chronology of 4-H, highlighting policy changes, but also relating anecdotal accounts of assorted events that transpired within the institution. As Clark was writing more for those with a personal connection to 4-H, he does not reference the work of any historians, and on the whole he offers a largely positive assessment of North Carolina 4-H, perhaps reflecting his own personal experiences with it.<sup>9</sup>

In many ways my work incorporates several of the themes and approaches present within previous scholarship on 4-H. As with John, Buck, Moore, and Clark, I examine the development of an American 4-H program at the state level. Chronologically, my work overlaps with previous research conducted, and as a result I too address issues such as economic changes and 4-H's efforts at adapting its programming to remain useful and relevant to youth. After all, the decline in farming as a viable career opportunity occurred not only in the South. Like Moore and Jones, I focus on the role that gender

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Jones, *Mama Learned Us to Work: Farm Women in the New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Wayne D. Rasmussen, *Taking the University to the People: Seventy-Five Years of Cooperative Extension* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> James W. Clark, Jr., *Clover All Over: North Carolina 4-H in Action* (Raleigh: North Carolina State University, 1984).

played in the process of establishing early clubs. Although I lack the national scope of Reck and Rasmussen, I do address the early origins of club work, as well as the impact of the Great Depression and World War II on its development. Similarly to Harris, Wessel and Wessel, and Rasmussen, I explore the ways in which a 4-H program worked with marginalized young people, including racial minorities and the economically disadvantaged.

My work, however, does not simply revisit these themes. Instead, it seeks to take many elements of earlier works and expand them into a broader, and in some instances more complex, examination of club work. Although much of my research does focus on the policies and practices of North Carolina 4-H and their change over time, it also endeavors to more directly connect those developments to a larger historical context. As a result, I do not simply chronicle the events that transpired within the organization throughout the twentieth century, but instead, link those events to narratives of historical change taking place in North Carolina, the South, and the United States. While this approach is to an extent similar to the work of Moore, Harris, and Jones, I focus on both a greater number of historical themes and a much larger chronological span. Such an approach also sets my own examination of North Carolina 4-H apart from that of Clark, as his emphasis was more on preserving the narrative of the organization for those affiliated with it than on engaging in larger historical discussions.

A variety of sources provided relevant evidence for this investigation. The majority of those consulted came from several different collections related to 4-H and Extension work housed either at North Carolina State University's D.H. Hill Library's

Special Collections Research Center or on the *Green 'N' Growing* online database, also maintained by NCSU's Special Collections. I relied upon collections from North Carolina State Agricultural and Technical University's archives in F.D. Bluford Library for additional information regarding the African American 4-H program. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland, holds additional sources used for this research. I also consulted published primary sources, including reports prepared by North Carolina's Cooperative Extension Service, along with memoirs written by individuals who served in leadership positions during the early years of 4-H.

The available sources were useful for several reasons. Perhaps the greatest strength was their scope and chronological breadth. Consulted collections provided ample records from all decades between the 1910s through the 1970s. While documents did span a considerable amount of time, many of them remained similar over the decades, such as reports on club work submitted annually to the Federal Extension Service or programs produced for events held yearly. Because the structure and organization of such documents remained the same over the years, they provide a useful basis for determining and comparing North Carolina 4-H's development and practices over time.

Sources utilized also address club work from a variety of perspectives. A large portion of my sources are official reports compiled primarily for submission to the Federal Extension Service. The bulk of these are either annual reports that generally address all elements of 4-H activities over a particular year, or plans of work detailing anticipated efforts for an upcoming year. This category also includes reports pertaining to special programs conducted by North Carolina 4-H, including work in pilot projects

initiated by the Federal Extension Service. Other sources focus more on interactions between the state and county levels of 4-H administration. For example, some document collections contain information compiled by county agents and submitted to the state office, as well as correspondence prepared by state leaders for agents working at the county level. The varied nature of these sources is valuable for understanding the total 4-H program, as well as some of the attitudes held by staff members toward policies, practices, and club members.

One of the largest limitations of this work is the lack of voices from club members themselves. The majority of available records relating to 4-H focus primarily on actions taken at the administrative level. Such documents are useful in providing an overview of the ways in which the organization altered its projects and activities over the years, as well as for uncovering some of the views held by both state-level leadership and county agents. At the same time, these records often fail to provide the reactions and opinions of club members to the organization, its policies, and its programming. In some limited instances, available documents do contain statements from club members that present their views on 4-H. However, these do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the majority of club members, as they come exclusively from high-performing 4-H'ers. They also were not generated spontaneously, but were instead prepared for submission to agents when receiving an award, or as reports on assorted 4-H activities and events. As a result, these accounts from club members tend to present only positive views of the organization. A few limited oral interviews do provide the perspectives of former club members decades after they were involved with 4-H. However, as with the written

statements, these accounts come from very successful club members, several of whom went on to pursue careers in Extension work. While such interviews do add complexity to the narrative of 4-H club work in North Carolina, they are biased in favor of the organization.

North Carolina 4-H's records do not necessarily answer all the questions that one might have about it. Information regarding individual clubs and club members is limited. Although county agents probably knew the names of all the club members they encountered when conducting local meetings, they likely did not pass club rosters along to the state office. If they did, state leadership never commented on such membership rolls in preserved correspondence and none are available in the collections consulted. In some instances documents like annual and county reports, newsletters, or accounts of functions like camping might name and discuss the accomplishments of specific 4-H'ers. For example, throughout parts of the 1940s and 1950s, annual reports often listed not only the names of the winners in each project category but also provided an overview of club members' experiences with 4-H, glimpses into their home life, and even an occasional statement from the 4-H'er on their work with the particular project. In other instances, though, state leadership did not even record the names of winners in annual reports. The collections consulted also provide no consistent data on North Carolina 4-H's finances. On some occasions records did reference the need to raise money for certain activities, such as when the African American program worked to construct a camp set aside just for black 4-H'ers. Detailed reports of financial accounts, though, are either missing or housed in an as-of-yet undiscovered collection.

Far more sources exist pertaining to the white 4-H program in North Carolina than the African American program, and those that are available for the black program are less extensive than white records. Several possible explanations account for this discrepancy. The African American program never served as many club members or as large of a geographic area as the white. Additionally, black agents, even at the state level, were still under the authority of the white state leader. As a result, black sources were not always prioritized to the same degree as those from whites. In the 1950s, for example, some black annual reports were simply stapled to the back of white reports, almost implying that the white reports took precedence over those from the black program. Location of records may also factor into the limited nature of African American sources, as the bulk of materials relating to North Carolina 4-H are housed at North Carolina State University, which provided the headquarters for the white program. While existing sources do indicate that the African American program produced considerably more records than are currently available, the current location of such sources is unknown.

In addition to scarcity, there are other limitations associated with the African American sources. While there were enough sources available to get a general sense of club work, the records often lack the degree of detail contained in white sources. Annual reports for the black program in several instances provided a more extensive overview of the general African American experience in North Carolina. While such information is useful for understanding challenges that black agents faced as well as their perspectives on social and economic inequality, the lack of detail relating to club members can make it



difficult to provide an accurate comparison between the two programs. In other instances, sources pertaining to the African American program are simply thinner and provide less information in general than those associated with white 4-H activities. In 1963, for example, the African American annual report contained sixteen pages of information whereas the white report had fifty.

In general, 4-H records differ extensively with regard to the amount of information that they provide. Even with the white program, the annual reports compiled each year out of the state club leader's office vary from year to year in terms of the degree of detail included in each report. Assorted factors resulted in more limited reports, including times of crisis such as during the Great Depression. During this period, many Extension agents shifted their focus to implementing New Deal agricultural policies and work with youth suffered as a result, leaving agents with less to report. Changes in leadership also affected the extensiveness of annual reports. During L.R. Harrill's term as State club leader, reports tended to be much longer and contained more detailed information and anecdotal accounts regarding club work. Such reports are informative with regard to many different elements of 4-H, including the kinds of project activities in which winning club member engaged and the organization's rationale for offering assorted projects. After Harrill's retirement annual reports still provided an overview of 4-H's yearly accomplishments and goals, but in a more succinct and less detailed format, thereby providing researchers with less material with which to work.

Many of the included sources reflect the views of L.R. Harrill, as he wrote extensively about North Carolina 4-H. In addition to assisting with the compilation of

various official reports, Harrill composed scripts for local radio shows, speeches, parts of newsletters, addresses to club members, and other assorted documents that outlined and promoted 4-H's work with the state's youth. Not long after his retirement, he also published two books, *Memories of 4-H*, which functioned primarily as a memoir of his time leading the organization, and *Sketches of 4-H*, which was largely a collection of his philosophical views on 4-H and its accomplishments. Harrill derived much of the content of *Sketches of 4-H* from various writings he composed prior to his retirement. Other club leaders that followed Harrill simply did not produce as many written accounts of their work with the organization. Additionally, Harrill participated in three radio interviews conducted in the late 1970s where he and former club members and Extension workers reminisced about past experiences with 4-H. In these interviews, Harrill dominated the discussions and the other interviewees often deferred to him. Harrill's prolific writings do create a situation in which his views come through more strongly than that of other individuals associated with North Carolina 4-H. However, his insight is quite valuable as he built up and led the organization for almost four decades.

Access to certain types of documents also varied considerably. While some specific categories of documents such as annual reports and plans of work were available from almost every year covered by this investigation, other types of documents were not. In the case of project record books, for example, the collections did not house a complete set of such books that North Carolina 4-H used. The books that were available might come from only one or two years of club work, which made it impossible to provide an annual comparison for the objectives and instruction associated with club projects based

on record books alone. Similarly, other sources like 4-H Church Sunday programs and guidebooks for agents and adult volunteers were also sporadically preserved. As a result, these types of sources provided additional information and detail to supplement that uncovered in more extensively preserved documents like annual reports.

In spite of their limitations, the available sources do provide insight into changes taking place in both North Carolina and the United States throughout much of the twentieth century. They reveal the ways in which leaders and agents working with North Carolina 4-H responded to such developments. In compiling my findings, I have organized individual chapters by the degree to which the topics presented resulted in dramatic change within the organization. Certainly four themes, economic change, race, gender, and character building, significantly shaped the work of North Carolina 4-H and were on the minds of leaders and agents. However, some, such as the rapid decline of farming as a profession or the federal mandate for racial desegregation, forced the organization to more rapidly implement changes and led to major alterations within the overall program. Economic developments, for example, led to the creation of entirely new project areas, the recruitment of members who were not from farm families, and changes to the ways in which club work itself was carried out. Similarly, racial attitudes and policies initially resulted in the creation of two separate 4-H programs in North Carolina for several decades and limitations on opportunities for African American club members. While themes like gender and character building had a major effect on the institution's development, their influence was in many instances felt more subtly.

Chapter Two explores the ways in which 4-H adapted its programming to the changing nature of North Carolina's economy. As farming and farm homemaking declined as career opportunities for many of the state's young people, 4-H leadership recognized that the organization would have to adjust its overall focus in order to remain useful and relevant to youth. Although this process began in the 1950s and intensified in the 1960s and 1970s, Chapter Two also explores earlier factors that helped facilitate this shift, focusing especially on the impact of New Deal policies, technological innovations, and the expansion of agribusiness on commercial agriculture in North Carolina and the South. In response to such developments, North Carolina 4-H altered its offerings in several ways, initially introducing projects that addressed the increasingly mechanized nature of farming but eventually developing programming unrelated to agriculture. Some of this new curriculum, such as projects in dog care or flower gardening, connected somewhat to the organization's original focus on animal husbandry and horticulture, while other projects, such as those relating to bicycle care and career exploration, reflected the growing non-farm population and the decline in agricultural employment within the state. Four-H not only expanded its areas of instruction, but in the 1960s began engaging in recruitment efforts geared toward attracting members from new demographics, including suburban and urban youth as well as young people from economically-disadvantaged backgrounds. Though 4-H had successfully carried out internal restructuring by the end of the 1970s, the organization still faced the challenge of public opinion, which continued to view it as primarily a rural institution focused primarily on farming.

Chapter Three examines the ways in which North Carolina 4-H addressed the issue of race. As one might expect, this chapter follows familiar themes relating to race in the South, including the prevalence of segregation and inequality within 4-H, the process by which it integrated, and the degree to which such efforts were genuinely successful. The organization certainly practiced segregation with regard to how it conducted club work. From individual 4-H clubs, to county staff, even to state-level offices, black and white 4-H workers and club members were institutionally separate from one another. The African American program was ultimately under the jurisdiction of the white, but the two segments of club work did not share funds and had to secure their own financial sponsors. This condition resulted in unequal opportunities for club members based on race. The divisions were not simply the policy of 4-H itself; both the Extension Service that administered 4-H and the local schools where club meetings took place were segregated. The organization did not attempt to integrate until it faced a federal mandate to do so, and the process by which it went about complying ultimately created a situation in which the majority of clubs remained single-race. To a large extent 4-H's racial policies and experiences reveal that the organization was shaped by larger circumstances beyond its control but also unmotivated to challenge societal trends.

A closer look at North Carolina 4-H's experiences, however, reveals a more complex story about race in a southern state. In spite of segregation, cooperation did occur between the two programs. Some interracial meetings were held at the state level in the 1940s and 1950s. Both segments of 4-H were also willing to share their agents with one another to provide instruction when needed. L.R. Harrill supported the African

American program to an extent, writing letters to potential donors when the black program was engaged in fund raising for the construction of a camp for black 4-H'ers, and speaking to black club members attending assorted camps and conferences. The presence of large Native American populations in North Carolina, including the Lumbee in Robeson County and the Cherokee on the Qualla Boundary, further complicates this narrative. Although the organization did establish clubs exclusively for Native Americans at the county level, when attending statewide functions Native Americans went to those set aside for white club members. While perhaps far from progressive, such encounters do present a more complicated account of southern race relations during segregation.

The fourth chapter addresses the degree to which 4-H club work reflected societal assumptions about gender and gender roles. For much of the organization's early history, such views manifested in the division of projects offered by 4-H. Going back to the earliest clubs in the 1910s, agents encouraged boys to take up projects centered on various aspects of farming, which was considered appropriate work for males. Girls, on the other hand, were pushed more toward activities that emphasized farm homemaking, training them for their expected future roles as farmers' wives. Such divisions continued in varying degrees until the mid-1970s. To a large extent, the end of this practice stemmed from economic changes taking place within the state as farming and farm homemaking increasingly became unviable career options.

Just as with race, however, North Carolina 4-H's practices from the 1910s to the 1960s add complexity to the narrative of gender roles in the South and the United States.

While agents and leaders clearly expected boys to grow up to be farmers and girls to become homemakers, they also afforded 4-H'ers some flexibility with regard to project selection and allowed young people to transgress gender norms when completing club work. Girls were more likely to cross this divide, participating in traditionally male project areas, such as those associated with livestock and field crops, as early as the 1910s. Although much rarer, boys also occasionally took on traditionally female projects, including food preparation and room decoration. In such instances agents recognized that club members could potentially benefit from such fluidity. Girls and boys alike could, as both youth and adults, supplement family incomes and provide needed labor by learning a variety of skills that deviated from traditional gender norms. For 4-H agents, the practical value of project work was more important than maintaining strict gender divisions, a characteristic which distinguished it from similar youth organizations like Future Farmers of America and Future Homemakers of America, both of which offered their members far less flexibility with regard to gender. As a result of this attitude, the process by which gender restrictions on 4-H activities disappeared was almost a non-issue. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the number of projects and awards with sex-based criteria for participation or winning gradually declined until there were none remaining.

Finally, Chapter Five addresses the ways in which North Carolina 4-H attempted to build character within club members. Despite the fact that the institution was founded on the principles of providing agricultural and homemaker training to rural youth, even from its earliest years 4-H agents and leaders attempted to instill certain social values

within club members. Three of the most prominent of these values were wise usage of leisure time, religious participation, and the development of strong citizenship. Agents and leadership promoted such values throughout the first five decades of club work and beyond. Exploring these three elements of character building reveals the social values of 4-H staff members, which emphasized productive uses of one's free time, adherence to Christianity, and civic engagement and responsibility at all levels of society. These three themes also disclose agents' views of young people. While much of American society in the twentieth century expressed concerns about rebellious youth culture and out-of-control adolescents, 4-H agents rarely adopted such attitudes, instead remaining supportive of young people. Agents instead largely attributed blame for any lapse in club members' character to poor parenting or adult behavior at home. Chapter Five reveals the extent to which societal attitudes toward young people and youth culture shifted throughout the twentieth century but also explores ways in which adults working closely with youth might develop views outside the norm.

When considered within a larger historical context, youth organizations like North Carolina 4-H provide a valuable resource for gauging the cultural climate of a specific location and era. Examining 4-H's evolution helps shed light on some of these larger trends transpiring within the state, as well as within the South and the rest of the nation. Whether looking at the decline of family farming and the rise of agribusiness, the eventual end of segregation, new views about gender, or adult perceptions of youth, North Carolina 4-H serves as a useful lens for connecting with larger social and economic developments.



## CHAPTER II

### “THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT FOR THOSE WHO PREPARE THEMSELVES”: NORTH CAROLINA 4-H CONFRONTS CHANGES IN THE STATE’S ECONOMY

One of the greatest challenges faced by North Carolina 4-H in the period following World War II was adapting its curriculum in response to the changing agricultural and economic trends within the state. The organization’s original mission was to better educate rural boys and girls in improved agricultural and homemaking practices. Therefore, when federal policies and expanding agribusiness led to a reduction in small-scale farms within North Carolina, 4-H chose to innovate to ensure that it remained relevant to the state’s youth as fewer young people pursued careers in farming. The process by which it did so, largely involving the development of new 4-H projects and activities to accommodate club members who did not live on farms, was gradual, moving slowly through the 1950s and intensifying in the 1960s and 1970s.

Responding to North Carolina’s new economic developments caused 4-H to make significant alterations to the ways in which club work was carried out within the state. The organization devised new projects designed to help youth both on and off the farm learn useful skills that could potentially prepare them for future employment. The structure of clubs changed during this period, along with the methods of delivering instruction. Four-H reached out to new demographics in areas that the clubs of the 1920s and 1930s would never have considered serving, such as urban youth. In the process of implementing such adaptations, the organization on the whole became more generally

willing to experiment and innovate. At the same time, however, North Carolina 4-H did not reject its farming roots. While new curricula were developed to accommodate the shift away from agriculture, the organization continued to offer members the option to participate in some of its more traditional and farm-centered projects.

Before exploring the specific ways in which 4-H morphed in the post-World War II era, it helps to have an idea of how project work functioned during the early decades of the organization. Doing so provides a useful basis of comparison to fully understand the scope of the alterations that transpired. In the 1910s and early 1920s, 4-H did not formally exist in North Carolina. Instead, the state's Extension Service organized youth clubs for boys and girls centered around one specific activity related to farming or homemaking, such as growing corn or canning tomatoes. Young people would meet periodically to receive instruction from agents and report in on their progress. The bulk of the work, however, was carried out independently by members at their homes. When the Extension youth program officially transitioned to 4-H clubs in 1926, some elements of club work did change. The new 4-H clubs had a broader focus and were no longer centered on just one aspect of farming or farm homemaking. Instead, agents offered club members a variety of project options from which to choose that increased over the decades. Rather than joining several different clubs, such as one devoted to crops and another focused on livestock, club members instead enrolled in different projects like tobacco and dairy cattle. Most of the work on the projects was still conducted largely independently, with agents providing guidance and instructional materials like project manuals at monthly meetings. Agents might also drop by 4-H'ers' homes to offer extra

help or evaluate members' performance. As the curriculum expanded in the late 1920s and beyond, the organization added completely new project areas, such as those focused on home improvement and health. The primary focus of 4-H in its first couple of decades, though, remained almost exclusively on reaching rural young people living on farms, with the goal of training them in improved agricultural and homemaking practices to aid them as adults. In the pre-1945 period, field crops and livestock remained two project areas largely undertaken by boys, while projects related to sewing and foods and nutrition were dominated by girls.<sup>1</sup>

To understand several of the factors driving the changes that ultimately helped reshape the nature of 4-H club work in North Carolina, it is crucial to examine the impact of New Deal agricultural policies on the state. The economic changes that occurred in North Carolina throughout much of the twentieth century were not unique to the state as the entire South experienced a decline in the number of small-scale producers and people employed in agriculture, along with an increase in farm mechanization and large agribusiness farms. While a variety of factors contributed to this process, in many ways New Deal programs implemented in the 1930s to raise crop prices and farmers' standards of living served as the catalyst starting the wave of changes that swept through the South in the years that followed.

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<sup>1</sup> L.R. Harrill, *Memories of 4-H* (Raleigh: North Carolina Development Fund, 1967), 6, 10; Jane S. McKimmon, *When We're Green We Grow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1945), 1-6; "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual Report 1940 [4-H Club Work]," 140, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1001>; L.R. Harrill, "History and Summary of Thirty Years of 4-H Club Work in North Carolina, 1909-1939," 3-5, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/320>.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, southern farmers endured extremely poor economic conditions, a situation that initially motivated the development and expansion of youth clubs in the South. Although crop prices had risen considerably during World War I and remained high through much of the 1920s, overproduction and global competition resulted in price deflation throughout the latter part of the decade. As the United States economy declined with the onset of the Great Depression in the early 1930s, conditions for farmers worsened. Southern farmers, who tended to engage in cash crop monoculture, increased production as part of an effort to compensate for the decline in crop prices. Such actions only further depressed market values.<sup>2</sup>

The federal government intervened in an effort to assist growers and stabilize prices. The first true efforts at recovery for farmers came in 1933, when Congress passed the Agricultural Adjustment Act, which implemented a system of voluntary reductions for some of the primary crops grown in the South, such as cotton and tobacco. Farmers were offered financial incentives to leave sections of their fields fallow and those who had already planted their crops were paid to plow them up, an initially unpopular prospect that many farmers eventually embraced as they recognized the impact that overproduction had on market prices. As the reduction of planted acres helped stabilize prices in 1933, Congress enacted new legislation in 1934 that made crop controls on cotton and tobacco mandatory rather than voluntary. Under the Bankhead Cotton Control Act and the Tobacco Control Act of 1934, the federal government levied taxes against

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<sup>2</sup> Gilbert C. Fite, *Cotton Fields No More: Southern Agriculture, 1865-1980* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 106-107.

farmers who produced in excess of acreage allotments issued by the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), so long as a majority of farmers consented to the taxes by way of a referendum. On the whole crop controls were so successful that Congress continued to find ways to enact them even after the Supreme Court struck down the AAA as unconstitutional in 1935.<sup>3</sup>

As New Deal programs reduced the number of acres that farmers had under cultivation, the need for farm labor decreased, leading to unemployment and dislocation for many who had worked in agriculture. With more fields remaining fallow, landlords who had utilized the labor of sharecroppers and tenant farmers in the past found in many cases that it was simply more profitable to evict tenants rather than to retain them. Cotton producing areas especially experienced high rates of tenant evictions, which AAA officials did little to combat. The plight of tenant farmers and sharecroppers was worsened by the fact that landlords often collected AAA payments that were intended for their tenants, arguing instead that the funds should be used to settle tenants' debts. The federal government made some effort at assisting those evicted, first through the Resettlement Administration and later through the Farm Securities Administration. For the most part, though, it focused on working with the larger growers, as AAA officials believed that without the support of the landlords, crop control measures would never be successfully implemented. As a result of this arrangement, tenants faced widespread displacement in many areas of the South. While this change ultimately helped break the

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<sup>3</sup> Roger Biles, *The South and the New Deal* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 39, 40-41, 52-53; Fite, *Cotton Fields No More*, 129.

region's exploitative cycle of farm tenancy, conditions could be especially harsh for those who were evicted.<sup>4</sup>

To a significant extent, North Carolina's experiences with the New Deal followed a similar course to that of the larger South. The state's farmers experienced the drop in crop prices along with the overproduction and market flooding that further depressed values. As part of an effort to stabilize and eventually raise prices, North Carolina farmers participated in the same AAA programs as farmers in other southern states. New Deal measures in North Carolina also resulted in the eviction of tenant farmers and sharecroppers as it did in other parts of the South, since larger producers found it more lucrative to rid themselves of tenants as part of their compliance with AAA crop reduction policies.<sup>5</sup>

In other ways, though, North Carolina's experiences with the New Deal differed from the rest of the South. Although much of the focus on the New Deal's agricultural impact emphasizes the consequences that recovery programs had on cotton, this crop, though important to the state, was not as prevalent in North Carolina. By the end of the 1920s, the state produced roughly 4 percent of the cotton in the United States, an amount that lagged far behind that of southern states farther west. Instead, tobacco cultivation was more widespread, with North Carolina growing about 40 percent of all tobacco in the

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<sup>4</sup> Fite, *Cotton Fields No More*, 142; Biles, 44, 47-49, 56.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony J. Badger, *North Carolina and the New Deal* (Raleigh: Department of Cultural Resources Division of Archives and History, 1981), 2, 19, 27.

United States and 70 percent of the domestic tobacco used for cigarette production.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, while cotton crop control measures were important for the state, tobacco legislation ultimately had a greater impact on North Carolina's economy.

Because of the prevalence of tobacco production in North Carolina, the state's growers had considerable influence in the construction of New Deal legislation pertaining to that crop, a fact that ultimately affected the direction that tobacco production would take in later decades. As in other states, federal officials worked closely with large cultivators in North Carolina as part of an effort to gain their cooperation in implementing policies like crop reduction. As a result, these large-scale producers were able to secure policies that favored their interests, allowed them to dominate tobacco production in the state, and made it difficult for new farmers to become profitable tobacco growers.<sup>7</sup>

Although agriculture would continue to be a vital part of North Carolina's economy throughout the twentieth century, New Deal policies helped alter the nature of farming in the state as well as who was involved in this sector of the economy. The New Deal contributed to the decline of small-scale producers. Not only did policies limit the ability of smaller farmers to enter into tobacco production, but crop reduction efforts resulted in the eviction of some of the state's tenant farmers and sharecroppers. They did not experience the same level of displacement in North Carolina as in states that were more heavily engaged in cotton production, but about 10 percent of the state's landless

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<sup>6</sup> Badger, 1-2; Milton Ready, *The Tar Heel State: A History of North Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 337.

<sup>7</sup> Badger, 27.

farmers were forced out of agriculture during the Depression era. Evictions in this period also had an impact on the racial composition of North Carolina farmers as white landlords tended to evict black tenants at a higher rate than whites. In total, around twenty-thousand tenants and their families were evicted during the New Deal, with blacks comprising 60 percent of those displaced.<sup>8</sup>

The Great Depression had less of an impact on the nature of 4-H club work in North Carolina than it did on commercial agriculture within the state. Its legacy, however, motivated 4-H leaders in the following decades to implement many structural changes within the organization. Alterations made in the 1930s tended to be temporary in nature and tended to reflect the time constraints imposed on Extension agents by New Deal programs. For example, as Extension agents reached out to farmers in the 1930s to assist them with AAA programs, the amount of time they had to devote to 4-H declined. Such scheduling constraints, coupled with general economic hardship, led to reduced offerings and activities for club members, a short-lived trend reversed by the early 1940s when agents had more time to work with youth. During this same period, state-level leadership within 4-H voiced an awareness of the changing nature of both farming techniques and economic opportunities in agriculture. In 1941, L.R. Harrill, who led North Carolina 4-H at the state level for thirty-seven years and was instrumental in establishing the overall program, weighed in on the impact that practices implemented during the New Deal were having on the state's agricultural sector. He argued that some of these, such as crop reduction, were reducing the overall opportunities in farming

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<sup>8</sup> Badger, 28; Ready, 337-338.



available to North Carolina youth and contributing to an increase in unemployment.

During this period, Harrill also asserted that limitations existed on the earnings potential for young people who pursued careers in agriculture. Even before the end of World War II, the rural standard of living for young adults tended to fall below that of their urban counterparts.<sup>9</sup>

This financial disparity between rural and urban regions that concerned Harrill and others was linked to the expansion of southern manufacturing that accompanied World War II. On the whole, the war facilitated the growth of new industries within the South, as well as increased opportunities for employment in manufacturing. In an effort to create the material goods needed to wage war, many new factories opened throughout the Southeast, resulting in significant population increases in the towns and cities where the factories were located as people arrived seeking work. Throughout the South, the overall number of people living on farms declined by roughly a fifth, with many of those who left agriculture for industrial employment never returning to the farm. North Carolina's wartime experiences differed somewhat from the rest of the South in that it did not experience considerable growth in new industries, although plants were built for the

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<sup>9</sup> L.R. Harrill, "Annual Report of 4-H Club Work December 1, 1932 to December 1, 1933," 2, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/994>; L.R. Harrill, "Annual Report of 4-H Club Work December 1, 1933 to December 1, 1934," 4, 24, *Green 'N' Growing: The History of Home Demonstration and 4-H Youth Development in North Carolina (GNG)*, North Carolina State University Libraries, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/995> "4-H Objectives for 1941," Box 5, L. R. Harrill Papers, MC 17, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service 4-H Plan of Work for Calendar Year 1942," 1, Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Annual Reports, UA 102.002, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina.

manufacture of ammunition and parachutes. However, pre-existing industries within the state expanded as a result of wartime demand for products like textiles and cigarettes.<sup>10</sup>

During World War II, North Carolina 4-H offered a limited response to the state's evolving labor trends, continuing to focus primarily on educating club members in techniques related to farming and rural homemaking. Agents viewed such instruction as a way of possibly motivating young people to pursue agricultural vocations rather than succumbing to "the temptations of high city wages." The lure of urban areas had been an issue on the minds of 4-H leadership throughout the first half of the 1940s, as increased wartime industrial production presented new economic opportunities for many of the older youth involved in 4-H. Extension officials considered these jobs as a way to ease some of the unemployment that resulted from New Deal crop control measures. However, 4-H leadership also recognized that since many of the war industries jobs were temporary, not all young people would be able to remain in these positions indefinitely and that many might return to farming at the war's end. To stem the tide of rural outmigration, agents also wanted to entice other youth to abandon factory work and return to farms. Therefore, state-level leadership focused on ensuring that the projects available to club members would directly assist them in earning enough to support themselves in their future endeavors as farmers or to efficiently maintain a household as rural homemakers. By doing so, they hoped to reduce some of the factors pushing young

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<sup>10</sup> David Goldfield, *Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers: Southern City and Region, 1607-1980* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 183; James C. Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society, 1877-1984* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 45-46; Kirby, 304-305, 353-354; Ready, 369.

adults to seek non-farm employment. Agents believed that by improving rural economic conditions, factories would be less alluring.<sup>11</sup>

Technological innovations altered the nature of crop cultivation in the postwar period with farmers in both North Carolina and the South becoming more reliant on mechanization for agricultural production. Part of mechanization involved the use of tractors to replace draft animals that farmers had relied upon in the past for tasks like pulling plows. Machines also came to take the place of human labor. The widescale production of an effective mechanical cotton picker, which was not realized until the 1950s, led to a decline in the number of people required to harvest cotton crops. A similar trend followed with tobacco, though the complex physical structure of tobacco plants delayed mass production of tobacco harvesters until the 1970s. As a result of mechanization, 23 percent of cotton was harvested by machines in 1955. By the 1970s, 100 percent of southern cotton was picked by machines, thus greatly reducing the region's need for manual farm labor. Mechanization in tobacco cultivation resulted in a 40 percent decline in labor required for tobacco harvesting. By the end of the 1970s, around half of all tobacco was harvested mechanically.<sup>12</sup> The drop in the demand for

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<sup>11</sup> "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Plan of Work 1946," 1, Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Annual Reports; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service 4-H Plan of Work for Calendar Year 1942," 1; "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Plan of Work 1946," 5, Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Annual Reports.

<sup>12</sup> Ronald E. Seavoy, *The American Peasantry: Southern Agricultural Labor and Its Legacy, 1850-1995, A Study in Political Economy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 478; Donald Holley, *The Second Great Emancipation: The Mechanical Cotton Picker, Black Migration, and How They Shaped the Modern South* (Fayetteville, AK: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 119; Donald L. Winters, "Agriculture in the Post-World War II South," in *The Rural South Since World War II*, ed. R. Douglas Hurt (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 14.

farm workers would factor heavily into 4-H's motivations for restructuring the nature of many of its project offerings.

Farmers chose to mechanize for several reasons, with government policies, like federal price control measures, helping to drive much of the transition. Regulations on tobacco illustrate this federal influence. In the period from the establishment of the AAA through 1965, the federal government restricted the number of acres that tobacco farmers could plant in order to control market prices for the crop. Tobacco planters with the necessary financial resources utilized new pesticides and nitrogen fertilizers to increase their yields in order to improve their returns, something that smaller growers often could not afford to do. In 1965, however, the USDA changed its restrictions on tobacco, instead imposing limits on poundage rather than acreage. Fearing that their profits were in jeopardy, large growers began focusing on reducing overall labor costs and in the process pushed for the development of a mechanical tobacco picker.<sup>13</sup> The creation of such a machine led to a significant reduction in the volume of tobacco picked by hand, thus lowering the overall labor costs of growers who could afford such a device.

As mechanization was more widely utilized, the nature of farms changed in response. Over time, the average acreage of farms expanded while the total number of farms declined. This process first began in the 1950s, increasing significantly by the end of the decade and continuing into the 1960s. In 1950, North Carolina had 288,508 farms, but four years later 7 percent of those were gone. The reduction only intensified as the

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<sup>13</sup> Jack Temple Kirby, *Rural Worlds Lost: The American South, 1920-1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 344-345.

decade progressed. Farm census data collected in 1959 revealed that the number of North Carolina farms had dropped by 34 percent from the 1950 total, and by 1964, over half of the original amount had disappeared, with only 148,202 remaining. With regard to tobacco alone, the number of such farms within North Carolina had fallen by almost 90 percent by 1992, although actual production of the crop dropped only by about 11 percent. Mechanization and consolidation led to an overall shift away from the tenant farming and sharecropping practices utilized in the first half of the twentieth century but did not completely eliminate the need for agricultural laborers. Instead of partitioning their acreage for tenants and croppers to work, large growers instead transitioned to hiring hourly wage earners to operate farm machinery and to complete the tasks that machines could not. In response to this shift, urban and suburban regions of the state also expanded as the majority of the state's residents worked outside of agriculture. Whereas 80 percent of the state's residents had lived in rural areas in 1920, by 1960 60.5 percent were living in urban areas.<sup>14</sup>

Technological innovation also altered the relationships between farmers and corporations, leading to the rapid expansion of agribusiness in the 1950s. Prior to World War II, farmers had purchased seed, equipment, and other agricultural supplies from local companies. Considerable changes took place in the postwar period, however, largely facilitated by technological advancements and government policies. Seeking to maximize efficiency and profits, farmers turned increasingly in the postwar period to new

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<sup>14</sup> M. Mohan Sawhney and Selz C. Mayo, *Tarheel Farmers: Their Farms and Patterns of Agricultural Production* (Raleigh: Agricultural Research Station, North Carolina State University, 1968), 77; Winter, 13-14; Seavoy, 462; Kirby, 275.

technological developments, including chemical fertilizers and pesticides, more productive hybrid seed varieties, as well as to machines like tractors and harvesters. As more farmers adopted these new innovations, others that remained in agriculture were compelled to do so in order to remain competitive, a process that ultimately resulted in farmers and corporations being more closely intertwined than they had been in the past. Previously, for example, growers had been able to breed the horses and mules that aided them with plowing and harvesting, or utilize the manure produced by such animals as fertilizer for crops. Postwar innovations meant that to stay competitive, farmers now had no choice but to purchase the new supplies from corporate suppliers.<sup>15</sup>

The new technological innovations, the expansion of non-agricultural jobs, and the growing influence of agribusiness, did not escape the notice of 4-H agents in North Carolina. The organization deliberately chose to restructure elements of its curriculum, offering club members projects that leaders hoped would equip them with the skills necessary to earn a comfortable living in postwar North Carolina. The process by which 4-H implemented such changes took place over multiple decades. The new projects offered in the 1940s and 1950s did little to encourage 4-H'ers to leave farming and farm homemaking, but instead focused on providing members with training to help them adapt to the technological changes taking place in agriculture. In this way, alterations made in the 1940s and 1950s did not shift greatly from the focus of previous decades because 4-H's emphasis remained primarily farm-centered.

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<sup>15</sup> John L. Shover, *First Majority-Last Minority: The Transition of Rural Life in America* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976), 149-152, 154; Gilbert C. Fite, *American Farmers: The New Minority* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 176.

Several project innovations reflected the new technological advancements and the influence of agribusiness. Though designed by 4-H agents these new projects encouraged club members to use new projects marketed by agribusiness firms. One of the earliest such projects was the tractor maintenance project, which first appeared in 1947. Reflecting the growing influence of mechanization on farming, the project was designed in such a way that participants received training in tractor care and operation. Though project manuals might provide theoretical instruction with regard to the mechanics of how tractors functioned, participating 4-H'ers also had the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning either at home, if a club member's family owned a tractor, or, for top-performers, by attending tractor maintenance schools at the county and district levels. At these particular events, instructors provided demonstrations of assorted care practices, including changing fluids, brakes, and belts, as well as providing a general overview of how combustion engines worked. To encourage safe driving practices, North Carolina 4-H also held tractor operator competitions, where participants were judged on their ability to skillfully and safely maneuver the machines. Continuing its emphasis on new agricultural practices, the organization began in 1952 to offer 4-H'ers the opportunity to participate in an entomology program, in which they would learn general information about insects as well as how to control pests both in the home and on the farm. Reflecting another postwar agricultural trend, elements of the project emphasized the use of chemical pesticides to assist in insect control. In all three projects,

club members were exposed to and encouraged to use new products only available by purchase.<sup>16</sup>

Even before the postwar expansion of agribusiness, North Carolina 4-H had connections to assorted businesses, including agricultural supply companies. These relationships began prior to World War II and were largely driven by the need to secure financial sponsors. Ever since the state's assortment of canning and corn clubs became consolidated under 4-H in 1926, the organization sought out sponsorship from a variety of businesses and organizations to cope with limited federal funding. Through the procurement of private donations and patronage at county, state, and federal levels, 4-H could offer club members increased access to things like special camps, prize awards for top-performing 4-H'ers, a greater number of competitions, and other activities. In some instances, such funding came from local organizations and civic clubs that did not engage directly in marketing agricultural or homemaking products. For example, in 1955 the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce and the Kiwanis Club both contributed funds for hosting a dairy show for white club members, as well as for paying out cash prizes to winners. While these kinds of sponsors might have an interest in promoting economic growth within their communities and the state, they were not retailers with the goal of marketing goods.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual Report 1947 [4-H Club Work]," 53-54, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1008>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 [4-H Club Work]," 47, 52, 53, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1013>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1955 [4-H Club Work]," 56, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1016>; Winters, 22.

<sup>17</sup> L.R. Harrill, 69; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1955 [4-H Club Work]," 9.



Some sponsors, though, were commercial entities whose products or services were directly tied to the goals of the project or award sponsored. In the 1950s, the Savannah Sugar Refining Corporation sponsored two junior canning contests, one for African American 4-H girls and another for their white counterparts. While reports on this competition did not state that the participating girls were required to use sugar purchased from this company, the competition sponsored was directly related to the commodity produced by the corporation, as sugar is a required ingredient for many canned goods. If nothing else, serving as a 4-H sponsor provided a company with a degree of advertising and a way of potentially creating good feelings about a particular product with 4-H'ers. Similarly, the tractor maintenance project provided the oil companies and tractor dealerships that sponsored or hosted regional training schools with an opportunity to at least expose the participating agents and 4-H'ers to their products and services. In some instances industry groups used their sponsorship as a way to expose 4-H'ers to a particular product without actually promoting a specific brand. Such an example can be found with the American Corn Millers Federation, which sponsored a project that taught participants how to prepare foods made from enriched cornmeal. In the case of the cornmeal project, the instruction guide, printed by North Carolina 4-H, emphasized the nutritional benefits of preparing food with cornmeal enriched with vitamins but never recommended any cornmeal brands. North Carolina 4-H also received sponsorship from companies and corporations with less direct ties to the project or event in question, but that could still potentially benefit from the exposure such donations could bring to them, such as the Frigidaire Sales Corporation's sponsorship of

training workshops and transportation to national meetings for adult volunteer leaders working with 4-H or Wachovia Bank and Trust Company's funding for dairy demonstration competitions.<sup>18</sup>

Four-H leaders had mixed views of such outside sponsorship. To a large degree, perceptions were positive. Reflecting back on his thirty-seven years of experience leading North Carolina 4-H, L.R. Harrill contended that he and others had viewed a rise in the number of donors as an indicator of the success of 4-H club work within the state. The organization's list of "cooperating agencies," as these outside sponsors were labeled, grew larger over the decades, though incomplete records make a thorough comparison between years impossible. A variety of factors may help explain this increase in the postwar period. It is true that agribusiness was expanding, but this was, until the 1960s, a time in which North Carolina 4-H's membership grew considerably, going from a combined total of 91,573 black and white members in 1945 to 166,427 in 1959. Though donations enabled the organization to provide more opportunities and incentives to its members than it could have done without them, leadership also acknowledged that not all sponsors necessarily fit within 4-H's vision for work with young people. Even during the 1930s, a time in which budget cuts and time constraints limited youth club work, leadership reported that "many prizes have been offered, some accepted and some rejected." Though no elaboration was provided on which prizes were rejected or why,

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<sup>18</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1957," 9, 10, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1018>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1951 [4-H Club Work]," 1, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1012>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 [4-H Club Work]," 52-53, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1013>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Annual Report for 1959 [4-H Club Work]," 8, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1020>.

the refusal to accept donations suggests that leadership did not believe that all relationships between 4-H and outside businesses were desirable. On the whole, though, 4-H agents portrayed their work with cooperating agencies as a positive development and did not reflect, at least on the record, about the advertising opportunities that such arrangements provided commercial sponsors. The practice of seeking and accepting outside sponsorship continued into the twenty-first century.<sup>19</sup>

North Carolina 4-H revised its curriculum to address other technological changes taking place on farms within the state that were not as directly driven by agribusiness. In 1948, the organization launched new projects that focused on potential uses for electricity both in agriculture and in homemaking. Top-performing members who completed electric projects also attended an annual Electric Congress each year in Raleigh. These projects, jointly sponsored by the state's electric utility companies, emphasized ways in which club members could improve conditions on their farms or in their homes with electricity. In addition to learning more about theoretical principles of agriculture, a 4-H'er participating in this project might also work on installing electric lights in a home or barn, utilizing electric milking machines on dairy farms, or preparing meals with electric appliances. Although less directly focused on electricity, the frozen foods project that emerged during the mid-1940s also represented a response to new and expanding technological developments. Previously all food preservation activities had encompassed

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<sup>19</sup> Harrill, *Memories of 4-H*, 69; L.R. Harrill, "Annual Report of 4-H Club Work December 1, 1935 to December 1, 1936," 8, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/997>; North Carolina 4-H Youth Development; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Annual Report for 1958 [4-H Club Work]," n.p., *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1019>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Annual Report for 1959 [4-H Club Work]," 6; "Donors Overview," <http://www.nc4h.org/donors/who-we-are/overview/> (accessed May 24, 2012).

canning, but as rural people increasingly had access either to electric home freezers or communal “freezer locker plants” where freezer space could be rented, the agency began teaching girls methods of preserving foods through freezing.<sup>20</sup>

Electricity-based projects were another reflection of the legacy of the impact of the New Deal within North Carolina. Created in 1935, the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) endeavored to expand access to electricity in rural households, something that existing electric companies had failed to do as they had not believed it to be financially profitable. Through the cooperatives established under the REA, electrification of the rural South increased rapidly. Without the REA’s efforts in the region, the same process could possibly have taken almost a century to accomplish. Within North Carolina, rates of farm electrification rose by over 22 percent from 1935 to 1940, although the state continued to fall behind the national average for the electrification of farms. More rural households became electrified in the postwar period, making it possible for 4-H to offer projects pertaining to the new technology.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to restructuring 4-H projects in response to the impact of technological developments on agriculture, state leadership also had to confront the continuation of industrial expansion in the postwar South, which also had implications for the future of farming. Several of the wartime manufacturing facilities constructed in the region were converted for peacetime uses enabling many of those who found employment in

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<sup>20</sup> “Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual Report 1947 [4-H Club Work],” 41, 51, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1007>, 41; “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 [4-H Club Work],” 54.

<sup>21</sup> Biles, 54; Badger, 54.

manufacturing during the war to retain their jobs. New industries also emerged in the postwar South, including automotive and furniture manufacturing, as well as petroleum processing. Corporations viewed the region as an attractive area to either establish themselves or relocate pre-existing industries because of the region's depressed wages and low rates of union membership, two factors that southern state governments promoted as a way to attract new jobs to the area, a practice that continued into the 1980s. North Carolina already had a strong industrial sector, firmly established in the early decades of the twentieth century and dominated by textile manufacturing, although cigarette and furniture production were also prevalent.<sup>22</sup> In the postwar period, the importance of manufacturing to the state's economy increased and provided economic opportunities to those displaced from agriculture by mechanization.

While many dislocated Southern farmers and their adult children traveled to other parts of the country in search of jobs, the majority of North Carolinians pushed out of agriculture did not leave the state but instead sought employment in other sectors of the state's economy, including manufacturing. In eastern sections of North Carolina, for example, many former tobacco farmers in the 1950s and 1960s found work in light industries such as textile mills that began opening in that part of the state. By 1970 over half of all North Carolinians employed in manufacturing were classified as nonfarm rural. Some smaller farmers did not leave agriculture altogether, but instead, also found employment off of the farm, often in manufacturing, in order to supplement their

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<sup>22</sup> Kirby, 105; Phillip J. Wood, *Southern Capitalism: The Political Economy of North Carolina, 1880-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986), 18.

incomes. Such opportunities were not available to all former farmers within North Carolina, as it was not until the mid-1960s and beyond that many manufacturing plants began to increase their numbers of African American workers.<sup>23</sup>

Industrial employment, while offering a degree of economic stability for workers, did not necessarily provide well-paying jobs, a situation that North Carolina politicians attempted to improve. The state, like many in the South, had low levels of union membership, partially due to the state's right-to-work legislation, which was adopted in 1947 and essentially outlawed closed shops within the state. The state also had a history of lower-than-average wages when compared to the rest of the nation and variation existed within different regions of the state as some rural areas had per capita income that averaged just under half of the state's mean. Luther H. Hodges, governor from 1954 to 1961, recognized the disparity between rural and urban sections of the state and advocated for the expansion of small industrial facilities into the more rural regions, a practice also followed by Governors Terry Sanford and James Hunt in later years. These new factories, however, did not always result in higher wages for their employees. Though they did provide employment to segments of the state's displaced rural workforce, wages paid continued to fall behind the national average since many of the corporations establishing plants in rural North Carolina were essentially relocating in the hopes of paying lower wages than were the norm in the more unionized parts of the country in which they originated. Local chambers of commerce, which played a considerable role in attracting industry to individual counties and towns, also sometimes

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<sup>23</sup> Kirby, 351, 354; Wood, 178-179, 194; Cobb, 82-83.

actively worked to attract companies that would not implement policies that challenged the state's traditionally low levels of union membership and wage rates, a practice that continued into the 1970s.<sup>24</sup>

Recognizing that unskilled light industry would not solve all the state's economic woes, politicians and civic leaders endeavored to attract better-paying and more technologically advanced industries. In the mid-1950s under the governorship of Luther H. Hodges, representatives from state government, private industry, and the three research colleges located in North Carolina's Triangle region, worked together to found the Research Triangle Institute, established in early 1959.<sup>25</sup> Hodges and others hoped that the institute, located in between Raleigh and Durham at Research Triangle Park (RTP), would lure new industries to North Carolina and also help the state retain some of its own college graduates since as many as two-thirds of 1950s science graduates from Triangle research universities left the state in search of better employment opportunities. The Research Triangle Institute was designed to reverse this outmigration and to create higher paying industrial jobs within the state. A similar research park opened in Charlotte during the 1960s. While initially many of the organizations operating out of RTP were nationally focused, by the early 1970s the institute's members began to direct their attention to the needs of the state. The park's presence within North Carolina also helped attract other higher skilled and better paying manufacturing facilities to areas of

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<sup>24</sup> Wood, 152, 154, 165-166; Cobb, 51-52; Luther H. Hodges, *Businessman in the Statehouse: Six Years as Governor of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), 29-32; Ready, 372.

<sup>25</sup> The three institutions were North Carolina State College at Raleigh (presently North Carolina State University), the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Duke University.

the state separated from the park as corporations from outside the region viewed RTP as proof that advanced industry could thrive in North Carolina.<sup>26</sup> Though such growth did provide new employment opportunities for the state's residents, it also meant that in order to obtain such jobs, individuals would need more technical training.

Mindful of industrial expansion and the shrinking number of small farms, Extension workers emphasized the importance of 4-H members investigating and preparing for work outside of agriculture. By the mid-1960s, state leaders noted that only about 10 percent of young people who were born in farming families would actually be employed on farms as adults. In order to make sure young people were prepared to find jobs outside of agriculture, North Carolina 4-H began offering a Career Exploration project in 1963, designed to educate club members about alternative employment options as well as how to find additional information about possible careers even after completing the project. Leaders working with club members participating in this project were instructed that while club members might not actually find the field in which they would eventually be employed as adults, the project would help 4-H'ers think more broadly about employment opportunities.<sup>27</sup>

Targeted at club members of both sexes ages twelve and up, the Career Exploration project was largely self-directed. The young people who enrolled in this

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<sup>26</sup> Charles X. Larrabee, *Many Missions: Research Triangle Institute's First 31 Years, 1959-1990* (Research Triangle Institute: Research Triangle Park, 1991), 58, 61, 73, 138; Ready, 371.

<sup>27</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1965," 1, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/486>; "Career Exploration: A Guide for Leaders, March 1964," Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications, UA 102.200, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina.



project were encouraged to assess their own interests and skills, and then research possible fields in which they might be interested in working as adults by learning more about the jobs, interviewing adults who held such positions, and consulting career counselors. Project leaders did not push 4-H'ers toward any particular jobs. Instead, they informed participants of certain career fields that were expanding, including service industries like “repair services, medical, [and] telephone.” They also highlighted areas that were on the decline, specifically singling out both mining and farming. Perhaps the closest this particular project came to suggesting specific jobs to club members was through the text printed on the cover of the Career Exploration record book. The front of this particular publication, which featured an image of a girl and boy staring at a sunrise, listed the names of seven careers: “nursing, lawyer, mechanic, agri-business, farmer, engineer, [and] doctor.” The inclusion of farming on the cover is especially notable as state level leaders envisioned the project as a way for pushing young people to seek out trades other than farming. At the same time, however, the inclusion of agribusiness directly reflects awareness on the part of agents about the changing nature of farming and the growing influence of corporations on it.<sup>28</sup>

Emphasis on workforce preparation extended beyond the Career Exploration project. Though state level leaders acknowledged that young people might no longer be able to make a living on small family farms, a goal of agents in the early decades of club work, they still asserted that in spite of the changes, “the total youth program in North

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<sup>28</sup> “Career Exploration: A Guide for Leaders, March 1964”; “Career Exploration – 4-H Record Book,” Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

Carolina is career oriented.” While the field of potential jobs agents expected 4-H’ers to one day acquire had expanded, the organization still held as one of its goals the desire to assist young people in successfully preparing for and securing employment as adults. To accomplish this, the organization offered special classes and training focused on career awareness to older club members. It also started emphasizing to club members ways in which some of its traditional projects, including those related to homemaking, provided training that could be useful when looking for paid work.<sup>29</sup>

Foods and nutrition was one homemaking project area that the organization contended could teach skills useful for securing paid employment. Since the organization’s earliest years, foods and nutrition had taught both theoretical and practical aspects of food preparation and dietary principles. In the 1960s, guide books for adult leaders began stressing ways in which completion of the project would leave 4-H’ers with training helpful in eventually finding work in places like “public health departments, welfare departments, agricultural Extension services, magazine and newspaper companies, radio and television stations, school lunch programs, industries, utility companies, research laboratories, foreign health programs, and colleges and universities.” Instructional materials contended that not all members who undertook the project would be able to use skills learned in 4-H to find jobs, noting that to do so would require “serious participation” on the part of the club member.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>“North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1967,” 11-12, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/434>.

<sup>30</sup> “Foods-Nutrition: 4-H Leader’s Guide, March 1964,” Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

Such emphasis on using training from a project to acquire paid employment also surfaced in the late 1960s in another homemaking project, home improvement. This particular project required participants to redecorate parts of their homes, often their own bedrooms, as part of teaching aesthetic principles and organizational skills. In the case of home improvement, North Carolina 4-H noted that it still anticipated the main benefit to both male and female participants would be the ability to make their homes as adults comfortable and attractive. However, the organization noted that, when combined with further study at a college or university, 4-H'ers undertaking this project could potentially pursue employment as "interior decorators and consultants, writers, commercial home economists, educators, and those in related areas." With both foods and nutrition and home improvement, 4-H was not so much providing apprenticeship opportunities for specific jobs, but instead working to cultivate interest and provide foundational knowledge to aid club members in further training should they decide to find employment in these areas. Though the organization viewed such projects as a way to continue its focus on preparing 4-H'ers for employment, it did not keep records of how many club members actually followed through in securing jobs related to project work.<sup>31</sup>

By the mid-1960s club members' own desires to work outside of agriculture created unexpected challenges for 4-H. In this period agents noted a statewide trend involving a "lack of appreciation for the dignity and worth of skilled labor among adults and youth," with many people viewing a college education with an emphasis on science

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<sup>31</sup> "4-H Home Improvement: A Guide for Leaders, 1968," Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

as the only avenue to a respectable job. Such opinions reflected changing developments in and expectations of education. Throughout the twentieth century, national high school attendance and graduation rates had steadily risen, while at the same time the Cold War military rivalry with the Soviet Union created an impetus for federal support of post-secondary education and a greater focus on science. Within North Carolina, efforts at economic diversification and improvement led to the solidification and expansion of the state's university system, as well as the creation of the community college system. It delivered some of the technical training needed to attract high-tech industries as well as affordable access to general education courses, thus enabling people with lesser financial resources to attend. The Higher Education Act of 1965, which provided access to low-interest federal student loans, further increased enrollments. As a result of such developments, the expectation that young adults would receive some form of college education grew and cultural attitudes increasingly linked financial success with college attendance. In response to such beliefs, leaders conducting the Career Exploration project sought to generally portray skilled labor in a more positive light, stressing the potential economic and societal value of working in jobs that were nonfarm and nonprofessional. Agents believed young people would be more likely to find employment within North Carolina's changing economy if they were less rigid with the jobs they were willing to consider.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1965," 2; John Modell, *Into One's Own: From Youth To Adulthood in the United States, 1920-1975* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 76, 122; Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York, Basic Books, 1996), William J. Reese, *America's Public Schools: From the Common School to "No Child Left Behind,"* updated ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 226; William A. Link, *William Friday: Power, Purpose, and American Higher Education* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina

North Carolina 4-H's emphasis on preparing club members for entering the workforce as adults continued into the 1970s. In addition to Career Exploration, 4-H'ers had the opportunity to learn about pursuing careers in business and as entrepreneurs through the Economics in Action project. This project, which began as a pilot initiative in 1973, provided participants with an overview of how local, state, and national economies functioned, as well as how interested club members might start their own businesses upon reaching adulthood. Though 4-H had worked with cooperating business and community interests for decades, the influence of local business leaders stood out more prominently with regard to Economics in Action. Rather than 4-H developing the project and then reaching out to local businesses, in this particular instance, business owners, community leaders, and local politicians approached 4-H, arguing that such a project was needed due to "the apparent apathy of youth toward the positive contributions of the business community and the general failure of youth to understand the role of the business in today's society." In Union County, this influence continued into the second-half of the decade. In 1976 agents reported that local "business and civic leaders" wanted the county's 4-H program to provide more "emphasis on the free enterprise system," arguing that "youth need to understand the importance of a full days work for a full days pay [sic]." In spite of the desires of local business leaders, the project, which continued through the 1970s, did not result in high participation rates from club members, with 350 out of a total of 93,000 4-H'ers enrolling in it in 1977. A lack of interest could explain

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Press, 1995), 162-163; Sheila Curran Bernard and Sarah Mondale, *School: The Story of American Public Education* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 149-150.

the low numbers, as well as the fact that the project required participants to go on group tours of places like banks, factories, and local businesses, which was somewhat antithetical to 4-H's efforts at implementing more flexible and convenient scheduling practices in the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>33</sup>

Awareness of economic and demographic trends in North Carolina left 4-H agents not only emphasizing career training but also reaching out to young people who did not live on farms. As small-scale agricultural producers declined and jobs in areas outside of farming increased, leadership at the state level of North Carolina 4-H initiated restructuring efforts to help make the organization relevant and interesting to the state's non-farm youth. This process began with adjustments in project offerings, an endeavor that started slowly in the 1950s and accelerated in the 1960s. Initially, the organization made a few minor additions in available projects, such as a course in automotive care initiated in 1958 and the addition of a recreational horse and pony project aimed at suburban youth in 1959. In the 1960s, however, the organization intensified its efforts at accommodating members who might not have any connections to agriculture. Between 1963 and 1965, 4-H added sixteen new projects to its offerings that could be completed regardless of whether or not a member lived on a farm. Some of these, such as money management and public speaking, fit within 4-H's goal of continuing to provide club members with instruction in practical skills useful in adulthood. However, other new

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<sup>33</sup> "Economics in Action: Guidelines for a 4-H Youth Program," 1-3, 7-8, Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Union County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 23-24; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, "Annual Narrative Report, Oct. 1, 1976-Sept. 30, 1977," 67, 69, Box 17, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Annual Reports.

projects introduced during this period more heavily emphasized leisure pursuits, such as those focused on activities like flower gardening, photography, and wood working.<sup>34</sup>

All of these new projects could be completed in rural, urban, or suburban environments and did not require participants to have access to farm land or equipment in the same way more traditional projects, such as field crops, livestock, or tractor maintenance did. As a result, these new project activities enabled the organization to more effectively recruit members from more diverse groups of young people than it had in the past. Four-H's development of leisure options also fit within North Carolina's transition to larger farms as the reduction in small-scale producers meant that more children would live in non-farm environments and as a result, no longer have to complete farm chores or work with their parents to prepare for their eventual futures as farmers or farm homemakers. Though the organization did maintain its focus on career exploration and planning, these new recreational projects, which often promoted the development of hobbies, had even more potential to attract to young people with more free time to 4-H since they emphasized pastimes rather than work. As a retired agent who worked in Vance County in the 1970s informally noted, the club members she encountered often

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<sup>34</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Annual Report for 1958 [4-H Club Work]," 43; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Annual Report for 1959 [4-H Club Work]," 39; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Annual Report for 1961 [4-H Club Work]," 7, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1022>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1963, 8-11, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1024>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1964," 4, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/471>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1965," 20.

preferred fun projects and activities over those associated purely with teaching adult skill sets, such as money management.<sup>35</sup>

North Carolina 4-H utilized other strategies for attracting and appealing to non-farm youth, including participation in a Federal Extension Service initiative in the mid-1960s known as Operation Expansion. Launched in early 1966, Operation Expansion was part of a national effort to devise ways of increasing enrollment without actually hiring more agents or staff. Six states, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Washington, were selected to take part in it. Initially six North Carolina counties participated: Buncombe, Currituck, Davie, Gaston, Sampson, and Vance. These specific counties were selected to provide a sampling of the different levels of enrollment present in counties throughout the state.<sup>36</sup>

Within North Carolina, implementation of Operation Expansion centered largely on attracting greater numbers of young people to participate in 4-H to cope with a significant decline in enrollment that occurred in the early 1960s. Four years before the initiative's launch the state's clubs stopped meeting in public schools and instead were organized around local communities. During the transition from school to community clubs, North Carolina 4-H lost almost 70 percent of its members, with enrollment falling from just over 168,000 in 1960 to 50,780 in 1965. In order to make 4-H attractive to

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<sup>35</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1967," 16; Carolyn Barnes, interview by the author, recording, Graham, North Carolina, April 14, 2010, in author's possession.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Wessel and Marilyn Wessel, *4-H: An American Idea, 1900-1980* (Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Council, 1982), 210; "4-H Operation Expansion North Carolina Report, February 15, 1966," Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records, UA 102.010, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina.



young people who had never been involved with it, staff focused on ensuring that projects and activities were both interesting and relevant to the needs and desires of potential members. Agents in participating counties surveyed youth to get a sense of which projects generated the most interest. To reach as many young people as possible, agents distributed surveys in public schools to students between the ages of six and nineteen. After collecting the data, they then attempted to both adjust the projects offered within community clubs and to also form new special interest groups that, unlike permanent clubs, provided more flexibility by meeting for a short period of time and focusing exclusively on one particular project.<sup>37</sup>

Agents involved with Operation Expansion highlighted as one of their primary goals the recruitment of new club members from demographic groups not widely served by 4-H in the past. They sought to accomplish this goal by promoting projects that were not necessarily agricultural in nature but were instead potentially appealing and accessible to urban and suburban youth. Surveys distributed to forty-two hundred young people in Davie County, for example, included options for projects that focused on dog care, flower gardening, bicycling, care for pleasure horses, and recreation. In Buncombe County, agents organized a new special interest group that focused on safe driving practices and automotive care. Currituck County agents organized a Junior Olympics that emphasized general recreation and bicycle skills. Such new offerings allowed 4-H a way to increase membership levels in spite of the decline in the number of the state's

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<sup>37</sup> "Operation Expansion Monthly Report, Davie County, March 1966" Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Annual Report for 1960 [4-H Club Work]," 6, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1021>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1965," 19.

farms and the organization's transition to community clubs because the utilization of survey data helped agents ensure that the new projects they offered were of interest to young people. Though agents in participating counties provided no rationale behind the survey results, the fact that those projects which had the most appeal were recreational in nature and promoted the cultivation of hobbies likely accounts for their allure to the survey participants. The fact that the bulk of these projects, with perhaps the exception of horse care, could be completed regardless of the environment in which the club member lived, also likely accounts for their attraction.<sup>38</sup>

The trial of Operation Expansion proved so effective in generating interest and increased enrollment in North Carolina 4-H that the organization applied to continue its involvement in it even after the pilot ended in July of 1966. The state resumed its involvement in Operation Expansion in October of that year, with the participation of the six original pilot counties and twelve new ones: Burke, Camden, Cabarrus, Durham, Harnett, Henderson, Moore, Pasquotank, Robeson, Stokes, Surry, and Wayne. State leadership selected the counties based on a variety of factors including the counties' desires to participate, the degree to which they were representative of agent workload in the state, and their location throughout different regions of North Carolina. The new counties utilized many of the same techniques as those used during the pilot, including conducting surveys to determine the interests of young people and forming special interest groups. Agents also continued to emphasize projects and programs geared

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<sup>38</sup> "Operation Expansion Monthly Report, Davie County, March 1966"; "Operation Expansion Monthly Report, Buncombe County, March 1966," Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "Operation Expansion Monthly Report, Currituck County, April 1966," Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

toward a broader non-farm audience. Reflecting the organization's desire to branch out, the surveys agents distributed to young people in each of the counties did not list any projects related exclusively to farming or rural living.<sup>39</sup>

On the whole, participation in Operation Expansion provided numerous benefits to North Carolina 4-H. Methods utilized during the pilot stage resulted in a considerable increase in youth memberships and adult volunteer leaders in the six counties that participated. From 1965 to 1966, overall enrollment in both community clubs and special interest groups rose by 5,162. The most dramatic gains occurred in Sampson County, where 2,031 new people joined either a community club or special interest group. Similarly, the pilot resulted in 317 new adult leaders assisting with 4-H programs.<sup>40</sup> Such developments represented a shift away from the decline the organization experienced upon its immediate departure from the public schools. The extension of Operation Expansion, which lasted through October of 1967, continued to support the trend of increasing youth memberships and the involvement of adult volunteer leaders. In the twelve new participating counties, the combined membership in community clubs and special interest groups rose by 4,733. Harnett County experienced the largest growth in terms of overall members, gaining 1,175, while Camden County had the highest

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<sup>39</sup> T.C. Blalock to 4-H Specialists and District Agents, September 26, 1966, Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "Operation Expansion North Carolina Report, October 1966-October 1967," 5, 9, Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "Operation Expansion Monthly Report, Wayne County, December 1966," Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

<sup>40</sup> "Operation Expansion North Carolina Report, October 1966-October 1967," 3, Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

percentage of increase, going from just 4 members in 1966 to 143 in 1967, a rise of 3,475 percent. The number of adult leaders also grew for the twelve new counties, with 4-H recruiting a total of 565 new volunteers.<sup>41</sup>

Such increases reflected the degree to which 4-H could, with appropriate adaptations, continue to draw in young people in spite of North Carolina's decline in small-scale agriculture. This success is better reflected by exploring the transitions occurring within the participating counties. For the most part, these were rural counties where farming was prevalent. From 1964 to 1969, which encompasses the years in which Operation Expansion took place, all participating counties except Burke had at least 30 percent of land within the counties designated as farms. Though percentages of reduction varied considerably, during this same period the number of farms in all counties but Camden, which experienced a very modest gain of six, declined, and the percentage of county land dedicated to agriculture also fell in fifteen of the eighteen participating counties. Simultaneously, though, the average acreage of farms in all but four increased. With the exception of Camden, the counties gaining the greatest numbers and highest percentages of new members were experiencing a decline in the numbers of farms, a reduction in overall county land dedicated to farming, and an enlargement in the size of farms that remained, reflecting the patterns in agriculture in North Carolina that had concerned 4-H leadership since the first half of the 1960s. Agents did not report the demographic composition of the new members they attracted in these counties.

However, the county trends in land usage combined with the fact that the surveys offered

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<sup>41</sup> "Operation Expansion North Carolina Report, October 1966-October 1967," 3.

did not include project options with direct ties to farming indicates that they anticipated the young people they were recruiting would be more likely to come from non-farm homes, even within rural areas. The successes with Operation Expansion only reinforced the organization's willingness to continue moving away from its traditional project offerings and utilize new meeting formats.<sup>42</sup>

In fact, while state leaders did praise increases in memberships and adult leaders, they cited structural changes within 4-H itself as the most beneficial aspects of participation in Operation Expansion. Leadership contended that by experimenting with different methods of implementing projects and activities, county agents became more willing to move away from the traditional club-based model. Perhaps one of the most important new innovations adopted as a result of the lessons learned from Operation Expansion was the use of special interest groups. This new meeting format, which required less intensive time commitments from participants, allowed young people and their families more flexibility with scheduling. The single-topic focus of special interest groups also could attract youth with narrow interests or who thought of traditional 4-H clubs as associated primarily with farming. Agents also cited these groups as an effective method for reducing the overall workload of Extension agents since adult volunteers could lead many of the groups. Operation Expansion also provided staff with new ways

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<sup>42</sup> United States Department of Agriculture Historical Archive, "1969 Census Publications: Volume 1, Part 26: North Carolina," *Albert R. Mann Library, Cornell University*, accessed May 29, 2012, [http://agcensus.mannlib.cornell.edu/AgCensus/getChapterFour.do?year=1969&number=26&part\\_id=322&title=North%20Carolina](http://agcensus.mannlib.cornell.edu/AgCensus/getChapterFour.do?year=1969&number=26&part_id=322&title=North%20Carolina); "Operation Expansion North Carolina Report, October 1966-October 1967," 3; For a full breakdown in changes in farmland in Operation Expansion counties, see Table 1.1 in the Appendix. Table 1.2 provides an overview of changes in 4-H membership in these same counties during Operation Expansion.

of updating 4-H curricula to make it appealing to nonfarm youth, including the use of surveys to gauge interest in project offerings. Prior to participating in this initiative, no formal methods had been in place to determine areas of interest to club members before projects were offered.<sup>43</sup>

North Carolina 4-H's efforts in the mid-1960s of expanding its membership base by reaching out to new, previously unserved demographics also included the direct targeting of youth from low-income homes. Though the organization had worked with economically-disadvantaged young people in its four previous decades, the initiatives undertaken in the 1960s stand out from previous instances. Throughout much of the period from the 1920s through the 1950s, the organization had focused generally on teaching club members the farming and farm homemaking skills that agents hoped would enable them to have comfortable standards of living as adults. During this thirty-five year span the most direct calls to target poverty came from African American leaders who noted some of the poor dietary and housing conditions endured by rural black sharecropping families and proposed project work as a way to help improve those situations. The 1960s, though, marked a major change from these previous approaches in several ways. The organization began intentionally trying to expand its work with low-income youth who were not being served by 4-H. State level agents began creating and promoting new instructional strategies specifically for working with this particular segment of 4-H, a development that stood out from other 1960's efforts at attracting members from new demographics as the new projects and meeting styles developed in

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<sup>43</sup> "Operation Expansion North Carolina Report, October 1966-October 1967," 12-13.

Operation Expansion had been open to all 4-H'ers, not just those from non-farm homes. This strategy connects to a third change that manifested in the 1960s. The organization and its agents increasingly adopted the stance that young people from low-income homes were so culturally different from their more affluent counterparts that such alternative modes of instruction were necessary, as 4-H staff assumed that they would initially be unable to adequately connect with or comprehend the standard lessons that other 4-H'ers received.<sup>44</sup>

Such attitudes, along with the desire to more directly work with low-income youth, fit into the larger context of antipoverty work that began in the 1960s. That decade marked a turning point in the United States with regard to how Americans viewed poverty and the steps needed to combat it. Investigative works published in the late 1950s and early 1960s, including John Kenneth Galbraith's 1958 book, *The Affluent Society*, and Michael Harrington's 1962 work, *The Other America*, influenced a shift in attitudes and governmental policies. Galbraith presented poverty as a permanent feature tied to capitalism, a view that Harrington also espoused and connected to the idea of a culture of poverty. This concept portrayed the poor as unique and separate from the rest of America, not only living with different income levels, but also having different values than the more affluent segments of American society. Despite presenting low-income families as culturally divergent and trapped in multigenerational cycles of poverty, his

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<sup>44</sup> Harrill, *Memories of 4-H*, 3; "1941 Annual Narrative Report of Negro 4-H Club Work," 42, 55, (National Archives Microfilm Publication T-878, roll 113), Extension Service Annual Reports, North Carolina 1909-44, Record Group 33, National Archives Building, College Park, Maryland; "Operations 4-H Outreach," 1, 5-6, Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, 4-H Youth Development Records.

writings did compel middle-class Americans to notice the poor and policymakers to work on developing new programs aimed at attempting to ultimately eliminate poverty.<sup>45</sup>

A variety of antipoverty initiatives emerged in response to work like that of Galbraith and Harrington. At the national level, President Lyndon B. Johnson and his advisors began developing legislation that would assist the nation's poor by providing them with opportunities, such as job training, to help improve their condition and even possibly lead to an end to poverty. The War on Poverty, as Johnson's plan came to be known, relied less on expanding direct relief payments to the impoverished and more on providing the nation's poor with ways of potentially overcoming disadvantage so that they could also enjoy the economic prosperity that dominated much of the U.S. economy in the early 1960s. Much of this assistance came through the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act, which established the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) to aid in implementing the legislation. Many of the job training initiatives were aimed at providing low-income youth with skill sets useful in helping them secure employment as adults, thus, leaders hoped, freeing them from the cycle of poverty. Community action programs differed dramatically from previous work with the poor in that they sought and encouraged direct participation by impoverished citizens from local communities in designing services to assist with job training, locating employment, securing housing, and other needs. Such inclusion was part of an effort to not only assist the poor through providing needed programs and services but also to benefit them "psychologically, by

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<sup>45</sup> James T. Patterson, *America's Struggle Against Poverty, 1900-1985* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 118-119, 125; Robert R. Korstad and James L. Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs: The North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty and Inequality in 1960s America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 113.



giving them a sense of empowerment.” Such aims were part of an effort that dominated the War on Poverty geared toward instilling the poor with what leaders viewed as middle-class values to help free them from the culture of poverty that Harrington and others described, and thus make them more independent and less reliant on government services. Since its emphasis was less on expanding welfare benefits, public opinion largely supported Johnson’s initiatives.<sup>46</sup>

Even before Lyndon Johnson’s national War on Poverty initiatives, Governor Terry Sanford worked to implement a program in North Carolina aimed at reducing poverty within the state by targeting its causes. Sanford’s interest in working to eliminate or at least reduce poverty in North Carolina made sense, as the state had a high poverty rate that exceeded both the averages for the South and the nation. In 1959, 40.6 percent of North Carolina’s population lived below the federal poverty line, well above the regional rate for the South of 35.6 percent and almost double the national average of 22.1 percent. Launched on September 30, 1963, and funded by grants from the Ford Foundation, the North Carolina Fund provided monetary support to eleven community action programs within different regions of the state. These community action programs were aimed largely at improving the physical conditions and changing the behaviors and mindsets of some of the state’s impoverished citizens. As with national War on Poverty programs, North Carolina Fund community action programs made an effort to include the poor in the decision-making process of how funds and resources should be distributed

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<sup>46</sup> Randall B. Woods, *LBJ: Architect of American Ambition* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 449, 451, 453-454; Patterson, 135-136, 139.

and utilized. Fund administrators initially approached the state's poor from a paternalistic standpoint, believing that it was necessary to impose upon this demographic the values of the middle-class. By the mid-1960s, though, low-income residents working with the Fund became less accepting of this practice. Increasingly impoverished North Carolinians living in areas served by a community action program were inclined to become more assertive in demanding fair treatment from both the private and government sectors, ranging from landlords to welfare officials, a result that many state and local leaders had not anticipated. The North Carolina Fund dissolved in 1968, primarily due to the fact that Sanford and other developers had intended for it to only operate for five years.<sup>47</sup>

North Carolina 4-H did not begin focusing on low-income youth until the mid-1960s. This timing is likely due to the fact that 4-H spent the early part of the decade transitioning from school to community-based clubs. Agents in this period were largely preoccupied with establishing new clubs to replace those that had met in schools, as well as recruiting adult volunteers to lead them. After 1963, when the shift was complete, agents and leaders turned their attention to employing new tactics to attract members from new, non-farm demographics. Such a focus, along with the larger context of antipoverty work, led North Carolina 4-H to engage in deliberate efforts to work more directly with impoverished youth. Its approach in many ways mirrored that of the larger Extension Service, such as emphasizing improved nutritional practices for low-income

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<sup>47</sup> Korstad and Leloudis, 88, 102, 105, 167, 173, 188, 216, 262-263, 287-288; United States Census Bureau, "CPH-L-162: Persons by Poverty Status in 1959, 1969, 1979, 1989, and 1999 by State," *United States Census Bureau*, accessed November 27, 2010, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/census/1960/cphl162.xls>

club members and training club members in better financial resource management. In launching this new area of 4-H work, state leadership felt it necessary to educate agents on the rationale behind its increased focus on low-income youth, emphasizing not only the benefits to the young people served but also the “opportunity” it provided the organization. Though the “opportunity” itself remained unspecified, this term likely could have alluded to the fact that memberships reached a record low in 1965. Any new members would be a welcome addition.<sup>48</sup>

Initially, North Carolina 4-H’s 1960’s efforts in developing services specifically for low-income youth were somewhat limited in scope and often stressed more theoretical concerns as leadership considered how to engage with this segment of the state’s young people. Though it was developing new strategies, the organization clearly had worked with club members from low-income homes in the past, a fact that the administration briefly noted in training materials sent to agents. It was, however, the first time that 4-H approached this demographic as a unique segment of 4-H’s work with the view that it required alternative strategies with regard to curriculum and instruction. Reflecting this emphasis on difference, the organization in 1965 had at least one community club established for exclusively low-income 4-H’ers, serving nineteen club members. That same year a county agent launched a special interest group for low-income girls to assist them in making their own school clothes. State leaders also developed a camping program for poor youth unaffiliated with 4-H in 1965, something

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<sup>48</sup> “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1965,” 6, 11.

that leaders had begun considering in 1964 as a way to expose low-resource young people to club work and perhaps recruit them as new members.<sup>49</sup>

The organization's first major endeavor at specifically expanding its low-income membership base began in 1966 when North Carolina 4-H participated in a national pilot initiative known as Operation Outreach. Twelve counties, two from each of the state's 4-H districts, participated in it. In several ways Operation Outreach was much like Operation Expansion. It provided agents with information on developing relevant programming and services for a non-traditional demographic of club member. Although it promoted the training of adult volunteers to work with low-income clubs, including adults from low-income neighborhoods, Operation Outreach also pushed agents to spend more time working directly with young people from families whose annual cash incomes were less than \$3000. Operation Outreach encouraged county agents to adopt the new methods of conducting 4-H work that were also promoted in conjunction with Operation Expansion. In addition to establishing community clubs for low-resource young people, for example, agents might also set up special interest groups focused on a single topic. Agents participating in this program utilized day camps, general recreational activities, and overnight camping opportunities to try to appeal to a greater number of low-income youth. They also relied on more traditional, agriculturally-based projects to engage club members from low-resource homes. In Yancey County, for example, twenty-one new

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<sup>49</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1965," 11; "Operations 4-H Outreach," 1, Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, 4-H Youth Development Records UA 102.010, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina; T.C. Blalock to Gordon Berg, March 24, 1964, Carton 13, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

members participated in a project where they grew trellis tomatoes, eventually winning an award from the Burnsville Chamber of Commerce. Although Operation Outreach lasted only through 1966, it led to at least 597 new club members joining 36 new community clubs.<sup>50</sup>

In addition to Operation Outreach, with its specific focus on low-income youth, Operation Expansion itself provided 4-H with an opportunity to reach young people from less-affluent homes as part of its campaign to increase 4-H's presence with non-farm youth. Much of this work involved county agents promoting and organizing 4-H activities in low-income areas, including poorer neighborhoods and housing projects. Henderson County agents held interest meetings in low-income neighborhoods to inform young people about opportunities with 4-H. Some agents, such as those in Harnett County, sought the assistance of local welfare boards in locating low-income youth and developing services for them, as well as educating their parents on what 4-H offered. In other instances, residents actually contacted the local Extension office to request 4-H programming in their communities. In Buncombe County, for example, an agent formed a special interest group at Lee Walker Heights, a predominantly African American housing project, only after receiving a request from an adult who had already formed a non-4-H community group for teenagers.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1967," 7-8; William C. Cooper, "Operation 4-H Outreach: A Preliminary Report on Pilot Work with Disadvantaged Youths," February, 1967, 1-2, Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

<sup>51</sup> "Operation Expansion, North Carolina Report – October 1966-October 1967," 12; "Forward with Youth and You 4-H Expansion Report – Henderson County – April 1967"; "4-H Expansion Report – December 1966 – Harnett County"; "4-H Expansion Report – June, 1967 – Harnett County"; "Operation

Though many similarities existed between Operations Expansion and Outreach, very noticeable differences were present, too. Some assistance for Operation Outreach, for example, came from state and federal antipoverty programs, with county agents taking advantage of resources available through them. Several counties sought the aid of workers associated with either the North Carolina Fund or the OEO to help them implement 4-H programming within low-income areas. As early as 1964, State 4-H Leader T.C. Blalock, who replaced L.R. Harrill after his 1963 retirement, advocated for the use of North Carolina Volunteers, a group composed of college students and supported by the North Carolina Fund, to aid in recruiting low-income youth for 4-H camps and also for working with those campers. Neighborhood Youth Corps workers assisted county agents by organizing and conducting 4-H summer recreation in low-income communities. North Carolina 4-H also relied upon the assistance of college students participating in the Plan to Assure College Education (PACE), a program not directly tied to antipoverty work, in its work with low-income youth during the mid-1960s. Much like Youth Corps workers, PACE participants assisted with implementing 4-H's summer recreation activities, as well as helped with 4-H's efforts to expand its services to youth with intellectual disabilities during this same period. In addition to receiving labor from these groups, North Carolina 4-H also gained a bit of financial support for its Operation Outreach work. The North Carolina Fund community action

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Expansion – Buncombe County – April 1967”; “Operation Expansion – Buncombe County – June 1967,” in Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

program in Yancey County provided the funding for the award-winning trellis tomato project offered during Operation Outreach.<sup>52</sup>

Another marked distinction between Operations Outreach and Expansion emerges in the attitudes held by agents with regard to the new 4-H'ers they were serving, which often reflected some of the prevalent opinions held about the poor in the mid-to-late 1960s. A major view that dominated 4-H work with low-income youth during this period was the belief that these young people, who were defined as having an annual family income of less than \$3,000, were somehow different and therefore required alternative methods of instruction than their more affluent counterparts. Such views of difference, along with adaptations to confront them, come through in 4-H's assumptions about the literacy levels of this segment of youth. Guidelines for conducting project work with low-income 4-H'ers asserted that written instructions "should have short paragraphs and simple, meaningful words which youth coming from culturally disadvantaged families can understand. Drawings in place of words are effective." Further reflecting this view, the training materials for Operation Outreach informed agents that "the disadvantaged child is typically a physical learner" and instructed them to engage this demographic with projects that "will allow [them] to do something physical." This example also reveals the assumption that low-income 4-H'ers would not be as equipped to grasp new concepts

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<sup>52</sup> T.C. Blalock to Gordon Berg, March 24, 1964; "Operation Expansion Monthly Report – Gaston County – May 1966," Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "4-H Operation Expansion [Gaston County] – June, 1967, Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "Operation Expansion Narrative – August 1967 – Stokes County," Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "4-H Expansion Report – July and August, 1967 – Harnett County," Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1967," 8.

communicated textually and would instead need to engage in hands-on activities to understand ideas that other 4-H'ers might have encountered through project manuals. Though training materials did not provide specific examples of how this kind of physical instruction might be carried out, they did caution agents to ensure that whatever activities were utilized should be seen by club members as “practical rather than ‘busy work’” as such a distinction could be just as alienating as textual lessons.<sup>53</sup>

Some 4-H staff assumed that the impoverished tended to expect charity from government programs. In organizational handouts related to Operation Outreach, North Carolina 4-H emphasized the importance of agents clarifying to possible financial sponsors, as well as low-income youth and their families, that 4-H was offering “opportunities and not gifts.” Making such a point to the cooperating individuals and agencies providing donations could potentially assuage concerns about how such financial assistance would be used in work with young people from low-wealth homes. However, communicating this point to the potential club members and their parents suggests that 4-H leadership believed that poorer club members viewed 4-H simply as a charitable program. Leadership stressed the importance of ensuring that low-income 4-H'ers were left with the view “that the world does not owe them a living; it only owes them an opportunity to prepare for and work for a living,” echoing the popular sentiment throughout much of the 1960s that government services and programs should be aimed at

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<sup>53</sup> “Operations 4-H Outreach,” 5; “Report on the National Seminar in Expanding 4-H Opportunities for Rural Disadvantaged and Urban Youth,” 6, 7, Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.



assisting the poor at better integrating into the economy rather than providing them with welfare benefits.<sup>54</sup>

Four-H staff not only made assumptions about the abilities and character of poor youth but about their families as well. Often agents viewed the adults as being intrinsically different from their more affluent counterparts. Just as the organization emphasized taking an alternative approach when working with impoverished young people, it contended that work with their parents warranted new strategies as well. When recruiting adult volunteers from low-income neighborhoods, agents participating in Operation Outreach were cautioned against asking adults from these communities to become 4-H leaders. While the organization did want these individuals to serve in a leadership capacity, agents were specifically told not to use the term “leader” when working with this demographic because of 4-H’s assumption that an adult from a low-income neighborhood would “be afraid to be a leader.” When visiting low-resource areas in search of potential club members and adult volunteer leaders, training materials instructed agents to “make over the little dirty child that may be in the home,” revealing that 4-H leadership fully expected to find unwashed children in the homes of the impoverished. North Carolina 4-H also encouraged its agents to engage both low-income adults and youth in group activities because its leadership viewed this kind of work as “more effective... for persons whose attitudes and behaviors are deviant from general cultural norm,” thus clearly demonstrating the belief that state leaders viewed this particular demographic as inherently different and “other” from the rest of American

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<sup>54</sup> “Operations 4-H Outreach,” 6.

society. Such a distinction was not made in Operation Expansion's more general efforts at recruiting adult volunteers from non-farm homes where the primary concern was simply generating adult enthusiasm and support.<sup>55</sup>

Assumptions made by agents about low-income youth and their families reveal the degree to which agents were ill informed about the conditions faced by this segment of its membership. The example of cleaning up the "dirty little child" fully illustrates this mindset. While agents never indicated whether or not they ever actually encountered unwashed children in low-income homes, even if they had it would not necessarily have meant that the child's parents were simply content to allow their children to be dirty. Very real physical limitations faced by poor North Carolinians in the 1960s, including limited access to clean water and rental houses that either lacked running water or needed significant repairs to existing plumbing, could very easily produce a situation where, despite a parent's best efforts, a child remained dirty. In such an instance even the best instruction provided by an Extension agent would be of little use to the family in question. The statement in the Operation Outreach training materials suggests that 4-H leaders not were generally aware of these limitations and that they fully expected low-income parents to simply tolerate poor hygiene for their children.<sup>56</sup>

Club work with low-income youth revealed to agents and leaders a degree of the actual differences that existed between them and 4-H'ers from more affluent homes, which tended to stem from a lack of material resources and not inherent "otherness." At

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<sup>55</sup> "Operations 4-H Outreach," 4.

<sup>56</sup> Korstad and Leloudis, 183, 259.

the end of the trial of Operation Outreach, agents noted that participation in the program allowed some low-wealth club members to have experiences largely taken for granted by the agents. In one instance, low-income club members traveling on a 4-H trip ate at a restaurant and ordered from a menu for the first time. This experience stood out to the volunteer leader supervising the trip because the new 4-H'ers needed instruction on how to use a restaurant menu. At another point during the pilot initiative, an agent reported that a girl from a low-wealth home attending 4-H camp for the first time learned about hair curlers from watching the other more affluent girls put their hair up each night. The agent remarked that the girl had never seen curlers before, but that she wanted to acquire a set of them. Such experiences help explain some of the assumptions that 4-H agents and leaders held about low-income youth. Since these young people were for the first time encountering activities the agents may have considered mundane, it makes sense that 4-H workers might perceive club participants from impoverished families as largely different from themselves.<sup>57</sup>

While agents may have viewed these experiences for low-income 4-H'ers as noteworthy, in many ways this kind of exposure to new practices was in line with the work that 4-H had been doing for many years. Decades before the organization began to focus directly on the issue of poverty, North Carolina 4-H had already been providing some of the state's young people with chances to have expanded life experiences. Club members from the 1940s noted that participating in 4-H provided them with new opportunities, including traveling both out of their home counties and out of state for the

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<sup>57</sup> Cooper, 10-11.

first time. Some of them had never ridden on a train before going on a 4-H-sponsored trip. While focusing more directly on the underserved segments of the population may have been a new approach for agents and leaders, their work was in many ways similar to some of the more traditional elements of 4-H in exposing North Carolina youth to new experiences not provided by their regular home life.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the organization's new emphasis on low-income work, the kinds of projects and activities recommended for these new 4-H'ers remained fully in line with 4-H's past emphasis on practicality. Although the organization recommended different teaching techniques for these particular club members, its leaders encouraged agents to direct them toward many of its project areas popular with 4-H'ers from diverse economic backgrounds, including home beautification, dog care, clothing, crafts, science, and foods and nutrition. Just like 4-H's work in the 1960s with other demographics, these projects, with perhaps the exception of dog care, allowed low-income club members to learn useful skills in areas outside of agriculture that could potentially help with family finances and assist them as adults. To accommodate limited financial resources, county agents were encouraged to seek out donations from assorted community members and groups. It is true that state leaders also recommended that low-income 4-H'ers receive instruction in some of the less sought after projects, such as learning how to complete income tax forms, but all of these project suggestions fit in with 4-H's original emphasis on providing young people with practical instruction for more efficient adult living.

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<sup>58</sup> Mary Helen Jones, interview by author, recording, Henderson, North Carolina, March 25, 2010, in author's possession; "Interview of L.R. Harrill and Severn Former 4-H Club Participants, May 3, 1977," *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1033>.

Leaders did not deviate far from 4-H's original intent and strategy related to projects when working with this particular segment of the organization's membership.<sup>59</sup>

Although Operations Expansion and Outreach both ended in the second half of the 1960s, Extension and 4-H continued to work on developing programming and services specifically for low-income youth through a variety of methods, including the Expanded Food and Nutrition Program (EFNEP). This national program was aimed at homemakers and youth from families with annual incomes below the national poverty level and was designed to improve nutrition within their households. While EFNEP was not technically a part of 4-H, the same home and nutrition agents who worked with 4-H clubs also devoted their time to it, teaching new dietary practices and nutritional information to young people between the ages of eight and twelve who joined EFNEP clubs. To a certain extent EFNEP clubs functioned much like 4-H clubs. Adult volunteers and, in some instances, teen leaders conducted regular meetings. Instruction involved a variety of techniques normally utilized by community clubs, including demonstrations and hands-on learning. Some EFNEP groups even used regular 4-H instructional materials. Camping, both overnight at 4-H facilities and at day camps, provided another way for staff to work with EFNEP members in much the same way that they did with 4-H'ers. At the same time, however, EFNEP clubs were significantly different than 4-H community clubs and special interest groups because of EFNEP's overwhelming focus on nutrition. These kinds of clubs were also limited in terms of the amount of time young people could remain members. After spending two years in

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<sup>59</sup> "Operations 4-H Outreach," 5-6.

EFNEP, agents hoped that members would then transition into a regular 4-H community club.<sup>60</sup>

EFNEP's goal of serving as a gateway to 4-H membership met mixed results. Some youth were able to complete the EFNEP program and move on. In the first six months of 1971, for example, sixty-two new clubs formed in North Carolina as EFNEP members transitioned out of the program and into 4-H. At the same time, though, agents reported difficulty in accomplishing this switch from EFNEP to regular clubs and special interest groups. A retired agent from Vance County contended that efforts at expanding EFNEP and shifting youth from this program to 4-H were largely hampered in several counties by a lack of trust on the part of the parents of EFNEP members. While parents might be content to allow their children to attend meetings held within their housing project or on their street, they often balked at allowing them to participate in clubs that drew from a larger member base, though other factors, such as lack of transportation, also affected their ability to participate. Even at the end of the decade, state leaders still noted that they were having some degree of difficulty in getting EFNEP members to transition into 4-H, although they did contend that successes occurred in counties where the staff associated with both programs worked together closely.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Estelle E. White, Edgar J. Boone, and Robert J. Monroe, "Executive Summary: The Effect of Extension Service's Youth Nutrition Lesson Series on Behavioral Change in EFNEP Youth Utilizing Different Education Environments and Teachers," October, 1976, 1-3, Box 50, North Carolina State University, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; Barnes, interview by author; Jones, interview by the author; "North Carolina 4-H Youth Progress Report – Fiscal Year 1974," 4-5, Carton 10, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

<sup>61</sup> Wessell and Wessell, 242; "North Carolina 4-H Youth Progress Report, Fiscal Year 1971," 2-3, Carton 10, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; Barnes interview; "Annual Narrative Report – Oct. 1, 1978-Sept. 30, 1979 – North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service," 147-148, Box 17, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Annual Reports.

Although national support for many antipoverty initiatives had waned by the 1970s, North Carolina 4-H continued to reach out to low-income youth well through the end of the decade and beyond with mixed results. In 1974, for example, 4-H initiated a program known as Action and Adventure for low-income boys between the ages of nine and twelve from urban areas. EFNEP continued to play a prominent role, despite the fact that its funding failed to keep up with inflation toward the end of the 1970s. In addition to providing instruction to EFNEP club members, the organization worked to recruit more adult volunteers from low-income neighborhoods to work with EFNEP clubs, an effort that secured a \$70,000 three-year grant from the National Extension Service for North Carolina 4-H to research new ways of training low-income volunteers for both EFNEP and 4-H clubs.<sup>62</sup>

In spite of these achievements, agents often struggled to incorporate greater numbers of these youth into their local programs. An Alexander County agent noted in 1976 that the county's 4-H program needed to broaden its membership base and pull in more young people from disadvantaged homes. That same year, an agent from Camden County expressed a need for more instructional materials and programs designed exclusively for low-income 4-H'ers, and other agents echoed this sentiment. They struggled not only with gaining increased numbers of youth from this demographic but also with reaching low-income families, a point of concern since parents who were unaware of 4-H's offerings tended not to encourage their children to join. As a

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<sup>62</sup> "North Carolina 4-H Youth Progress Report – Fiscal Year 1974," 5-6; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Narrative Report, Oct. 1, 1976-Sept. 30, 1977," 71, Box 17, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Annual Reports.

Rockingham County agent reported, a lack of communication with adults also created a shortage of leaders from low-income neighborhoods. In spite of these setbacks, North Carolina 4-H did not abandon its focus on economically disadvantaged youth. Though it never became a dominant aspect of the organization's mission, 4-H's targeted poverty work serves as another example of a mid-1960's innovation aimed at boosting enrollment that would persist beyond the end of the decade.<sup>63</sup>

In addition to recruitment efforts, North Carolina 4-H would carry on its efforts in updating its image and appeal by continuing to explore new subject areas for project offerings. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, North Carolina 4-H offered an increasing number of projects that emphasized science education. This kind of curriculum not only fit with the organization's new focus on reaching out to youth from broader backgrounds, but it also enabled 4-H to provide projects that connected with larger trends in education that promoted a greater focus on instruction in science. Several factors drove this push. Within North Carolina, politicians and state leaders concerned about economic development viewed such training as crucial to meeting their goals of attracting and retaining high-tech industries. This local initiative took place within the context of a national movement to improve science curricula at the secondary level throughout the

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<sup>63</sup> North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Alexander County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 29; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Camden County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 14; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Davidson County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 15; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Catawba County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 20; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Duplin County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 8.



United States, an endeavor which began immediately after World War II but intensified during the escalation of the Cold War in the 1950s. The Soviet launch of Sputnik, the first satellite to orbit the earth, helped strengthen public support and federal funding for such educational reforms. Reflecting these state and federal trends, state agents leading 4-H contended that the expansion of scientific instruction in club work would help prepare young people for their futures as adults in a society more focused on science and technology.<sup>64</sup>

Much like other project areas, the expansion of 4-H's science-centered curriculum evolved over several years, sometimes incorporating traditional elements of the organization's work even while developing new material. In 1964, 4-H introduced a new project, Science of Plants and Soils, which was designed in such a way that club members could complete it regardless of whether their location was rural or urban. Composed of more than fifty different activities, the project provided varying degrees of complexity that taught fundamental principles of scientific inquiry. State leadership viewed Science of Plants and Soils as a bridge between 4-H's farming origins and North Carolina's expanding non-farm population, hoping that in addition to the purely educational potential of the project, it would also cultivate an appreciation for agriculture within urban youth. In other instances, agents adapted components of pre-existing projects, such as those related to clothing, forestry, and nutrition, in order to make them more directly address scientific principles. For example, club members completing

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<sup>64</sup> John L. Rudolph, *Scientists in the Classroom: The Cold War Reconstruction of American Science Education* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 106-108; Reese, 225-226; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1967," 13.

clothing projects might, in addition to sewing garments, research the flammability of different fabrics. New projects also emerged during this period that focused more on traditional subjects for scientific education, including projects that explored climate systems and chemistry. As a result of its efforts, by 1967 the organization offered close to one hundred projects and activities that provided instruction in science. Although agents wanted to increase enrollment in these areas, logistical concerns often slowed growth, as North Carolina 4-H possessed limited instructional materials in this area, making it difficult for county agents throughout the state to access them.<sup>65</sup>

Expanding scientific instruction provided North Carolina 4-H with an opportunity to not only innovate the content of its projects, but also the method by which instruction was delivered to club members. In 1969 it began broadcasting a ten-part series on local television stations throughout the state called the 4-H TV Science Club. Developed by the Michigan Cooperative Extension Service, the series provided club members with a basic introduction to subjects such as astronomy, biology, chemistry, and meteorology by having them complete relatively simple experiments at home. Such exercises were intended to supplement the lessons 4-H'ers learned at school. Young people interested in televised projects enrolled with their local county agent, collected their record books, and received instruction via television programs. Participants still connected with other 4-H'ers through either special interest groups or community clubs. The use of televised instruction enabled 4-H to reach a greater number of youth in more locations and also

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<sup>65</sup> “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1964,” 1; “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1967,” 13.

assisted with the organization's limited instructional resources. Aimed at children in the fourth through sixth grades, roughly 125,000 young people enrolled in the project during its first year of broadcast. North Carolina 4-H would continue to utilize television as a medium for reaching young people, though it expanded its offerings beyond that of science education.<sup>66</sup>

Based on agents' accounts the most popular television program released by 4-H was a nutrition-centered series entitled *Mulligan Stew*. The show's format likely accounted for its appeal. Rather than simply providing direct instruction as the 4-H TV Science Club programs had done, episodes of *Mulligan Stew* instead incorporated messages about good nutrition into a plot-driven show, which featured the adventures of a group of early adolescents. Each week the cast investigated and solved fictionalized problems related to nutrition. The show also contained a segment in each episode where they performed in a rock band, singing songs about ways in which viewers might improve their dietary habits. Similar to the science series, *Mulligan Stew* was aimed at students in grades four through six. Initial enrollment in the projects related to *Mulligan Stew* was approximately 130,000 in 1973 when the series first aired. That number declined to roughly 101,000 the following year, although the drop in enrollment actually represented the popularity of the series working against it. Television stations were unable to air *Mulligan Stew* in 1974 because the tapes had been so overused in 1973 that they had deteriorated below broadcast quality. Instead, county agents had to borrow the

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<sup>66</sup> "4-H TV Science Club," Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; Lyman B. Dixon, "4-H TV Science Series – 1972," *4-H News*, IX, no. 5 (1971): 4, Box 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

tapes from the state 4-H office and show them to smaller groups of 4-H'ers within their individual counties. The popularity of *Mulligan Stew* among club members and agents created a situation in which no 4-H programming was televised in 1975 because the series was no longer available. District agents felt that the other usable 4-H television shows were of far lesser quality and would diminish the reputation of 4-H television programming when viewed by people who had first watched *Mulligan Stew*.<sup>67</sup>

The use of television by North Carolina 4-H to reach young people in the state continued throughout the 1970s, largely because of the effectiveness of this medium in attracting new people to the organization. In Beaufort County, for example, agents reported that *Mulligan Stew* resulted in 800 new children participating in 4-H. At the time, only 205 were enrolled in community clubs in the county. In the mid-1970s, agents in Bladen County also noted that the county's 4-H program reached the majority of the youth it worked with through television rather than through community clubs or special interest groups.<sup>68</sup> Like special interest groups, the use of television illustrated 4-H's willingness to innovate and diverge from traditional methods to reach an increased number of the state's young people. Such flexibility was especially needed in the years

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<sup>67</sup> "Mulligan Stew: A 4-H Television Production with Expanded Nutrition Programs," Carton 9, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "Summary of 4-H TV 'Mulligan Stew' Enrolled Participation 1973," Carton 9, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "Summary of 4-H TV 'Mulligan Stew' Enrolled Participation 1974," Carton 9, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; Lyman B. Dixon "Policy for Loan of 'Mulligan Stew' Film," *4-H News*, X, no. 5 (1974): 3, Box 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; Lyman B. Dixon, "4-H TV Programming," *4-H News*, X, no. 4 (1974): 1, Box 1.

<sup>68</sup> North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Beaufort County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 22; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Bladen County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 17.

following the transition from school clubs to community clubs, when overall participation in traditional clubs declined.

As North Carolina 4-H worked to increase enrollment and to expand its reach to young people living in nonfarm households, it faced the challenge of overcoming the widely held view that linked 4-H with its agricultural past. Although the organization had introduced new projects and delivery methods, many people within North Carolina continued to view 4-H as an institution with an exclusively rural focus. As early as 1964, agents at the state level remarked on efforts at changing the overall image of 4-H. They believed that by adding projects that focused on dog care and the science of plants and soils, the organization would appear more intriguing and open to youth from all backgrounds. Bicycle care, flower gardening, and photography also helped expand 4-H's offerings, and agents also proposed providing new recreational activities, including skiing and roller skating, in order to make the program more attractive to older youth in urban areas. The organization also restructured some of its older projects during the 1970s to make them more up to date, including those that directly promoted recreation. This project had been around since the 1940s with the initial purpose of encouraging farm children, who spent many of their hours outside of school laboring on family farms, to have fun. The revamped leisure education project, introduced in 1976, was designed to expose club members to a variety of structured recreational activities, including "active games and sports, social activities, literary activities, music, arts and crafts, drama, [and] dance." Though elements of this project remained the same as those from earlier decades, agents now promoted such pursuits as ways for youth to wisely utilize their expanding

amounts of leisure time since many young people no longer had to assist their families with farm chores. Four-H additionally designed promotional materials for nonfarm youth, including a 1974 folder entitled “Four-H Goes to the City,” developed for urban youth which highlighted projects of potential interest as well as information on how those with a desire to join 4-H might do so. New offerings alone were not enough, though, to change public perception of 4-H. The organization instead needed more direct approaches in order to reshape its image.<sup>69</sup>

More pointed efforts at raising public awareness of 4-H’s new focus first took place in Operation Expansion counties. The initiative’s emphasis on increasing membership pushed agents in each of the eighteen participating counties to educate the public about 4-H’s offerings for non-farm-rural and urban young people. In Sampson County, agents went so far as to specifically target youth living within the county’s towns in their efforts at recruiting new members. Agents working in Operation Expansion counties also utilized the mass media in order to inform residents about 4-H’s new focus, airing television and radio advertisements and issuing press releases to local print and broadcast news organizations. These efforts represented a shift from 4-H’s use of media outlets in the past primarily to report on club activities and member accomplishments. Agents also utilized word-of-mouth opportunities to raise awareness of new offerings. In

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<sup>69</sup> North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1964,” 1; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Rutherford County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 23-24; “North Carolina 4-H Youth Progress Report, Fiscal Year 1976: A Concise Assessment of Results and Changes in Important 4-H Program Areas Compiled by North Carolina 4-H Staff,” 7, *GNG* <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/472>; Dan F. Holler, “Four-H Goes to the City,” *4-H News*, X, no. 1 (1974): 3, Box 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

Buncombe County, 4-H staff members met with local school principals, community groups, and parent-teacher associations to spread the message about the changing nature of 4-H's focus.<sup>70</sup> Such methods were also available for agents in counties not participating in Operation Expansion.

In spite of the organization's efforts in raising awareness of its new non-farm focus, in many instances the general public continued to believe 4-H existed exclusively for rural youth. Over a decade after 4-H began diversifying its project options and actively trying to recruit young people who lived in urban and suburban areas, agents continued to report that they still faced the challenge of overcoming the public's association of 4-H with farming. A 1977 review of all Extension services within North Carolina revealed that the rural image of 4-H persisted and that it continued to create difficulties for agents seeking to recruit new members. A Catawba County agent noted, for example, that people within the county continued to link the organization with farming and that this "stereotyped image of 4-H makes expansion difficult." An agent working in Lenoir County went even further, suggesting that the organization's image not only limited expansion, but also caused an actual decline in memberships.<sup>71</sup> Through the 1970s and into later years, agents continued to face the challenge of altering public perceptions about 4-H.

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<sup>70</sup> "Operation Expansion Monthly Report, Sampson County, March 1966," Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "Operation Expansion Monthly Report, Buncombe County, April 1966," Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

<sup>71</sup> North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Catawba County Grow*, 21; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Lenoir County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 18.

While Extension agents at all levels worked through much of the 1960s and 1970s to change 4-H's image and meet the needs of non-farm youth, the organization continued to offer several of its older agricultural projects, though the number of these projects declined throughout the 1970s. In 1972, for example, North Carolina 4-H allowed members to participate in ten projects relating to commercial crops and thirteen that focused on poultry and livestock. In 1977, fourteen livestock and poultry projects were available, but club members could choose from only six projects focused directly on producing commercial crops. By 1979, 4-H'ers in North Carolina could choose from twelve poultry and livestock projects. That same year the organization offered just two pertaining to commercial crops. Tobacco, which had for so long been vital to the state's economy, was no longer available as a 4-H project, nor was cotton.<sup>72</sup> The increase in farm mechanization and the fall in overall farm ownership within the state coincided with the reduction in crop projects.

Despite the reduction in available agricultural projects in the 1970s, 4-H continued on a limited basis to develop and participate in new methods of teaching improved farming practices. In 1977, the organization debated introducing a new project focused on raising dairy goats and found that at least 160 club members were interested in participating in such a program. While this number was proportionally quite small when compared to the statewide enrollment in 4-H of 93,000, the fact that leaders at the state level were even considering adding additional agricultural projects indicates that the

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<sup>72</sup> "4-H Project Selection Leaflet," 1972, Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; "1977-1978 4-H Project Selection Sheet," Box 6, North Carolina State University, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; "1979-80 4-H Project Selection Sheet," Box 6, North Carolina State University, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.



organization remained committed to its farming origins. A year earlier, agents in Burke County noted the need for the development of new agricultural programs to better serve the county's youth. In 1979, the state's low income 4-H'ers living in areas served by the Tennessee Valley Authority could participate in a program called Cash Crops for Kids. Club members were given a grant, up to \$100, to assist them in growing a cash crop of their choice. The program's goal was to not only aid young people in earning money during the summer break from school, but to also emphasize effective cultivation techniques. Such characteristics tied it directly to 4-H's original goals of improving rural standards of living and promoting agricultural innovation.<sup>73</sup>

The 1960s and 1970s were also a period in which new horticultural projects emerged that, while not centered on standard southern cash crops, were flexible enough to allow club members the opportunity to pursue new career paths related to growing plants. The Science of Plants and Soils project, first introduced in the early 1960s, morphed over the years to allow club members to pursue a variety of interests relating to horticulture that did not directly encompass traditional farming. Elements of this project enabled rural, urban, and suburban youth to complete a variety of exercises that ranged from maintaining a lawn to growing a small garden. Carolyn Barnes, a retired Extension agent who worked with 4-H in Vance County during the 1970s, noted that these new kinds of projects still provided club members with a way to perhaps one day make a

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<sup>73</sup> Charles E. Lewis, "Dairy Goat Project Survey Results," *4-H News*, XVI, no. 11 (1977): 4, Box 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Burke County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 17; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, "Annual Narrative Report: Oct. 1, 1978 – Sept. 30, 1979," 144.

living in an area related cultivating plants, noting that as the state's economy and 4-H projects both changed, new opportunities emerged in areas like landscaping, horticultural research, and work with plant nurseries. According to Barnes, agriculture encompassed more than "just tilling the land and raising tobacco."<sup>74</sup> Although the era of the corn club had essentially ended by the close of the 1970s, North Carolina 4-H had so effectively adapted its programming that it could continue to educate the state's youth in improved growing practices more relevant to their needs.

Homemaking projects, especially those focused on foods and nutrition, also reflected the changing nature of both North Carolina and the state's 4-H program in the 1960s and 1970s. These kinds of projects remained a central part of 4-H's offerings, but their emphasis shifted over the years. Initially, 4-H food projects stressed the importance of future rural homemakers possessing the ability to prepare nutritious and economical meals for their families and to preserve fruits and vegetables grown in home gardens to supplement food stores during the winter. Beginning in the 1960s, these projects began to focus more on the personal nutritional needs of the club member as well as recreational food preparation. For example, in 1968 4-H offered a project called Outdoor Meals that taught participants how to cook food outside by means such as grilling. Although the guide book for the project noted the importance of nutritional awareness, it did not present the project as a way to more economically prepare family meals. Instead, it emphasized the recreational nature of outdoor cooking. This trend continued into the

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<sup>74</sup> "4-H Project Selection Leaflet"; "1977-1978 Project Selection Sheet"; "1979-80 Project Selection Sheet;" Carolyn Barnes, interview by the author.

1970s. Four-H still offered more traditional projects, such as those focused on breads and cereals or dairy foods. Like Outdoor Meals, though, new food topics were more recreational in nature, including projects focused on picnics (offered in addition to Outdoor Meals), preparing international foods, and social entertaining with food.<sup>75</sup> The *Mulligan Stew* series also served as a new approach to nutritional education. While such projects continued to emphasize some of the original themes stressed by 4-H in the 1940s, such as nutritional awareness and food preparation skills, they also illustrate the changing nature of social and economic conditions within North Carolina as they were not tied so directly to rural homemaking.

By the end of the 1970s, North Carolina's agricultural sector and its overall economy were much different from what they had been prior to World War II. Farming, while still prevalent and important economically, had morphed as federal policies, agribusiness, technological innovation, and farm consolidation significantly reduced the number of family farms in the state. Far fewer residents pursued careers in agriculture as machines increasingly performed much of the work associated with planting and harvesting crops. Former farmers found employment in areas like manufacturing, and new industries, lured by the state's low wages and minimal rates of unionization, moved into the area. The changing nature of the state's economy created a situation in which North Carolinians required greater levels of post-secondary education, often in technical

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<sup>75</sup> Cornelia C. Morris, *Canning Fruits and Vegetables*, Extension Circular No. 223, 2, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/116>, 2; Mary E. Thomas and Sallie Brooks, *Food Preparation for 4-H Club Members*, Extension Circular NO. 209, 3, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/45>; "Outdoor Meals," Box 5, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; "4-H Project Selection Leaflet"; "1977-1978 Project Selection Sheet"; "1979-80 Project Selection Sheet."

fields. The majority of the state's residents no longer lived on farms, and urban and suburban areas experienced considerable growth.

Responding to many of these developments meant that the state's 4-H program was significantly different at the end of the 1970s than it had been in 1945. Aware of North Carolina's declining farm population, 4-H expanded its offerings to better accommodate the needs and interests of young people who did not live on farms and might instead live in urban and suburban areas. To attract and retain members from new demographics, the organization chose to alter its programming and offered projects that members could complete regardless of whether they lived in rural or urban surroundings. The overall number of agricultural projects declined significantly. By 1979, club members were far more likely to participate in projects relating to the care of dogs or bicycles than improved farming practices. Additionally, the economic changes taking place within the state led 4-H to encourage its members to consider careers in areas outside of agriculture and rural homemaking, a prospect that would likely have shocked thirty-seven-year State 4-H Club Leader L.R. Harrill in 1926 when he set out to "[make] farmers out of boys." As people moved off of farms, the format of 4-H clubs also changed. Members no longer met in schools, but instead, participated in community clubs, special interest groups, and televised projects. To a large extent the restructuring necessitated by the decline in farming produced a radically altered 4-H program. In spite of such changes, however, North Carolina 4-H continued to remain committed, albeit in a reduced manner, to its founding goals. Even as the organization eliminated projects like corn, cotton, and tobacco, it still offered other agricultural projects and occasionally

implemented new ones. Because it was willing to adapt its programming, North Carolina 4-H was able to endure the decline in farming and still remain viable, continuing to provide instruction and recreational activities to the state's youth.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Harrill, *Memories of 4-H*, 10.

## CHAPTER III

### “A MATTER OF HISTORY”: POLICIES AND PRACTICES WITHIN NORTH CAROLINA 4-H REGARDING RACE

Reflecting back on his thirty-seven years of leading North Carolina’s 4-H program, L.R. Harrill argued that 4-H’s treatment of race could not be taken out of the larger context of the laws and social practices prevalent throughout the state. It is impossible to fully examine almost any organization operating in the southern United States throughout much of the twentieth century without discussing the ways in which race shaped its operation and development. Attitudes and policies pertaining to race in this region influenced in varying degrees almost every facet of life. In the period of the twentieth century prior to the Civil Rights Movement, both formal laws and informal social customs in the South ensured that African Americans and whites remained separate from one another in many parts of their day-to-day existence, and when they did come together, whites were clearly in superior positions. Both during and after the Civil Rights Movement, attitudes regarding race continued to have a major impact on the South, as African Americans fought for and achieved more equal legal standing while some whites within the region attempted to combat these gains.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Interview of L.R. Harrill and Seven Other Former 4-H Club Participants, October 3, 1977,” *Green 'N' Growing: The History of Home Demonstration and 4-H Youth Development in North Carolina (GNG)*, North Carolina State University Libraries, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1035>; Leon F. Litwack, “Jim Crow Blues,” *OAH Magazine of History* 18, no. 2 (2004): 8-9; Robert R. Korstad and James L. Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs: The North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty and Inequality in 1960s America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 313-315.

In many ways, North Carolina 4-H's treatment of race followed the same course that so many of the state's public and private institutions took through the end of the 1970s. Four-H maintained two separate, racially segregated programs from its inception until civil rights legislation compelled it to desegregate in the 1960s. Although both black and white agents were fully dedicated to serving the needs of farm youth, the two programs did not operate as equal parts of the state's Extension Service. Whites ultimately oversaw all 4-H work, white and black, within the state. While the African American program had its own administrators, they were still under the authority of the white state leader. The separate nature of the two programs created an environment in which African American 4-H'ers had fewer opportunities for projects, awards, and camping than their white counterparts. Their clubs also had less funding. Many of these limitations stemmed from 4-H's policy of conducting segregated programs, while others were the result of larger forces at work within the state beyond the control of its 4-H and Extension programs.

At the same time, however, the actions of agents and leaders within North Carolina 4-H revealed the degree to which racial boundaries were not entirely fixed. Though whites working within the organization never challenged or questioned racial segregation, white leaders of both 4-H and the larger Extension Service maintained practical outlooks with regard to their work. As a result of their desire to improve overall living conditions in rural areas, and thereby strengthen the state's agricultural sector, they were willing to support and collaborate with African American Extension workers, an approach that distinguished North Carolina from other southern states. In addition to

interracial cooperation, the presence of a substantial Native American population within the state further complicates the narrative of race and 4-H as the organization, during its years of segregation, was forced to develop a way to work with a demographic that did not clearly fit into the black/white binarism that influenced the majority of club work.

Though the story of the African American experience in North Carolina 4-H is largely marked by inequality, it also reveals the degree to which agents working within this segment of the organization were able to engage in advocacy for rural blacks. Though never directly confronting the system of segregation, at least not officially, the African American agents who carried out club work with young people used their positions to raise awareness of the challenging economic conditions confronting African American farm families. They also utilized 4-H projects as a tool for combating this economic disparity. Though perhaps not as engaged in direct activism as other African Americans in the first half of the twentieth century, black agents, careful not to offend their white supervisors, found ways to more covertly advance the cause of improving standards of living for black farmers and their families.

When North Carolina 4-H faced a federal requirement to integrate its clubs in the mid-1960s, its experiences differed significantly from that of many other southern institutions. The model of club organization that 4-H adopted in the early 1960s created a system in which community clubs complied with national mandates to desegregate but largely avoided compulsory integration, a process that ultimately occurred not in response to race, but as a result of factors related to changes in the state's educational policies. As a result, North Carolina 4-H had a less volatile experience of desegregation



than that of other institutions, such as public schools. At the same time, however, this system created a situation where the majority of clubs remained racially homogenous. This is not to say that 4-H failed to integrate. Some mixed-race community clubs did form, and larger meetings and events held at the county and state levels brought African American and white club members together even if their home clubs were racially homogenous. However, North Carolina 4-H was not forced to confront issues of race as directly as other clubs and institutions serving the state's young people.

Examining the broader context of race and racism within the southern United States reveals much about the rationale behind North Carolina 4-H's treatment of race within its clubs throughout much of the twentieth century. L.R. Harrill was correct in his assertion that the broader attitudes and practices regarding race in North Carolina largely affected 4-H's approach to the issue. In many ways, the agency's actions were the result of a system that solidified in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

North Carolina 4-H originated during a period in which African Americans and whites throughout the South were largely separated from one another through both legal and customary means. Although southern whites felt anxious about race relations in the region after the end of slavery, the majority of state and local laws establishing a system of racial segregation in the South were not enacted until the period from 1890 to 1915. Whites in this era were especially concerned about the newer generations of African Americans born outside of slavery who were less deferential to whites than former slaves. As part of an effort to more fully reassert white dominance over African Americans, state and local governments disenfranchised blacks and placed restrictions on how blacks and

whites could interact in public spaces. In addition to limiting the freedom of African Americans, these laws also had the effect of humiliating blacks. Violence, terror, and intimidation directed by whites toward blacks worked to enforce customary segregation and deference to whites as well.<sup>2</sup>

In North Carolina, many legal restrictions were imposed on African Americans in the first two decades of the twentieth century. A good number of these limitations were legal in nature, as Democrats in elected positions utilized the doctrine of white supremacy as a way to garner political support from white voters. Throughout the state, local governments enacted laws that required the establishment of separate facilities for African Americans and whites in a variety of settings, including waiting areas, restrooms, prisons, rail cars, and other spaces. Practices and assumptions outside of codified segregation also limited African Americans during this period as a more heightened cultural double-standard for the state's blacks emerged, largely influenced by the ideology of white supremacy that helped fuel the Democrats' political victories. For example, African Americans within North Carolina were excluded from living in certain areas, received lower wages, were passed over for many jobs, and experienced harsher treatment from law enforcement than whites even though laws did not necessarily mandate any of these practices. Conversely, this system of legal and cultural segregation

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<sup>2</sup> Leon Litwack, *How Free is Free? The Long Death of Jim Crow* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 13-15; Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 110, 127, 129, 130.

also placed limits on the behavior of whites as society highly discouraged encounters in which blacks and whites interacted on equal terms.<sup>3</sup>

Such divisions permeated youth club work in the state. Separation of white and black club members had been a part of North Carolina 4-H from its formalization in the 1920s. Beginning in the 1910s, the corn, livestock and canning clubs that were the forerunners of 4-H developed as either entirely black or entirely white, with clubs continuing to operate this way until the 1960s. The connection of individual clubs to the public schools accounted partially for their segregated nature. Early organizers wanted to tie the clubs to rural schools, and in North Carolina, this model of school-based clubs continued until 1962. As the state's public schools were racially segregated, 4-H clubs were automatically segregated as well. Even without this link between clubs and schools, though, Extension's work with youth would likely have still been segregated. The organizational structure of North Carolina's Extension Service created two racially separate programs for implementing its work within the state. The black and white segments of each were headquartered at their respective land grant institutions, the future North Carolina State Agricultural and Technical University (A. & T.) in Greensboro, for African Americans, and the future North Carolina State University in Raleigh, for whites. Just as the larger Extension Service split down racial lines, so too did 4-H. Two 4-H programs served North Carolina, one black and one white, with separate administration for each at both the state and county levels. Also like the larger Extension Service, state

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<sup>3</sup> Robert R. Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 55-56.

offices for each 4-H program were housed at either the Greensboro or Raleigh land grant college.<sup>4</sup>

The administrative organization of North Carolina 4-H reveals the degree to which African American agents were both autonomous in their work but also limited by the system of segregation. The African American and white programs operated largely independent of one another. Both segments of 4-H had their own program-wide leaders, separate agents, and conducted their own county, district, and state-level events for club members. At the county level, black and white agents worked primarily apart from one another, although black supervisors at the county level were technically subordinate to their white counterparts. Similarly, the African American agent who supervised all black 4-H work in North Carolina held only the title of “Specialist for Negro 4-H Club Work,” while the white supervising agent was known as the “State 4-H Club Leader” and ultimately had authority over both the black and white programs. This arrangement did not mean that the white state leader undermined the authority of the African American leader. Instead, L.R. Harrill, whose tenure from 1926 to 1963 encompassed almost the entire period of 4-H segregation, often chose to provide more support than supervision to R.E. Jones and William C. Cooper, the two men who served as black specialists during Harrill’s thirty-seven-year term as state leader. For example, Harrill attended statewide events for black club members to show his support for their work and assisted Cooper with fundraising efforts for the construction of a camp for African American 4-H’ers.

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<sup>4</sup> “Agricultural Extension Service Report of Boys’ Club Work in North Carolina [March, 1916],” 3, 7, *GNG*, North Carolina State University Libraries, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/35>; “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1962,” 24-36, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1023>.

While the potential existed for white leadership to severely impinge on the autonomy of the black program, such an occurrence did not happen in North Carolina at the state level during Harrill's tenure.<sup>5</sup>

Due to the leadership positions they held, these three men, Harrill, Jones, and Cooper, were instrumental in shaping the course of 4-H club work in North Carolina throughout the period in which it was segregated. All North Carolina natives, these men focused largely on improving both the quality of the state's agriculture as well as the experiences of rural people. L.R. Harrill, like many of the state's white farm agents, received his educational training at the future North Carolina State University in Raleigh. R.E. Jones and William C. Cooper, on the other hand, completed their undergraduate work at land grant institutions established for African Americans. Jones, who served as the Specialist for Negro 4-H Club Work from 1936 to 1945 and as the leader of the black segment of Extension from 1943 to the mid-1960s, attended the future A. & T. Cooper, who would replace Jones in 1945 as the African American 4-H specialist and serve in this capacity until desegregation, earned his degree at Hampton Institute in Virginia. The agricultural focus of both the institutions that future agents attended and the training that they received left them largely committed, at least until the early 1960s, to promoting

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<sup>5</sup> R.E. Jones, interview by D.W. Colvard, February 14, 1980, transcript, R.E. Jones Collection, F.D. Bluford Library Archives, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro, North Carolina; "North Carolina Administrative Plan of Work for 1959," 4, Box 9, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service - Annual Reports, UA 102.002, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1949," 2, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1010>; L.R. Harrill to J.C. Haynes, December 21, 1953, Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records, UA 102.010, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, NC.

agricultural solutions to problems faced by their clientele. Harrill, Jones, and Cooper all believed that teaching young people more efficient farming techniques would help them elevate their standards of living as adults. As a result, during the period in which 4-H was segregated, Jones and Cooper, though aware of the economic challenges facing black farmers, did not advocate for young people to seek employment off the farm. Similarly, both white and black home agents, who typically held degrees in home economics or a related field like nutrition, believed that the skills rural girls learned in 4-H, such as sewing, gardening, food preservation, and the ability to plan more nutritious meals, would allow them to also improve their families' economic standing, both as dependents living at home and later on as farmers' wives. Local colleges like the future William Peace University in Raleigh and the North Carolina Women's College (later the University of North Carolina at Greensboro) trained white home agents, with some earning advanced degrees at North Carolina State. African American women received instruction at institutions like A. & T. and Bennett College in Greensboro.<sup>6</sup>

Black agents in North Carolina had somewhat better experiences than their counterparts in other states in the South. By the late 1940s North Carolina allocated more funding to its total African American Extension program than any other southern state,

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<sup>6</sup> NC 4-H Alumni and Friends Association, "W.C. 'Bill' Cooper," *North Carolina 4-H Hall of Fame*, accessed June 16, 2012, <http://www.nc4halumni.com/halloffame/laureates/1-2009/112-cooper-wc-qbillq>; Wilma Hammett, Jan Christensen, and Joan Gosper, *Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Service to Family, Community, and North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Family and Consumer Sciences Foundation and North Carolina Extension and Community Association Foundation, 2011), 4; Rosalee Trotman, "Agent Retires After 33 Years," William C. Cooper Collection, F.D. Bluford Library Archives, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro, North Carolina; "4-H Club Work Among Negro Youth in North Carolina," *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/195>; NC 4-H Alumni and Friends Association, "Pauline Moore," *North Carolina 4-H Hall of Fame*, accessed June 16, 2012, <http://www.nc4halumni.com/halloffame/laureates/1-2009/68-moore-pauline>.

and the size of its program was also large in comparison to other states. African American agents in North Carolina were able to petition local elected officials for funding for Extension projects, which was especially important and useful for agents as individual counties were required to provide some of the money needed to conduct Extension work. R.E. Jones contended that this ability to directly petition for county resources was something that rarely occurred in most states with black agents. Though the success rates of petitioning black agents are unknown, the fact that they could petition in the first place reveals a greater degree of autonomy within Extension work in North Carolina when compared with other southern states.<sup>7</sup>

Several factors accounted for this willingness of whites to work with African American agents. Agriculture was, and still is, a vital part of North Carolina's economy. The white leadership of Extension, motivated by a sense of practicality, wanted to ensure that black farmers had access to resources designed to help improve their farming practices as doing so would benefit the entire state economically. The overall number of farmers and the proportion of those who were black within the state help further explain this attitude. Throughout the 1940s Texas was the only state whose total combined number of farm operators consistently exceeded that of North Carolina. Proportionally, by the end of the decade North Carolina had the second highest percentage of black farmers, who accounted for 28.3 percent of the state's farm operators. Only Mississippi

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<sup>7</sup> Debra A. Reid, "African Americans and Land Loss in Texas: Government Duplicity and Discrimination Based on Race and Class," *Agricultural History* 77, no. 2 (Spring, 2003): 282; Joel Schor, "The Black Presence in the U.S. Cooperative Extension Service Since 1945: An American Quest for Service and Equity," *Agricultural History* 60, no. 2 (Spring, 1986): 142; R.E. Jones, interview by D.W. Colvard.

exceeded it. Farming was clearly important in the state and ignoring the black segment of the agricultural workforce could have had dire consequences for North Carolina's economy. The practical mentality of North Carolina Extension leaders that such a situation created caused the state's African American program to differ from those in other southern states where, in spite of agriculture's economic importance, the white leadership sometimes allowed their black Extension programs to suffer as part of an effort to reinforce the racial hierarchy. Inequities definitely existed with Extension work in North Carolina. Pay for black agents, for example, lagged behind that of their white colleagues. The white men who oversaw Extension and 4-H never publicly questioned or challenged the system of segregation or the operation of dual programs for blacks and whites. These same men, however, helped create an environment in which African American agents had some advantages over their counterparts in other southern states. I.O. Schaub, the first white Extension director, and L.R. Harrill both supported the work of black agents. Schaub, for example, pushed for the black program to receive a share of federal funds proportional to the size of the African American farm population, while Harrill provided support to, rather than intrusion in, the black 4-H program. Less sympathetic white leaders could potentially have created a more restrictive environment for African American agents, a situation which did occur in other Southern states. Because white administrators did not adopt an adversarial toward approach black agents' efforts at improving rural life, though still constrained by segregation, were made somewhat easier than they could have been.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> R.E. Jones, interview by D.W. Colvard; Schor, 139, 152; United States Department of



In addition to racial segregation, African American farmers living in both the South and North Carolina in the early twentieth century faced their own unique set of limitations. In the decades following the Civil War, farm tenancy and sharecropping in southern states increased as large landowners sought new and inexpensive ways of securing labor after the end of slavery. From 1880 until the implementation of New Deal agricultural policies in the 1930s, the overall number of farm owners in the South declined while the number of farm tenants rose. Under this system, farmers who did not own land worked on individual plots provided by a landowner in exchange for cash payments, a portion of the crop grown, or a combination of the two. Although tenancy afforded landless farmers a degree of autonomy from the landowners, something especially important to former slaves and their descendants, tenants often found themselves relying on high-interest credit in order to buy essentials necessary for survival. This situation left the majority of them living in poverty.<sup>9</sup>

Farm tenancy is especially significant for understanding the experiences of African Americans engaged in southern agriculture in the first half of the twentieth century because, despite the fact that a greater number of whites were tenants, the overall percentage of African American tenants was much higher. In 1900, 32.9 percent of all white farmers in North Carolina were tenants, compared to 67.8 percent of black farmers. By 1930, 39.7 percent of the state's white farmers were tenants, while 74.3 percent of its

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Agriculture, "1954 Census Publications," *Census of Agriculture Historical Archive*, accessed June 29, 2012, <http://agcensus.mannlib.cornell.edu/AgCensus/censusParts.do?year=1954>; Reid, 283.

<sup>9</sup> Gilbert C. Fite, *Cotton Fields No More: Southern Agriculture, 1865-1980* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 5, 18-24, 142-143; Jones, *Labor of Love*, 61.

black farmers were. Although the introduction of crop control measures during the New Deal led to a reduction in farm tenancy and an increase in farm ownership among both whites and blacks who remained in agriculture, the majority of black farmers continued to engage in some form of tenancy while most white farmers were owners. By 1950, for example, the overall rate of white tenancy in North Carolina had dropped by over 10 percent to 28.5 percent. African-American tenancy was also lower than it had been in 1930, but 67.6 percent of all black farmers in the state were still tenants in 1950.<sup>10</sup>

The economic conditions associated with sharecropping did not escape the notice of African American agents, who directly identified some of the ways in which the system detrimentally affected the African American 4-H program. Black leaders noted that the poverty faced by sharecroppers kept some club members from completing their projects to the standards initially instituted by 4-H because they could not afford the required materials. This inability to finish projects not only limited instruction but also led to low morale in club members, which reduced enthusiasm for participating in 4-H. Black leaders also remarked on the impact that the terms of sharecropping had on 4-H work in North Carolina. Contractual obligations sometimes created situations in which sharecropping families did not have any spare acreage to set aside for their children to

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Volume VII Agriculture 1909 and 1910 Reports by States, with Statistics for Counties Nebraska-Wyoming, Alaska, Hawaii, and Porto [sic] Rico," 222, United States Department of Agriculture, [http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Historical\\_Publications/1910/Reports\\_by\\_state\\_Nebraska\\_Wyoming/41033898v7ch3.pdf](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Historical_Publications/1910/Reports_by_state_Nebraska_Wyoming/41033898v7ch3.pdf) (accessed January 17, 2011); U.S. Bureau of the Census, "United State Census of Agriculture: 1950 Counties and State Economic Areas, North Carolina and South Carolina, Volume 1, Part 16," 4, United States Department of Agriculture, [http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Historical\\_Publications/1950/vol1percent20Northpercent20Southpercent20Carolina/41656297v1p16.pdf](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Historical_Publications/1950/vol1percent20Northpercent20Southpercent20Carolina/41656297v1p16.pdf) (accessed January 17, 2011).

use for completing 4-H agricultural projects. Landlords also were not always willing to allow the cultivation of additional crops on their land and black agents made it a part of their work to speak directly with landlords about the benefits of 4-H with the hope that this would persuade them to be more flexible with land use for club members. The role of landlords could limit participation in other ways. In at least one instance, a sharecropping father initially forbade his son from joining 4-H because the father feared that his landlord would claim the completed harvest and sell it, thereby profiting from the son's labor as well. Though black Extension agents were able to change the father's stance, explaining that his son could take on a gardening project to supplement home food stores rather than one related to commercial crops, records cannot reveal how many other parents felt the same way and kept their children out of 4-H.<sup>11</sup>

Economic limitations on black farmers, agents contended, also caused some African American youth to reject farming altogether as a possible career, causing William Cooper to note in 1955 that the "best skills and brains" were leaving agriculture to seek their prospects in non-rural settings. Such a development concerned Cooper, who asserted that at the time North Carolina agriculture was undergoing a period of transition in which it would need "some of the best brains and skills to make a go of farming." The desire to limit and reverse migration of both blacks and whites away from farms had been

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<sup>11</sup> "1955 Four-H Annual Plan of Work," 6, 9, Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service - Annual Reports; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Negro 4-H Club Specialists Plan of Work for 1953," 4, Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service - Annual Reports; "1941 Annual Narrative Report of Negro 4-H Club Work," 55, (National Archives Microfilm Publication T-878, roll 113), North Carolina, 1909-44, Extension Service Annual Reports, Record Group 33 National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1949 [Negro]," 6, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/464>.

a fundamental part of club work since its inception, with agents and leaders of both programs focusing on 4-H training as a way to improve rural standards of living so that, as young adults, 4-H'ers would remain in agriculture. The hope was that the skills they learned in club work would enable them to comfortably support themselves and their families. While the organization would alter its approach in the 1960s and actively encourage white and black farm youth to seek non-farm employment as adults to improve their economic standing, this stance had not yet permeated 4-H in the mid-1950s. Cooper and others wanted black 4-H'ers to overcome economic limitations, but during this particular period they still primarily promoted ways of doing so that related to agriculture. This attitude fit into the larger philosophy of Extension work in North Carolina, which emphasized a "live-at-home" approach to rural blacks. This strategy was aimed at combating poor conditions caused by economic inequality through home production of family food and livestock feed, as well as by using home economics training to prepare and preserve more nutritionally balanced meals. Though the white program definitely served children of sharecroppers as well, its leaders did not, at least officially, view the system as having as large of an impact on club members and club work as black agents did.<sup>12</sup>

Although pervasive throughout the region and the state, the system of legal and cultural segregation in place in the South and North Carolina faced resistance and

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<sup>12</sup> "1955 Four-H Annual Plan of Work," 6, 9; "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Plan of Work 1946," 1, Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service - Annual Reports; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1964," 2, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/471>; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, "Changing Times: 1947 Annual Report," 23, Box 17, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service - Annual Reports.

challenges in the first half of the twentieth century. Early on, African Americans worked to advance their own needs in spite of disenfranchisement. For example, blacks throughout the South actively separated themselves from elements of white society, establishing and supporting their own community institutions and businesses rather than those of whites. Black women in North Carolina were able to petition local whites for resources related to things like community clean-up efforts and increased funding for vocational training because they, as women, were not considered by whites to be as threatening as black men. Additionally, in the 1920s, African American college students at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte and Shaw University in Raleigh launched their own protests against the white administrators of their schools. Some African Americans who had the financial resources simply chose to leave the region altogether. Around two million southern blacks traveled to northern cities between 1900 and 1930, with even more leaving after the outbreak of World War II offered increased employment in defense industries in other parts of the nation. From North Carolina alone, around fifty thousand African Americans left the state between 1930 and 1945. Disenfranchisement and segregation were firmly in place in North Carolina prior to World War II, but African Americans found their own ways to challenge this system.<sup>13</sup>

World War II served as a catalyst to intensify African American resistance to segregation. Blacks recognized the contradiction between the discriminatory policies in place in parts of the United States and the nation's promise of spreading democracy and

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<sup>13</sup> Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 168-169, 174-175; Litwack, *How Free is Free*, 30; William RReady *The Tar Heel State: A History of North Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 347-348.

liberty abroad. As a result, they became increasingly outspoken about domestic conditions. African American military veterans voiced their own frustration with the fact that, upon returning home, they were expected to take up their former subservient positions to whites as well as accept the economic limitations they experienced upon returning to civilian life. As in the prewar years, many African Americans throughout the South opted to escape the oppressive conditions of southern racial practices by leaving the region. Others became more involved in pushing for legal reforms to aid southern blacks. Memberships with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) increased nationally during this era, with the majority of new branches and members coming from the South. North Carolina's branches increased twofold during this period. As African Americans indicated that they sought more equitable treatment, whites within the state expressed their own concerns and fears about the increased assertiveness of blacks. Wartime experiences caused African Americans to lose their "fear of whites," resulting in a strong push for increased rights in the postwar period. Although the South's system of segregation remained in place beyond the 1940s, the activist sentiment that intensified in the World War II era would result in massive changes throughout the region and North Carolina in the following decades.<sup>14</sup>

African American agents working with North Carolina 4-H were not immune to the spirit of protest that developed in the World War II era, though their efforts to improve conditions for blacks during World War II were less overtly political than those

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<sup>14</sup> Ready, 348-349; Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 28-29; Litwack, *How Free is Free*, 92; Jones, 131.

of other activists. Rather than directly challenging segregation or calling for full equality, agents in the 1940s worked to make whites more aware of the poor standards of living faced by black farm families and to use their positions to provide as much relief as possible. In the early 1940s, the Extension Service encouraged all farmers to increase crop production in order to serve the needs of the military. Responding to this call, R.E. Jones contended that the dismal economic conditions confronting North Carolina's African American farmers, the majority of whom were sharecroppers, actually hurt the war effort, stating in a document intended for his white supervisors at the state and national levels that "more and more I realize that an ill fed, ill housed, and inadequately clothed group of people will without their knowledge and without any effort materially, mentally, socially, and economically, hinder this all out effort of total defense." Even toward the end of the war, Jones continued to take the stance that black farm families needed higher standards of living, arguing that Extension's main priority with this demographic should be dietary improvement. During World War II, African American Extension workers also donated to the North Carolina Interracial Commission, an organization that worked for suffrage rights and more equal treatment of blacks within the state. Jones noted these donations in official Extension reports, contending that the commission helped to create "a better relationship among the races in a number" of North Carolina counties. Immediately after the war, Jones and William Cooper, as well as county agents, remarked on the substandard health and diets within the rural African American community in North Carolina. Just as other blacks used World War II as a catalyst to call for expanded civil rights, Jones and some Extension workers saw the war

years as a time to campaign for improving the daily existence of black farmers and their families.<sup>15</sup>

While willing to critique the conditions faced by African American agricultural workers during World War II, 4-H agents refrained from directly confronting segregation and other discriminatory practices that limited black farmers and their families. For example, R.E. Jones noted that rural blacks essentially were a “submarginal people,” a label that aptly described a condition imposed by segregation. Rather than tie this status to segregation, however, Jones instead chose to focus on the material conditions associated with this submarginalization, such as poor housing and inadequate nutrition. Other African American agents were willing to make similar arguments, for example linking limited economic resources to problems like diet and housing, but none officially connected these problems to racial discrimination. Additionally, Jones, perhaps aware of white concerns about more assertive blacks, sought to underscore the fact that wartime critique of living conditions did not signify an attitude of rebellion among the African American community. Again writing to a primarily white supervisory audience, he contended that “the spirit and patriotism of our people are unequivocally American.” Black Extension workers in North Carolina carefully worked to raise awareness of the

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<sup>15</sup> “1941 Annual Narrative Report of Negro 4-H Club Work,” 55, (National Archives Microfilm Publication T-878, roll 113), North Carolina, 1909-44, Extension Service Annual Reports, Record Group 33 National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland; “Agricultural Extension Service – State of North Carolina – Annual Report [Negro] 1944,” 36, 1944 H. Mgt.-Bertie County (National Archives Microfilm Publication T-878, roll 137); John L. Godwin, *Black Wilmington and the North Carolina Way: Portrait of a Community in the Era of Civil Rights Protest* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), 72; “North Carolina State Club Leader (Negro) Annual Report – 1945,” 47-48, North Carolina Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports 1945, Extension Service Annual Reports, Record Group 33 National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland; “Annual Narrative Report for Alamance County – December 1, 1946 to November 30, 1947 [Negro],” p. 17, 1947 North Carolina Plant Pathology Thru Alamance, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports, 1946-60.



needs of the state's rural African American community without appearing as a threat to existing social norms.<sup>16</sup>

African American 4-H leaders continued to call for improvements to the living conditions of North Carolina's rural black population in the postwar period. Each year supervisors of both the white and black programs were required to submit annual reports of results accomplished and plans of work for the following year. A striking difference exists in the tones of the reports from these two programs. Even when discussing similar issues, those compiled by black agents were more impassioned and had a greater sense of urgency for correcting problems faced by African American farm youth and their families. For example, on the issue of economic challenges associated with agriculture, white leaders did acknowledge some of these, but they tended to be quite different than those stressed by black leaders. For example, the white program highlighted factors "such as higher wages for labor, higher costs for farm land, equipment, supplies, fertilizer and taxes, [and] a lack of adequate medical care" as affecting farm families and 4-H'ers. While Black leaders also acknowledged the need for improved medical care, their overall emphasis focused less on the business side of farming. Instead they stressed the immediate impact on quality of life of challenges facing African American farm families, including the poor economic conditions resulting from the prevalence of sharecropping, the low levels of high school completion of rural African American youth, the limited diets of many black farmers, and the "pathetic conditions" associated with much of the

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<sup>16</sup> "1941 Annual Narrative Report of Negro 4-H Club Work," 55; "Agricultural Extension Service – State of North Carolina – Annual Report [Negro] 1944," 47-48.

housing inhabited by the farm families they served. In this way, black 4-H leadership not only concentrated on economic challenges in farming but also used their positions to raise awareness of and advocate for overall improvement in quality of life for rural blacks in North Carolina.<sup>17</sup>

Though black 4-H agents may not have engaged in overt political activism, they did utilize the resources available within their positions to aid African American farm families. Four-H project work was one such way in which they could do so. Vegetable gardens, home beautification, the annual Fix-It Week, and dairy cattle projects all had the potential to better both the diets and living spaces of club members and their families. Several of these projects, such as gardening and home beautification, were also promoted within the white program for similar reasons. However, such projects had special significance for African American 4-H'ers due to the prevalence of sharecropping among black farmers and the detrimental impact it had upon their housing and diets. Fix-It Week, on the other hand, was unique to the African American program and emphasized club members completing needed repairs around the farm. Directing club members toward these kinds of projects did not end sharecropping and farm tenancy but did have the potential to improve the environments in which 4-H'ers and their families lived. Since these projects fit perfectly within the context of club work, they provided a non-threatening way for agents, employed by an organization ultimately under white control, to actively work at improving black conditions. Directly challenging segregation and

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<sup>17</sup> "Agricultural Extension Service Plan of Work 1947 – Boys' and Girls' 4-H Club Work," 1, Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service - Annual Reports; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Negro 4-H Plan of Work for 1950," 2-3.

white economic domination could have potentially endangered agents' jobs and personal safety; project work may not have changed the structure of race relations in the South but it did at least help confront nutritional deficiencies and limited incomes by supplementing farm families' diets.<sup>18</sup> Though black agents would continue to use their positions to aid African American farm families after the end of World War II, race and racial divisions still shaped the structure of club work in North Carolina until the organization integrated in the mid-1960s.

Segregation largely kept the black and white programs separate, though some instances of interracial cooperation did occur within 4-H, primarily among administrators. Such collaboration had its origins prior to World War II and, reflecting the leaders' emphasis on practicality, was part of an effort to strengthen the overall quality of club work in North Carolina. Meetings and conferences were one such way that blacks and whites came together. In 1934, for example, the Extension Service in North Carolina began holding an annual interracial conference for African American and white agents. Black and white Extension workers also attended interracial training programs on assorted topics. Typically in these instances the attendees were higher-ranking agents at the state or district levels who would take the new information related to projects, demonstrations, and technological advances back to the lower-ranking county agents that they supervised. African Americans not only attended these meetings but

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<sup>18</sup> "4-H Club Work Among Negro Youth in North Carolina"; "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual Report 1947," 7, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1008>; "North Carolina State Club Leader (Negro) Annual Report 1947," 2, 1947 North Carolina Plant Pathology Thru Alamance, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports, 1946-60, Records of the Federal Extension Service, Record Group 33, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

served in leadership capacities, occasionally functioning as instructors in the training sessions. At the annual conferences William Cooper sometimes addressed both black and white agents on issues pertaining to improved implementation of various aspects of 4-H. Cooper also served on interracial panels at conferences, working with L.R. Harrill and other white assistant leaders to direct and moderate discussions. The motivation behind these instances had less to do with actively challenging the racial hierarchy and instead originated out of a desire to improve the overall effectiveness of both the black and white 4-H programs through collaboration and sharing knowledge.<sup>19</sup>

The need to provide quality instruction directly to 4-H club members could result in interracial work. White agents sometimes trained African American agents and assisted with the black program's annual 4-H Short Course, later known as Club Week, a week-long assembly held at the campus of A.&T. each summer for top performing African American 4-H'ers. Counties that lacked an African American 4-H agent occasionally relied on white agents to work with black club members. In other instances, blacks provided instruction and assistance to whites. In the early 1950s, North Carolina's Extension Service hired the first African American agricultural specialist for any Extension program in the nation. This man, R.L. Wynn, was a farm agent and was also a dairy cattle specialist. He worked primarily with 4-H'ers but also aided farmers as they sought to learn more about caring for the dairy herds that the Extension Service had

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<sup>19</sup> Jane S. McKimmon, *When We're Green We Grow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1945), 145-147; R.E. Jones, interview by D.W. Colvard; Jack Betts, "R.E. Jones, Obstacles Cleared, Retires from Extension Service," *Greensboro Daily News*, March 1, 1977, R.E. Jones Collection; "North Carolina State Club Leader (Negro) Annual Report - 1947," 14, 15, 1947 North Carolina Plant Pathology Thru Alamance, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports, 1946-60.

brought into the state. Regardless of whether he was working with youth or adults, Wynn provided direct instruction to both blacks and whites on improved dairy cattle practices. Wynn's work, along with other instances of interracial cooperation, emerged as part of a focused effort on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the total Extension program rather than as part of a concentrated campaign to challenge the system of segregation.<sup>20</sup>

Though limited collaboration and interracial work did take place between the African American and white 4-H programs in North Carolina, the two segments ultimately were not equal in terms of size, scope, and opportunities afforded to members. Many of the limitations faced by the African American program resulted from the impact that maintaining a dual club structure had on the availability of resources. North Carolina's Extension Service allocated agents and funding to regions based on farm populations, and throughout the twentieth century, blacks remained a smaller percentage of the overall state population than whites. Since Extension work was divided by race, instances existed of county-level services to whites far surpassing those for blacks. In some counties in the state, especially in the western region, the number of African American farmers was so low that the state Extension office never assigned black agents to those areas. While white agents did occasionally provide assistance, in some parts of the state Extension simply did not serve black youth. As late as 1962, the African American program had agents in only fifty-two of North Carolina's one hundred

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<sup>20</sup> McKimmon, *When We're Green We Grow*, 145-147; R.E. Jones, interview by D.W. Colvard; "A.&T. Agricultural Leader Receives Top Southern Award," *Journal of Dairy Science* 44, no. 1 (1961): 4; Betts.

counties, while white agents were present in all counties. White leaders, while perhaps more supportive in North Carolina than in other states, failed to ensure that all black youth who desired to do so had the opportunity to participate in club work.<sup>21</sup>

Maintaining dual 4-H programs also created a situation in which black 4-H clubs had fewer economic resources than white clubs. Part of this inequity stemmed from the way in which Extension distributed federal and state funding, which was also based on population. I.O. Schaub may have worked to ensure that the black program received a proportional share of funds, but because the black population was smaller in North Carolina, the white program would always receive greater funding. The African American program also had to work to secure its own contributions from outside agencies. Legal restrictions and limited federal funding meant that much of the public money secured from federal, state, and county sources was spent on the administrative needs of conducting club work, including paying agents' salaries, maintaining their offices and supplies, and acquiring instructional materials for clubs. To provide club members with things like prizes and scholarships for top performers, trips to regional meetings, and special camping opportunities, Four-H staff had to secure donations from sources like civic organizations, industry groups, and businesses. The segregated structure of 4-H meant that these institutions might receive funding requests from both black and white agents. Some donors did choose to provide funding to both programs,

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<sup>21</sup> McKimmon, 148; "Annual Narrative Report, State of North Carolina, 4-H Club Work [Negro] for Period January 1, 1962 – December 31, 1962," 7, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/481>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1962," 6, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1023>.

but many of the cooperating agencies listed as assisting white clubs were different from those with which the black program associated.<sup>22</sup>

The quality and quantity of awards also varied between the white and black programs. In 1958, for example, the white program offered awards at the state level in forty-one categories while the African American program had awards available in only twenty-two. The lesser number of award categories meant that African American 4-H'ers had less diverse areas in which to compete. Though both black and white club members could win awards related to farming, homemaking, and other pursuits, options for African Americans were more limited. In the case of farm categories in 1958, for example, both black and white 4-H'ers could win awards for their work pertaining to dairy cattle but whereas the black program only offered two awards, one in general dairy work and another in dairy cattle judging, whites had these two opportunities plus four others in more directed aspects relating to subject matters like dairy herd management. Whites also had double the number of awards related to areas outside of farming and homemaking. Though both programs shared some opportunities in these other categories, such as health improvement, overall achievement, and leadership, some were available exclusively to whites, including recreation, citizenship, public speaking, and

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<sup>22</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 – 4-H Club Work," 9-10, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1013>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 – State Four-H Club Work [Negro]," 26-27, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/466>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1958 – 4-H Club Work," *GNG*, 62-63, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1019>; "Report of Work with Negro 4-H Club Members Annual Report for 4-H Club Work, A. and T. College, Greensboro, North Carolina [1958]" in "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1958 – 4-H Club Work," 1958 North Carolina, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports, Records of the Federal Extension Service, Record Group 33, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

better grooming. The absence of awards does not necessarily mean that African American 4-H'ers had no opportunities to participate in such activities. Black agents had incorporated recreational exercises and grooming instruction into club work for decades. However, black 4-H'ers could not win awards in these areas. Homemaking categories were the most even between the two programs, with whites having only two extra awards, home management and beautification of home grounds.<sup>23</sup>

Award prizes serve another example of how African American club members sometimes had more limited opportunities than their white counterparts. In some instances the prizes that winners received were comparable. White 4-H'ers who won a state-level dairy award received a twenty-five dollar savings bond and a watch while African American winners in the same category would get a certificate of achievement and a fifty-dollar bond. At the same time, however, the white program offered some awards with far greater value than were available in the black program. The white program secured a total of six college scholarships paid out over the course of four years from three different donors, ranging from six hundred dollars to one thousand dollars. In spite of efforts of black leaders to secure them, limited financial donations meant that no college scholarships were available for black 4-H'ers, though a limited loan fund did exist. Nine white 4-H'ers also won funding to travel to the National 4-H Club Congress in Washington, D.C. Black club members were ineligible for this prize, as 4-H did not integrate its national meeting until 1962. The discrepancies in awards were directly tied

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<sup>23</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1958 – 4-H Club Work," 9-11, 62-63; "Report of Work with Negro 4-H Club Members [1958]."



to the role of the National 4-H Service Committee, an organization that worked to secure and coordinate private donations for 4-H club work throughout the nation. The majority of North Carolina's state-level prizes came from this committee, and it determined what awards were available for black and white club members.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout the period of segregation, state leaders of the African American program strove to improve the overall quality of its awards and prizes. In some instances, problems stemmed from black county agents who did not effectively distribute award certificates to the top-performing club members with which they worked. The limited number of awards available within the African American program, though, presented a larger challenge to its leadership. Awards were considered vital not only because they rewarded diligent 4-H'ers but also because they also helped with member retention and motivated other club members to work harder on their projects. Expanding the overall number of awards was a key goal of William Cooper. He especially wanted to secure college scholarships for African American 4-H'ers, as this was a major source of disparity between the black and white programs, but this endeavor proved challenging even when 4-H requested assistance from the black community. Although African American business owners might want to help 4-H'ers, many of the larger businesses were reluctant to donate to 4-H scholarship funds because of the fact that the organization was segregated. Despite black agents' efforts at raising funds for a greater number of

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<sup>24</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1958 – 4-H Club Work," 9-11, 62-63; "Awards Available for Negro 4-H Members in Program Offered Through National Committee on Boys and Girls Club Work," Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; Thomas Wessel and Marilyn Wessel, *4-H: An American Idea, 1900-1980, A History of 4-H* (Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Council, 1982), 34-36, 172-173; "Pauline Moore."

prizes, the African American program never had an awards system equitable to that of the white program.<sup>25</sup>

Even when African American 4-H'ers in North Carolina and in other states won awards, they often failed to receive acknowledgement of their hard work in the same way that white 4-H'ers did. In 1951 the National 4-H Service Committee adopted a policy that essentially excluded all African American 4-H'ers from national recognition of any awards they might win. The committee developed this policy after consulting with representatives from the Federal Extension Service, 4-H leaders in southern states, and southern Extension directors. As a result, the committee would not reference any African American achievements in its promotional materials, nor would it issue press releases for them despite the fact that it coordinated some of the funding for African American awards and prizes. Instead, the committee left the decision to publicize black achievements up to the respective Extension offices at the state level. The exclusion of African Americans from the annual National Club Congress in Washington, D.C. also stripped black 4-H'ers of another opportunity to gain national credit for their outstanding project work.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> "State Plan of Negro 4-H Club Work for North Carolina, 1942," 10-11, Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service - Annual Reports; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Negro 4-H Plan of Work for 1950," 4,6, Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service - Annual Reports; "A Proposal for Strengthening One Area of 4-H Club Work: Negro Scholarships," 2, Folder 6, North Carolina State University, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications, UA 102.200, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina.

<sup>26</sup> Norman C. Mindrum to State Directors of Extension, February 6, 1961, Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

African American 4-H'ers in North Carolina did have some opportunities for recognition, even if not at the national level. Each year counties within the state sent some of their best performing club members to the week-long Club Week gathering held at the campus of A.&T. (The white program held its own version of this event in Raleigh.) At this event, 4-H'ers received training in a variety of subjects related to club work and also took part in recreational activities. Both the white and African American programs paid tribute to their respective state-level winners at this gathering. Beginning in 1946, a few black 4-H'ers also were able to gain state recognition for their work at the North Carolina State Fair. From that year forward black club members from a handful of counties were selected to develop exhibits for the fair on topics related to 4-H. Although both white and black displays were housed in the same location at the fair, they were judged separately. Thematically, the topics for black and white exhibits tended to be similar. Throughout the 1950s 4-H'ers from both programs presented displays on information they received through club work relating to better nutrition, care of livestock, improved home décor and organization, and uses of electricity. Exhibits from both programs also addressed some of the economic benefits of participating in 4-H, noting how the sale of goods and commodities produced through project work enabled some club members to supplement family incomes or pay required fees to attend 4-H camps. White 4-H'ers did touch on some themes that black youth did not in their fair displays, including projects on citizenship, entomology, and grooming. Such differences could be explained by the fact that these were areas in which the white program offered state level awards but the black program did not, thereby potentially fostering more interest for them

within the white program. Black 4-H'ers also had fewer opportunities to display their exhibits at the state fair. In the 1950s whites typically had ten to twelve displays, while blacks had six.<sup>27</sup>

Southern agents, both black and white, worked to devise regional ways of acknowledging the achievements of African American club members. Such action fit within 4-H's philosophy that awards and recognition were crucial to encouraging higher quality project work and retaining members. In the case of North Carolina, leaders of both programs viewed such retention as important since they believed that the skills taught through club work were useful in improving the state's agricultural sector and reducing the allure of higher-paying employment in non-farm settings. While all states selected outstanding white 4-H'ers to attend the National Club Congress, which met in Chicago, and the National 4-H Conference, held in Washington, D.C., African Americans were excluded from these two annual assemblies. In 1948, over twenty years after the establishment of these meetings for white 4-H'ers, the national 4-H office organized the Regional 4-H Camp for top-performing black club members from southern states. Despite the fact that this camp was for African Americans, both whites and blacks were

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<sup>27</sup> "The 19<sup>th</sup> Annual State 4-H Club Week for Negro Boys and Girls," July 18-23, 1949, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/202>; "NC State Negro 4-H Club Short Course [1926]," *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/200>; "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual Report 1946 [4-H Club Work]," 36, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1007>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 – State Four-H Club Work [Negro]," 18; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 – 4-H Club Work," 25; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1956 [Negro]," 24, 1956 North Carolina, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports, Records of the Federal Extension Service, Record Group 33, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland. "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1956 [4-H Club Work]," p. 25, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1017> "Report of Work with Negro 4-H Club Members Annual Report for 4-H Club Work, A. and T. College, Greensboro, North Carolina [1958]," 16; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1958 – 4-H Club Work," 24.

involved in planning and organizing it. In 1949, L.R. Harrill served on its organization committee, while in 1952, William C. Cooper participated in the planning stage.<sup>28</sup>

The nature of the Regional Camp was somewhat limited when compared with opportunities for whites. Far more white 4-H'ers in North Carolina were able to attend national meetings than African Americans were able to take part in the Regional Camp. Except for 1949, in which twelve delegates attended, North Carolina sent eight African Americans club members each year to the Regional Camp. Officials permitted twelve to attend in 1949 because a polio outbreak prevented any attendance from North Carolina in 1948. Similarly, four white club members were chosen each year to attend the National 4-H Conference. White attendance at the annual National Club Congress, however, was significantly greater. In 1949, for example, twenty-six white 4-H'ers attended the Chicago meeting. The number was even higher in 1952, when North Carolina sent thirty-two delegates, and in 1957 thirty-five went. Although the Regional Camp did allow black 4-H'ers some degree of recognition beyond their individual states, it was considerably more limited in terms of geographic scope and participation when compared to the national meetings for white club members.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Wessel and Wessel, 166, 341-342; "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Plan of Work 1946," 1; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1949," 11, 16, 30; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1949 [Negro]," 5, 12-13; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 – State Four-H Club Work [Negro]," 23.

<sup>29</sup> Wessel and Wessel, 166, 341-342; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1949," 11, 16, 30; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 – State Four-H Club Work [Negro]," 23; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1949 [Negro]," 12-13; "4-H Club Work Among Negro Youth in North Carolina"; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 – 4-H Club Work," 30, 18; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1957," 16, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1018>; William C. Cooper and Anna D. Hunter, "1957 Annual Narrative Report," 21, in "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1957," 1957

African American involvement in the International Farm Youth Exchange Program (IFYE) represents another way in which black 4-H'ers in North Carolina had dissimilar experiences from white club members. Through this program, state 4-H offices annually selected one boy and one girl from older club members to travel abroad for several weeks to live with a farm family in another country. In this way, American youth could learn about international agricultural practices and perhaps even share some of their own training with their host families, as well as generally promote "international understanding." In North Carolina, white 4-H'ers had participated in IFYE since its inception in 1948. African American club members, however, did not have this opportunity until 1954. In January of that year, the office in Raleigh informed black leadership that delegates from the African American program would be eligible to participate, and two black club members traveled to England, Scotland, and Wales. While official records give no indication of why North Carolina 4-H chose 1954 to begin including African American club members in IFYE, it is worth noting that when the organization made this change, the U.S. Supreme Court was in the process of deliberating on the *Brown v. Board of Education* case.<sup>30</sup> Extension leaders could potentially have sought to make the two programs more equitable in anticipation of the court's ruling.

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North Carolina, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports, Records of the Federal Extension Service, Record Group 33, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>30</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1948," 25, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1009>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1954 [Negro]," 35-37, 1947 North Carolina Plant Pathology Thru Alamance Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports, 1946-60; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1954," 32-33, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1015>.

The issue of race and North Carolina 4-H extends beyond discussions of the differences between the African American and white programs. Prior to desegregation, the majority of North Carolina's 4-H clubs were composed exclusively of either black or white club members, but in two regions of the state a third category of clubs formed, those with all Native American members. On both the Qualla Boundary in the western part of the state and in Robeson County in the east, public schools operated that served only Native Americans, the Cherokee and the Lumbee, respectively. Therefore, when Extension agents established 4-H clubs in these schools, their memberships were composed exclusively of Native American youth. These divisions, however, were not as dramatic as those between the white and the black programs, and in the case of Native Americans, 4-H did not follow the larger racial trends present within North Carolina. State law required that separate schools be established for African American, Native American, and white children, and public buildings in Robeson County were segregated three ways, with separate facilities for African Americans, Native Americans and whites. However, at the state level, North Carolina 4-H did not establish a third program for Indian club members. Instead, they attended statewide events, such as the State Club Congress, with white 4-H'ers, and went camping at Camp Millstone, a 4-H facility unavailable to African Americans. White agents from Robeson County also reported to state leaders on work with both white and Native American 4-H'ers but not on that carried out with the county's African American club members.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> "First Meeting of 4-H Council of Indian Schools is Held," *The Robesonian*, December 1, 1952; John R. Finger, *Cherokee Americans: The Eastern Band of Cherokees in the Twentieth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 27; Malinda Maynor Lowery, *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South: Race, Identity, and the Making of a Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 20-21;

Though the 1950s were a period in which North Carolina 4-H's racial policies remained largely unchanged, the decade marked a major turning point in the larger narrative of black activism for equality. Adopting largely non-violent tactics like lawsuits, peaceful protests, and the use of acts of civil disobedience, African Americans built on and expanded the civil rights campaign that emerged during World War II. One notable victory was represented by the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* United States Supreme Court ruling. African American legal challenges to segregation were not new. Beginning in the late 1930s, the NAACP brought numerous legal challenges to *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the 1896 Supreme Court ruling that upheld segregation so long as equal facilities existed for blacks and whites. Prior to *Brown*, the NAACP won some victories in instances where separate and equal facilities did not exist, for example in states where blacks might not have access to a particular graduate program offered only at a segregated university. These victories, though, did not challenge the legal principle of *Plessy*. The 1954 ruling, however, struck down *Plessy*, contending instead that a system of segregation by its very nature created unequal conditions.<sup>32</sup>

The *Brown* ruling generated a variety of reactions throughout the South and in North Carolina. African Americans greeted the news with a sense of hope and the belief

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"Helen Lewis Leaves Her Mark at State Meeting of 4-Hers," *The Robesonian*, July 29, 1957; "114 Indian 4-H Members Leave for Camp Monday," *The Robesonian*, August 27, 1953; Cooper, "The Four-H Club Camp Story;" O.P. Owens, "Robeson County 4-H Highlights, 1918-1959," Carton 12, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "Highlights of 4-H Club Work in Swain County," Carton 12, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

<sup>32</sup> Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Origins of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008), 247-249; David R. Goldfield, *Black, White, and Southern: Race Relations and Southern Culture, 1940 to the Present* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 59-62.



that school segregation would soon end. This optimism was soon diminished, however, as whites throughout the region offered resistance to the implementation of the ruling. The prospect of integration caused many whites to fear that they might lose social status and respectability. Whites also voiced fears about black males, speculating that white women and girls would be in danger from inappropriate sexual contact if segregation ended. Such concerns permeated all socioeconomic levels, with affluent whites sometimes leading the resistance. As a result of white noncompliance, school integration did not immediately occur following the 1954 decision.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the growing activism and assertiveness of many southern African Americans in the 1950s, black Extension agents in North Carolina continued to offer critiques of rural living conditions faced by blacks that avoided directly confronting the issue of racial discrimination. African American leadership might note some of the differences between North Carolina's white and black farmers, citing things like the different percentages of renters, school completion, and agricultural jobs held by blacks and whites, but they rarely explained the factors that contributed to those conditions. In instances where agents did provide explanations, they still did not openly confront the issue of segregation. In an annual plan of work, for example, black 4-H leadership linked the lower wages that African Americans received in non-farm jobs to the fact that blacks working outside of agriculture tended to be "in the lower classification of jobs." While

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<sup>33</sup> Pete Daniel, *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 180-181, 193-194; William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 38; James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 99.

this situation ultimately resulted from racial discrimination in hiring practices, North Carolina's black 4-H leaders never made the explicit connection between the two in reports they submitted to their white supervisor. R.E. Jones, did, however, clearly link race and employment when addressing older club members, explaining at a 1952 gathering that race limited them in what careers they could pursue as adults. By avoiding language that directly critiqued segregation and discrimination when communicating with white supervisors, African American agents could express the needs of rural blacks without potentially offending their superiors in either Raleigh or Washington, D.C. This approach might have been an especially useful strategy in the period immediately following the *Brown* decision as this was a time when blacks in Extension in other states lost much of their support from white leadership that felt threatened by the impending changes to the South's racial hierarchy.<sup>34</sup>

Recreational camping within the African American program reveals some of the ways in which black 4-H agents and leaders engaged in careful, guarded criticism of the system of segregation. Camping had been an integral part of North Carolina 4-H's work from its earliest years, providing rural youth with an opportunity for recreation and instruction away from their communities, sometimes serving as the first chance that young people had to travel outside of their home counties. By the 1950s, the white 4-H program operated four camps throughout the state, but these were not open to black club members. Instead, African American 4-H'ers relied primarily on Camp Whispering

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<sup>34</sup> "1955 Four-H Annual Plan of Work," 1-4; "Narrative Report: Regular State 4-H Camp and YMW Conference," 2, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/280>; Schor, 145.

Pines in the present day William B. Umstead State Park. As it was one of the only quality camping facilities available to blacks in the state, 4-H competed with other youth organizations for use of the camp each summer, limiting the overall camping opportunities for black club members. In reflecting on this limitation, William Cooper did not directly critique racial segregation, but he did emphasize that the lack of camping facilities for African American youth restricted 4-H camping within the black program. Although not mentioning the fact that several camp facilities were available for white 4-H'ers, Cooper did hint at the role that segregation played in limiting access to existing camps, stating in a 1955 report that Camp Whispering Pines had "the best facilities in the State that could be used by Negroes." In this way Cooper carefully highlighted some of the consequences of segregation without engaging in a straightforward challenge to the system, an especially prudent move in the immediate post-*Brown* period.<sup>35</sup>

The construction of Camp Mitchell, a facility reserved exclusively for African American club members, also represents to an extent the activism and advocacy that took place within the black 4-H program. Rather than simply accept the limitations that segregation placed on 4-H camping, African American leaders and agents strove to rectify the situation as best they could. Though their positions, which were ultimately under the supervision of whites, may have prevented them from directly confronting North Carolina's system of segregation, they worked to ensure that black 4-H'ers did at least have their own quality camping facility. Due to legal restrictions on the use of

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<sup>35</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1956 [4-H Club Work]," 21; William C. Cooper, "The Four-H Club Camp Story," Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

Extension funds, African American leaders in 1950 formed the 4-H Club Foundation of North Carolina to engage in fundraising for the construction of a camp for black club members. To secure the money needed for building a camp, the Club Foundation and agents reached out to farmers, club members, community organizations, and businesses to solicit donations for the camp's construction on the coast in Swansboro. Much of this fundraising took place within the African American community, but black agents also asked their white coworkers for financial support, framing their efforts in terms of improving the state's total 4-H program. While L.R. Harrill did assist with the fundraising efforts, such as writing to potential large donors like Sears and Roebuck in support of the Club Foundation, the majority of the effort put into establishing the camp and funding its construction came from African Americans.<sup>36</sup>

Although Camp Mitchell was well-received by agents, parents, and campers when it opened in 1956, prior to its completion, leaders feared that the greatest opposition to the camp would come from within the African American community. Twenty years after it opened, William Cooper recalled a degree of hostility and uncertainty that surrounded the fundraising efforts for the camp. Several agents within the black program were unhappy with being asked to engage in the solicitation of funds, while others viewed Cooper, who was at the time the state leader for the African American 4-H program, as

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<sup>36</sup> "Certificate of Incorporation of the 4-H Club Foundation of North Carolina, Inc.," Carton 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; W.C. Davenport, B.M. Edwards, C.L. Boone, and Natalie P. Wimberly to All State College Extension Specialists, May 6, 1955, Carton 14, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "Advice Worth Passing Along," *North Carolina Extension News* LXII, no. 11 (July, 1976), Box 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, Office of the Assistant Director, UA 102.005, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina; "To Build a 4-H Camp," *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/197>; L.R. Harrill to J.C. Haynes.

essentially using the camp as a way to boost his own professional position and possibly advance his career. Members of the 4-H Club Foundation, who were themselves African American, also voiced concerns over how North Carolina's black community might respond to the camp because of its emphasis on recreation. According to Cooper, several people within the Club Foundation believed the project might fail because "they felt Negroes would never support a place to 'play.'" Though Cooper did not elaborate on the rationale behind such concerns, several factors could account for them. Many black farm families faced dire economic conditions and may have wanted their children focused on practical training to improve standards of living rather than engaging in recreation. A degree of parental hostility toward 4-H recreation had existed since the organization's earliest days, with L.R. Harrill noting the reluctance of some white families to allow their children to participate in such activities. Limited enthusiasm for the camp also came from concerns that it would never actually be built. Some black agents simply did not want to get their hopes up for fear that they would be let down. Despite these uncertainties, however, the Club Foundation was able to raise the \$87,000 needed to build the camp. Cooper considered the construction of Camp Mitchell, along with the overwhelming support for it, to be "perhaps the most significant thing that happened to [him]" while working with North Carolina 4-H.<sup>37</sup>

As the African American 4-H program in North Carolina experienced a victory with Camp Mitchell, southern blacks in general were facing new challenges in the mid-

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<sup>37</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1956 [Negro]," 16-19; "Advice Worth Passing Along," L.R. Harrill, *Memories of 4-H* (Raleigh: North Carolina 4-H Development Fund, 1967), 20.

to-late 1950s as state and local governments employed a variety of strategies to try to block school integration. In Virginia, public schools closed in some of the state's districts and voters approved a referendum providing financial assistance to students attending private school. South Carolina rescinded its compulsory education laws and forbade teachers from being members of the NAACP, while Mississippi and Atlanta both increased funding for black schools in the hopes that African Americans would abandon the cause of integration. Many states also implemented freedom-of-choice plans, under which students theoretically had the option of attending desegregated schools. In practice these plans rarely resulted in integration as whites chose not to send their children to black schools and black parents faced numerous bureaucratic challenges and social pressures if they attempted to send their children to white schools. In some instances, governors utilized more forceful approaches to thwart desegregation, including the use of the Arkansas National Guard and the Texas Rangers to prevent school integration. Additionally, informal methods of harassment and intimidation by ordinary citizens were used against blacks attempting to integrate white schools as well as against some whites who chose to send their children to integrated schools.<sup>38</sup>

Aware of the conflict taking place in other states surrounding desegregation, North Carolina leaders worked to develop a method for the state to come into compliance

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<sup>38</sup> Howard E. Covington, Jr. and Marion A. Ellis, *Terry Sanford: Politics, Progress, and Outrageous Ambitions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 168; Jason Sokol, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 120; Patterson, 99, 100-101, 104, 145-146; Charles Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All: The Battle Over School Integration in Mississippi, 1970-1980* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), 68, 72, 76-77; Charles J. Ogletree, Jr., *All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half-Century of Brown v. Board of Education* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 125; Daniel, 261-262, 270; Goldfield, 112.

with the Supreme Court ruling while also avoiding as much unrest as possible. Developed by a committee appointed by Governor Luther H. Hodges in 1955, North Carolina voters in 1956 approved by referendum the Pearsall Plan, named for the committee's chair, to deal with school desegregation in the state. The plan allowed North Carolina to essentially appear in compliance with *Brown* without actually engaging in widescale integration. Black students who wished to attend white schools had to petition local school boards that were not allowed to reject their requests based on race. Rejections based on other criteria, however, were permitted. School boards had the option to close schools within their districts if violence erupted in response to compulsory desegregation. The plan also provided state funds to assist parents with private school tuition if their children were assigned to integrated schools. No schools closed under the Pearsall Plan and the only request for tuition assistance was challenged and defeated in court. In 1966, the plan was ruled unconstitutional. Ultimately, the Pearsall Plan slowed the process of integration in North Carolina but helped preserve the state's reputation as being more progressive than other Southern states, a key goal of political leaders hoping to attract and retain industrial jobs from outside the South.<sup>39</sup>

As southern blacks experienced frustration with both direct resistance to desegregation and the stalled implementation of the *Brown* ruling, their protest tactics changed. African Americans increasingly began engaging in acts of civil disobedience to

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<sup>39</sup> Ready, 349-350; Chafe, 51, 59-60, 67; John Drescher, *Triumph of Goodwill: How Terry Sanford Beat a Champion of Segregation and Reshaped the South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 49; "A Welcomed Decision," *Lexington Dispatch*, November 26, 1958, 4; Joseph Ator, "Industrially Rich North Carolina is Willing to Give a Bit on Integration" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 19, 1957, 2.

both protest and draw attention to the slow pace of school integration and the remaining segregation present in public establishments. In North Carolina, for example, African Americans were frustrated with token instances of integration resulting from the Pearsall Plan. Legislation like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and United States Supreme Court rulings like *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* in 1969 did outlaw segregation and racial discrimination as well as compel districts to more actively integrate public schools, respectively. However, many African Americans felt that these reforms did not go far enough, as economic inequality remained. As a result, blacks grew disillusioned with the Civil Rights Movement and some became increasingly militant. Although the push for both legal and economic equality would continue beyond the 1960s, by the end of the decade the movement's momentum was slowing.<sup>40</sup>

While many of North Carolina 4-H's experiences regarding race resemble much of the larger narrative of race relations within the state and the South throughout the first six decades of the twentieth century, the process by which racial integration occurred in 4-H was somewhat different. For the most part, the consolidation of North Carolina's two 4-H programs into one lacked much of the conflict that accompanied integration in other parts of southern life, such as public schools. Some tension did exist as county Extension offices were combined, but at the club level especially, the process occurred largely without incident. The smoothness of 4-H's desegregation policy ultimately stemmed from an early 1960s change in the way that clubs were structured, driven by a

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<sup>40</sup> Ready, 352; Davison M. Douglas, *Reading, Writing, and Race: The Desegregation of the Charlotte Schools* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 83, 105, 211; Litwack, *How Free is Free*, 114-116.



variety of factors in many ways unconnected to the issue of race. In 1962, North Carolina 4-H ended its thirty-six year practice of organizing individual clubs within public schools and instead centered them in local communities, a process initiated by internal challenges but pushed to completion by educational reforms in the state.

Concerns over the efficiency and effectiveness of club work partially motivated this change. Four-H's original mission had been to educate rural youth in improved farming and farm homemaking practices to help facilitate higher standards of living for agricultural workers. In order to reach large numbers of young people, early Extension agents contacted local school superintendents to arrange for monthly 4-H meetings to be held in public schools during normal instructional hours. School administrators supported this arrangement and club members were allowed to leave class in order to attend meetings. While this partnership proved beneficial for boosting enrollment in 4-H, by the mid-1950s, agents were beginning to report some flaws with it. The open membership in school clubs created a situation in which some people joined simply for the break club meetings afforded them from regular classes. As a result, agents often found that clubs were so large that they simply could not give individualized attention to each club member.<sup>41</sup>

Larger trends in education, such as school consolidation, also affected 4-H club structure. Beginning in the late 1930s and intensifying after World War II, educational reformers focused their efforts on high schools, arguing that students would receive

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<sup>41</sup> "An Approach to Organizing and Conducting Community 4-H Clubs," 1-3, Carton 2, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

higher quality instruction if districts were to consolidate their numerous small high schools into larger ones. They contended that small schools, which had limited faculty members, simply could not provide as broad a range of core courses and electives as larger institutions could. As North Carolina began merging its rural high schools, 4-H agents noted the impact that consolidation had on club work. As early as 1941, R.E. Jones argued that in spite of consolidation, many black youth were leaving high school before graduation, making it difficult for 4-H to retain older members. Just over a decade later, William Cooper asserted that the process of consolidation was detrimental to 4-H as the material presented in the meetings had in some cases been made redundant since the new, larger schools were able to hire vocational and home economics teachers. In some instances, other 4-H staff members reported that this potential duplication led to hostility on the part of school administrators toward 4-H. Even in instances where this was not the case, Cooper remarked that farm youth who were now attending school for the first time in their counties' urban centers did not want to be seen associating with 4-H because of its rural image, something from which they wished to distance themselves. In other cases, high school administrators, coping with scheduling challenges, placed students in 4-H, resulting in "a lot of people in the clubs who are not purely there on a voluntary basis." Additionally, according to Cooper, consolidated schools only allotted forty-five minutes for monthly meetings instead of the full hour that had been allotted in the past.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> William J. Reese, *America's Public Schools: From the Common School to "No Child Left Behind,"* updated ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 293-297; David Strang, "The Administrative Transformation of Education: School District Consolidation, 1938-1980," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (1987): 355; "1941 Annual Narrative Report of Negro 4-H Club Work," 6, 32; "4-H Club History Cabarrus County," Carton 11, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Negro 4-H Club Specialists' Plan of

In response to these challenges, North Carolina 4-H began exploring new potential strategies for conducting club work, a process that would have a major impact on the way that the organization eventually desegregated. The main approach favored by leadership was to change the way clubs met and were organized. Instead of being affiliated with a school, the club model state and district agents were investigating proposed a community-based system of organization, in which clubs would form in local neighborhoods throughout a county and adult volunteers would take over the responsibility of conducting monthly meetings. This model was not new to 4-H club work in general, as some states had not formed partnerships with local schools. The desire on the part of North Carolina leadership to leave the schools was also not a recent development. R.E. Jones in 1941, perhaps thinking of challenges in retaining older African American club members, called for a gradual transition from a school-based to a community-based club model. While taking part in a multi-state leadership training workshop in 1957, representatives from North Carolina began seriously investigating how the state might carry out such a shift in its club structure. Federal 4-H staff only encouraged this process, arguing that studies conducted in West Virginia proved that community clubs tended to be the more productive club model in areas that had undergone school consolidation.<sup>43</sup>

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Work for 1953,” 5, Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service - Annual Reports, UA 102.002, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina; “1955 Four-H Annual Plan of Work,” 6.

<sup>43</sup> “1941 Annual Narrative Report of Negro 4-H Club Work,” 6; L.R. Harrill, “The Great Transition,” *Extension Service Review*, August 1963, 158-159, L. R. Harrill Papers, MC 17, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina; “The

Educational policy changes within North Carolina expedited the process by which 4-H clubs left the public schools, pushing the move along despite resistance from some county agents. Terry Sanford, elected governor in 1960, campaigned on the need to improve the quality of public education in North Carolina, which at the time of his election ranked in the bottom ten states in the nation in several categories, including the amount spent on education, classroom teacher-to-student ratios, and adult illiteracy. Roughly half of all North Carolinians in 1959 failed to complete high school. As part of implementing improvements, the North Carolina State Board of Education decided to ban extracurricular activities like 4-H from meeting during normal school hours to keep students focused on core subjects. Additionally, Sanford's new policies led to schools hiring permanent vocational and home economics teachers, which to an extent made the 4-H curriculum almost redundant. These educational reforms provided the impetus that ultimately decided the fate of the state's 4-H clubs; they essentially were left with no choice but to abandon the school meeting format. Not all county agents embraced the move to community clubs. Remembering her experiences with the process over a decade later, Margaret Clark, one of the district agents who oversaw the transition, characterized some of the complaints made by county agents to her as not only critical of the shift but also "very hurtful," with unspecified comments sometimes reducing her to tears. In spite

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Community 4-H Clubs," Carton 2, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

of agents' objections, the organization chose not to fight the new policy and removed its clubs from the public schools.<sup>44</sup>

The move to community clubs allowed North Carolina 4-H to technically desegregate its clubs while largely avoiding conflict. Responding to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Federal Extension Service required all state Extension programs to desegregate, including 4-H clubs. A July 1965 order from national 4-H leadership stripped federal funding from states that failed to integrate their clubs. In order to ensure compliance at the club level, North Carolina 4-H required all clubs to sign a document stating that membership was open to all youth regardless of race. While this action technically resulted in desegregation of North Carolina's 4-H clubs, the majority of them remained racially homogenous throughout the 1960s and 1970s because the community club model created a situation in which the racial composition of a neighborhood often determined the racial composition of a club. Unlike public schools, which by 1969 were required to actively bring black and white students together, the process by which North Carolina 4-H desegregated its clubs did not result in compulsory interracial interactions. North Carolina's clubs may have technically been open to members of all races, but the fact that they were organized at the community level continued to keep both black and white 4-H'ers separate.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Drescher, 68, 259-260; Terry Sanford, *But What About the People?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 10-11, 17, 136; R.W. Shoffner to All District Agents, September 15, 1960, Carton 2, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "Interview of L.R. Harrill and Seven Other Former 4-H Club Participants, October 3, 1977."

<sup>45</sup> Wessel and Wessel, 176-178; Carolyn Barnes, interview by author, recording, Graham, North Carolina, April 14, 2010, in author's possession; *Bazemore v. Friday*, 478 U.S. 385 (1986), in Lexus Nexus Academic, <http://libproxy.uncg.edu:2086/hottopics/lnacademic/> (accessed February 25, 2011).

North Carolina 4-H's shift to community clubs ultimately provided it with some protection from the challenges faced by 4-H programs in other southern states. In Georgia and South Carolina, for example, clubs were still affiliated with public schools that failed to desegregate by the Federal Extension Service's deadline. As a result, some clubs in Georgia lost access to federal funds until their schools were in compliance. Had North Carolina's 4-H clubs continued to meet in schools, it is possible that some clubs might have also lost federal funding since not all the state's school districts had integrated by 1966. Additionally, the community organization model allowed individual clubs to escape the strife that accompanied the more active process of integration that took place within the public schools, especially after the *Swann* ruling. Even with the slow process of school integration in North Carolina, federal court rulings ensured that the state moved more quickly in establishing racially heterogeneous schools than did 4-H in establishing mixed-race clubs. As a result, it was convenient for leaders and staff in warding off the pro-segregation protests and demonstrations associated with school integration. The benefits afforded to 4-H's administration by community clubs were not lost on L.R. Harrill, who over a decade after the order to combine programs, expressed his own concerns about what the future of North Carolina 4-H might have been if the clubs had not left public schools prior to integrating.<sup>46</sup>

The timing of the shift to community clubs, along with the ways in which it allowed 4-H to avoid the controversy and turmoil that programs in other southern states

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<sup>46</sup> Wessel and Wessel, 178; Ready, 350; Douglas, 107; "Interview of L.R. Harrill and Seven Former 4-H Club Participants, May 3, 1977," *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1033>.

faced, raises the question of whether or not the move was initially planned as a way to delay meaningful integration within local clubs. After all, the planning stages of the transition began in 1957, just three years after the *Brown* decision and some token desegregation did occur under the Pearsall Plan. The federal government had demonstrated its support for integration efforts that same year with President Eisenhower's use of members of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division to enforce desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas. The practice of school segregation was slowly beginning to erode. That North Carolina 4-H would choose to begin planning its exit from public schools at the same time is potentially suspect.<sup>47</sup>

Determining the true motives behind the transition is difficult. In spite of this larger context of school desegregation, leadership within both the white and black segments of North Carolina 4-H remained, at least officially, silent on the issue of race and community clubs. L.R. Harrill, for example, stuck consistently to his argument that community clubs were needed to make agents' work more effective. Earlier reports of problems associated with school clubs, including those raised by African American agents like R.E. Jones and William Cooper, supported the white leadership's argument that the school model had some inherent flaws. Federal 4-H staff members were also encouraging states to leave the schools, citing improved performance associated with community clubs. At both the federal level and in North Carolina, school consolidation came up numerous times as having a negative impact on club work. Additionally, even if North Carolina 4-H had not started planning to switch to community clubs, the reforms

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<sup>47</sup> Daniel, 270.

imposed by the State Board of Education essentially created a situation in which the organization had no choice but to leave public schools. Furthermore, as evidenced by Margaret Clark's account, there were many county agents unhappy with the decision to change the club organizational model. While it is very plausible that white agents at the district and state levels may have been discreetly planning to use community clubs as a safe way to escape desegregation, ultimately the factors that contributed to the move were more complex, separate from the issue of race, and beyond their control. What is not in question, though, is that the community club model, whether intentionally or not, provided 4-H administrators with a way to cushion the institution from the full impact of school desegregation and, because of the racial composition of the neighborhoods in which clubs formed, forestalled meaningful integration of local clubs.

True integration occurred more rapidly at the county level. With the consolidation of dual programs, countywide events like recognition days were combined, bringing black and white 4-H'ers together, if only for a short period of time. Special interest groups, which opened their memberships to all youth from throughout a county rather than just a small neighborhood, also helped to facilitate interracial interactions within 4-H. Such mixing lacked the level of unease associated with public school integration. Jean Jackson, a white club member during the late 1960s, recalled that while pervasive integration at her high school created a tense situation among the students and staff, her interracial 4-H experiences at both the county and state levels lacked the same climate of fear. In terms of administration, state leadership pushed county agents to



rapidly consolidate their offices, resulting in another instance of county level integration.<sup>48</sup>

Efforts at meaningful integration also took place at the state level of 4-H as Extension endeavored to comply with federal regulations. The burden of integrating often fell upon African Americans, a condition common within many state Extension departments in the South. To integrate the annual State 4-H Club Week, the meeting at A.&T.'s campus in Greensboro was abandoned, with black 4-H'ers and agents instead attending an integrated gathering at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. Similarly, in consolidating programs at the state level, African American Extension workers joined the white staff in Raleigh. This process actually moved slower than other parts of Extension integration. R.E. Jones noted that many of the established staff members in Greensboro owned their own homes and did not wish to move to Raleigh. Instead of actively combining the staff from the two offices, the Raleigh office integrated by filling arising vacancies with African American workers. Though racial restrictions were also lifted on the A. & T. office, Extension's primary focus seemed to be on eventually bringing more African American staff to work in Raleigh. As a result of the way the processes of integrating both State's and A. & T.'s Extension offices were carried out, the organization sometimes, according to Jones, "may not have lived up to

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<sup>48</sup> Jean Jackson, interview by author, recording, Raleigh, North Carolina, March 12, 2010, in author's possession; Barnes, interview by the author; Jones, interview by D.W. Colvard.

the full letter of the [civil rights] law,” though he did feel that their efforts revealed they were at least committed to the “spirit” of it.<sup>49</sup>

The consolidation of the two programs resulted in both victories and setbacks for the black staff at the state level. Though the Extension Service continued to be headquartered at Raleigh, the A. & T. office remained open. Over four decades after the merger of the two programs, Extension continued to operate an office at A.&T., as the university was still designated a land-grant institution and new funding legislation in 1972 led to expansion within this office. Additionally, agents working there were able to find new, relatively comparable, positions within Extension. R.E. Jones, for example, lost his role as the state leader for the African American branch of Extension when integration occurred. Instead, he remained active in the A. & T. office, becoming the assistant director of the North Carolina Extension Service and also holding the position of associate dean of A. & T.’s School of Agriculture, both of which he held until his retirement in 1977. Similarly, William Cooper, who had led the black 4-H program, still remained employed as a 4-H leader, serving as a state-level 4-H specialist, a position that reported directly to the state 4-H leader and replaced that of district agent. Though these men and other state level workers were able to retain high-ranking positions in the state Extension service, their reassignments reveal the degree to which whites still dominated the organization even after integration. Just as in the past, whites continued to hold the

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<sup>49</sup>“Meeting the 4-H State Staff,” *Clover Leaves*, July 24, 1967, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/363>; Jones, interview by D.W. Colvard

highest leadership positions in the state, with Jones and Cooper still subordinate to white supervisors.<sup>50</sup>

The process of integrating county Extension offices, which moved faster, did result in instances of tension between agents. A retired white agent from Vance County, hired not long after that county's programs merged, recalled that at the time of her hiring, a sense of distrust between black and white agents remained even though the office had been integrated for a couple of years. Throughout the state, the process of consolidation sometimes created confusion within local offices as agents struggled with the redundancies that combining programs created. Issues of Extension agent pay also led to conflict as some African American agents, who typically had received lower salaries during the period of dual programs, continued to earn less than their white counterparts even after integration. Such pay discrepancies were beyond the control of North Carolina 4-H, since the larger Extension service set salaries and not all of the agents involved worked directly with 4-H. Nevertheless, this disparity is important to understanding race relations within Extension because it reveals some of the institutionalized racism present within the organization that formal reports, which tended to emphasize a spirit of cooperation, often failed to note. After a lengthy legal battle that began in 1972, the United States Supreme Court ultimately ruled in favor of North Carolina's African American agents in 1986 in the case *Bazemore v. Friday*, contending that racial pay

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<sup>50</sup> "Meeting the 4-H State Staff," *Clover Leaves*, July 24, 1967, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/363>; Jones, interview by D.W. Colvard; "North Carolina Cooperative Extension," <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu>, (accessed March 3, 2011); Jack Betts, "R.E. Jones, Obstacles Cleared, Retires from Extension Service," R.E. Jones Collection.

discrimination continued to occur in North Carolina despite the integration of the state's Extension Service.<sup>51</sup>

*Bazemore* also revealed the frustration that African American parents within North Carolina felt with regard to the process by which the state's 4-H clubs integrated. Although the primary focus of *Bazemore* dealt with pay inequity, a concerned group of black parents also used the case to try to compel North Carolina 4-H to engage in more active efforts at integrating clubs, rather than its more passive approach of simply opening clubs to all members regardless of race. These parents argued that 4-H had not done enough to promote true integration within community clubs, contending that from 1972 to 1980, the number of racially homogenous clubs declined by 1.3 percent, a rate that the parents found to be unacceptably slow. Based on evidence presented in the *Bazemore* case, by 1980 at least 47.8 percent of clubs remained single-race, although the exact percentage was likely higher. Ultimately, however, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Extension on this particular matter, contending that North Carolina Extension and 4-H had made adequate progress in ending segregation within clubs, citing the voluntary nature of club membership as a factor beyond the control of 4-H. The court's rationale was that North Carolina 4-H, in no longer specifically barring memberships because of race, had made all necessary efforts in ending segregation within clubs, even if racially homogenous community clubs happened to form voluntarily.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Barnes, interview by the author; *Bazemore v. Friday*, 478 U.S. 385 (1986).

<sup>52</sup> *Bazemore v. Friday*, 478 U.S. 385 (1986).

The continued existence of single-race 4-H clubs in mixed-race communities reveals the degree to which blacks and whites, for perhaps a variety of reasons, chose not to join clubs with members of a different race. Only one documented instance occurred of a black 4-H'er being excluded from a club due to racial discrimination. At an unspecified period between 1965 and 1972, a white adult volunteer leader did deny an African American boy membership in a club. As a result of the leader's actions, North Carolina 4-H discharged the volunteer from its service. Official policies issued by Extension and 4-H did not seek to thwart efforts at integration. Hidden from official records, though, are some of the factors that contributed to the prevalence of racially homogenous clubs within mixed-race neighborhoods. In some instances, distrust between African American and white 4-H'ers often stood in the way of the formation of integrated clubs. This wariness came not just from white club members, as one might expect, but in some cases also from black 4-H'ers who were concerned about opening their clubs to potential white members.<sup>53</sup>

Such hesitancy was justified, as many African American club members throughout the South felt as though they lost opportunities with the integration of 4-H activities. In an effort to promote integration within 4-H, the national office ended the Southern Regional Conference, formerly known as the Regional 4-H Camp, for African American club members in 1961 and integrated the National 4-H Congress that same decade. While this change did allow black 4-H'ers the opportunity to compete for a

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<sup>53</sup> *Bazemore v. Friday*, 751 F.2d 662 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1984) in Lexus Nexus Academic, <http://libproxy.uncg.edu:2086/hottopics/lnacademic/> (accessed February 25, 2011); Barnes, interview by the author.

greater number of awards with more valuable prizes, fewer African American youth had the opportunity to attend a large 4-H gathering, as the national event remained predominantly white, a trend that continued through the 1970s. North Carolina's 4-H program followed this larger trend with its Congress delegations. In 1964, for example, out of a total of thirty-three 4-H'ers chosen to attend the event, only one was African American. Similarly, in 1967 North Carolina 4-H had only a single black club member out of a delegation of forty. Prior to integration, eight African Americans were able to attend annual regional meetings. Opportunities clearly declined after the two programs merged. Such a sense of loss fit in with the experiences of other African Americans in the South who in many instances found that integration of assorted institutions like schools and civic organizations left blacks marginalized in spaces that may have been integrated but were still dominated by whites who might outnumber them or hold the bulk of leadership positions. Integration, while a push toward rectifying inequalities, in some cases resulted in the erasure of African American community institutions. As a result, integration often took a heavier toll on blacks than whites who typically did not experience such losses.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Wessel and Wessel, 185; Carmen V. Harris, "States' Rights, Federal Bureaucrats, and Segregated 4-H Camps in the United States, 1927-1960," *Journal of African American History* 93, no. 3 (Summer 2008), 381-382; "North Carolina Delegation Attending the National 4-H Club Congress [1964]," *GNG*, <http://images.lib.ncsu.edu:8180/luna/servlet/s/mw9akx>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1964," 37; "North Carolina Delegation Attending the National 4-H Club Congress [1967]," *GNG*, <http://images.lib.ncsu.edu:8180/luna/servlet/s/q7r25f>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1967," 52, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/434>; Chafe, 345-346; Michelle Busby, "'The Price of Integration': The Story of the Charlotte YWCA in the 1960's," in *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and the YWCA in the City*, ed. Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 227.

Determining the impact that such limitations had on enrollment proves challenging as North Carolina 4-H stopped reporting enrollment numbers by race after desegregation. On the whole, memberships were down in the mid and late 1960s from where they had been at the beginning of the decade, though this loss began prior to the end of segregation and was viewed by agents as a result of the shift to community clubs. At the beginning of the decade, total enrollment stood at around 168,000. In 1963, the first full year in which all clubs had switched to the community club model, enrollment had declined to 59,672. This drop continued over the next two years, falling to an all-time low in 1965 of 50,780. The extent to which desegregation influenced this further reduction in membership is impossible to gauge from existing records. Overall the trend of decline was short-lived, with a reversal beginning after 1965. Enrollment increased from 1966 onward, likely due to North Carolina 4-H's participation in initiatives like Operation Expansion and its efforts at implementing structural changes as part of an effort to actively recruit and retain more members. By 1979, enrollment was at 98,405. Though some agents in the late 1970s were still emphasizing the need to attract more youth to club work, largely as part of an endeavor to regain enrollment levels from the period prior to the community clubs transition, the fall in memberships of the mid-1960s did not return.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Annual Report for 1960 [4-H Club Work],” 6, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1021>; Enrollment Statistics from 1963-1966, Carton 9, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; “4-H Statistical Summary, 1964-1967,” Carton 9, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; “Annual Narrative Report: Oct. 1, 1978 – Sept. 30, 1979,” 131, Box 17, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service - Annual Reports; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Catawba County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 21.

A loss of opportunity for black 4-H'ers also concerned members of the board of directors for the 4-H Club Foundation of North Carolina, the organization that helped raise the funds to construct and support Camp Mitchell. While the camp had been a source of pride for the African American 4-H program, the directors worried that it might be abandoned as North Carolina 4-H integrated its camps. As with other aspects of 4-H integration, after dismantling its dual programs, North Carolina 4-H left its camps open to all club members regardless of race, but its administration did not compel 4-H'ers to attend a particular camp.<sup>56</sup> Club leaders and county agents scheduling camping trips had the option of selecting which camps to use, as well as whether or not they even wanted to participate in the camping program. Integration initially led to an overall decline in camping in 1967, and Camp Mitchell did not operate that year as a result. Too few clubs participated to fund Camp Mitchell that year, a fact that also worried the Club Foundation's board of directors. In this sense, North Carolina's experiences differed from other southern states. In South Carolina and Virginia, for example, the state 4-H programs opted to close all of their camps in order to avoid integrated camping. In North Carolina, resistance to interracial camping came from the local level, not from the state's 4-H leadership. Camp Mitchell did not close permanently; North Carolina 4-H continued operating it as part of its regular camping program, reopening it before the end of the

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<sup>56</sup> Even prior to integration, camping in North Carolina had always been an extremely popular, but voluntary activity for 4-H'ers.



decade. In spite of initial resistance to integration, camping remained a popular and strong part of 4-H club work in North Carolina.<sup>57</sup>

Although North Carolina 4-H technically completed its desegregation process in the 1960s, its emphasis on racial integration continued into the 1970s, shifting to reflect increased efforts at awareness and inclusion of racial differences. In the second half of the decade, agents in some counties argued that the organization needed to do more to reach out to and recruit a greater number of African American club members.

Additionally, the state office secured educational film strips for agents at the county level to show to community clubs and special interest groups that examined and celebrated the different cultures of African American, Latino, and Native American children. While the film strips were utilized, records do not indicate the racial demographics of the viewers. State leaders also encouraged agents to increase the number of mixed-race clubs within integrated neighborhoods. The North Carolina Association of Extension 4-H Agents actively worked to ensure that black agents were included in delegations it sent to national conferences.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> “Board of Directors Meeting – 4-H Club Foundation of North Carolina, Inc.” January 17, 1968, 2-4, William C. Cooper Collection; Harris, 381-382; Fred H. Wagoner to Community Relations Section of the Joint Information Services Office at Camp LeJeune, June 24, 1979, Carton 14, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; Barnes, interview by the author.

<sup>58</sup> North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help Chatham County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 35; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help Person County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 30; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help Polk County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 17; Pauline E. Moore, “New Filmstrip Sets Available for Loan,” *4-H News XV*, no. 1 (1977): 3, Box 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; Donald L. Stormer, “County Extension Agent Alert,” *State 4-H News XIV*, no. 5 (1976): 6, Box 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; “Authorizations to Attend National Meeting,” *North Carolina Chapter National Association of Extension 4-H Agents [Newsletter]*, July 17, 1972, 3, Box 1, North Carolina Association of Extension 4-H Agents

At the same time, however, the 1970s were a period in which race in many ways did not garner the same level of focus that it had in the past. The elimination of the African American program, for example, meant that agents gave less direct details on the progress of black club members simply because reports were no longer written for racially segregated programs. This decade also marked a period in which North Carolina 4-H worked to adapt to changing economic conditions, focusing more heavily on adjusting its project offerings and altering its rural public image in order to remain relevant to youth. During a 1977 review of the over-all 4-H program, some agents did note the need to recruit more black members, but far more agents focused on increasing overall membership. Though rates had improved since the initial mid-1960s decline to 50,780 in 1965, the 1977 enrollment of 93,000 was still around 44 percent less than the 1960 level of just over 168,000. Social and economic changes within North Carolina, combined with the fact that all clubs had technically desegregated, meant that agents' attention, at least in official reports, had largely shifted away from race.<sup>59</sup>

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Records, UA 102.054, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina; Brenda Abrams to NCAE Members, July 17, 1973, Box 1, North Carolina Association of Extension 4-H Agents Records; "4-H Association Officers," *North Carolina State University Extension News* LIX, no. 5 (1973): 1, Box 1, North Carolina Association of Extension 4-H Agents Records.

<sup>59</sup> North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help North Carolina Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 150-151; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help Burke County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 15, 17; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help Cabarrus County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 25-26; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help Camden County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 13; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help Carteret County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 17; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help Caswell County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 17; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help Catawba County Grow*, 21; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help Clay County Grow*

Until the 1960s, North Carolina 4-H's approach to race within both its clubs and its administration in many ways reflected larger trends within both the state and the South. Separate and unequal programs existed for African American and white club members, as black clubs lacked the same opportunities for camping, recognition, and scholarships afforded to white 4-H'ers. Black agents, who administered their own programs at the county and state level, ultimately reported to whites. Interracial cooperation between the two programs did occur, such as at joint staff meetings at the state level or by sharing a subject specialist, but these were largely motivated by concerns of practicality and efficiency rather than by a desire to have an integrated 4-H program. Although many of the differences in programs were the result of structural factors rather than deliberate discrimination on the part of 4-H, the fact remained that having two separated programs created a situation in which one segment lagged behind the other. While experiences with Native American club members revealed the organization was less firmly entrenched in racial segregation than other institutions, North Carolina 4-H's

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(Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 30; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help Davidson County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 16; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help Harnett County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 20; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help Henderson County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 13; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help Montgomery County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 151; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help New Hanover County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 12; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *Four-Sight: A Plan to Help Rutherford County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 23; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Annual Report for 1960 [4-H Club Work]," 6; "4-H Statistical Summary, 1964-1967"; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Narrative Report, Oct. 1, 1976-Sept. 30, 1977," 6, Box 17, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service - Annual Reports.

black/white divide in many ways closely mirrored the larger system of segregation in place within the state.

The prevalence of inequality within 4-H does not mean, however, that African American agents simply accepted these circumstances. They endeavored to educate black youth in better farming and farm homemaking practices and found ways to adapt to limitations imposed by both the dual system of 4-H and the larger practices of segregation and oppression present within the state. Leaders of the African American program also worked to raise white awareness of the poor conditions faced by North Carolina's rural blacks, many of which were caused by the second-class status African Americans faced within the state. Carefully navigating the need for racial advocacy and deference to whites, R.E. Jones and William C. Cooper both emphasized the hardships that segregation and economic disparity imposed on rural blacks without directly criticizing the system.

The process by which North Carolina 4-H integrated its clubs represents one area in which the organization's experiences differed considerably from that of predominant trends within the state. The shift to the community club model of organization spared 4-H from the controversy and conflict surrounding the integration of the state's public schools. While all 4-H clubs after 1965 may have been technically open to members regardless of race, the fact that clubs were organized in racially homogenous neighborhoods led to the formation of many single-race clubs. Despite complaints from concerned African American parents, the United States Supreme Court contended that this situation was acceptable. Although school curriculum reform, rather than

desegregation, was the ultimate catalyst prompting the conversion to community clubs, the transition still affected North Carolina 4-H's integration process, taking some of the pressure off of white state leaders. Because 4-H no longer operated in North Carolina's schools, it did not face the funding cuts that programs in other states did. Since clubs now formed in local communities, many of which were racially homogenous themselves, black and white 4-H'ers were not forced together during monthly meetings, enabling North Carolina to almost painlessly, at least from the perspective of the Raleigh office, comply with federal regulation. Such convenience, however, came at the expense of true and meaningful integration. Roughly a decade and a half after the federal order to desegregate, almost half of North Carolina's 4-H clubs remained racially homogenous. The true integration that did occur at the county and state levels often came at the expense of African Americans. By the end of the 1970s, North Carolina 4-H had made substantial progress in providing more equitable opportunities to club members of all races compared to its performance in previous decades. However, the organization still had considerable work to do with regard to implementing meaningful integration at the community club level, a challenge that would persist into the future.

## CHAPTER IV

### “WHETHER THEY ARE A BOY OR WHETHER THEY’RE A GIRL... THEIR OPPORTUNITIES ARE AS GREAT AS THEIR IMAGINATION AND THEIR WILL TO DO”: GENDER AND NORTH CAROLINA 4-H

Throughout its first five decades, North Carolina 4-H’s approach to gender in many ways reflected mainstream American views regarding appropriate behaviors and roles for males and females in an agricultural setting. The organization endeavored to train boys and girls in the skills they would need to be successful adults, meaning that boys were instructed primarily in agricultural practices, while girls received training to become future farm homemakers. This division was so strong that, prior to World War II, many of the state’s clubs were segregated by sex, with boys and girls only coming together for occasional joint club meetings or district and state level events. In spite of this arrangement, North Carolina 4-H did maintain a degree of flexibility with regard to club members’ projects and activities, allowing boys and girls to sometimes enroll in project areas that crossed gender norms for male and female work, a practice that increased when crises, such as the Great Depression, put constraints on the time agents could spend with club members. North Carolina 4-H also provided its members with greater opportunities for coeducational instruction and project flexibility than other youth organizations in the first six decades of the twentieth century.

In the period following World War II, North Carolina 4-H gradually shifted its policies and practices regarding sex and gender roles. In the late 1940s and 1950s, more

club members took on projects typically associated with the opposite sex, although girls did so to a greater extent than boys. Four-H also offered projects and award areas designed for both sexes, including public speaking and leadership. By the mid-1960s, gender divisions and sex-based restrictions in 4-H projects and programming began to disappear as the organization adapted to the state's decline in agricultural jobs. This process occurred at the same time that more American women were working for wages outside the home and beginning to push for increased opportunities and rights. To an extent, 4-H's changes reflected some of these developments, as the economic factors that pushed farm women into paid employment also made training in farming and farm homemaking less useful for North Carolina youth. By the end of the 1970s, the organization had lifted all sex-based restrictions from its projects and awards, as well as further expanded its instructional offerings in areas completely removed from farming or homemaking. North Carolina 4-H was simply no longer focused on training boys and girls to fit into two distinct roles.

Larger cultural beliefs about appropriate gender norms for males and females helped shape the approach that North Carolina 4-H took in developing its programming for boys and girls. Although societal views about appropriate behavior and work for males and females had existed for centuries, the individuals who helped form and shape the early youth clubs in North Carolina, along with the rest of American society in the early twentieth century, were influenced by ideals about gender that emerged during the nineteenth century. During that period, as men increasingly found employment in public settings, Americans associated both the home and homemaking activities as strictly

within the purview of females. Rather than seeking out paid employment in a public setting, women and girls were instead expected to remain at home, performing a variety of domestic activities. Such work went beyond tasks associated with general household maintenance, like cleaning, instead requiring women to ensure that “home... was a cheerful place,” especially for male family members. In exchange, men were expected to provide for the material and economic needs of women. Regardless of such cultural norms, though, financial necessity compelled some women to engage in wage work.<sup>1</sup>

Similar divisions continued into the twentieth century, although the view of women’s domestic work did change somewhat. The emergence of home economists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries added a scientific component to women’s housework. First concerned with home sanitation and germ eradication in the 1890s, the women who pioneered the new field of home economics turned their attention to issues like diet and nutrition in the 1900s and 1910s. These women, who received college training in subjects like sanitation, bacteriology, and nutrition, wanted regular housewives to also have a basic understanding of such scientific principles to promote better home health. In line with this thinking, home economists believed that by emphasizing the scientific elements of housework, they might also be able to improve its public image and increase its cultural value. Additionally, home economists sought to assist families financially by training housewives to be informed consumers when purchasing manufactured goods. The increase in industrialization in the late 1800s meant

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18, No. 2 (Summer 1966), 162-163; Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 10-11, 59; William H. Chafe, *Women and Equality: Changing Patterns in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 22-23, 34-35.



that by the twentieth century women were purchasing factory-made goods that previous generations of women had produced at home, ranging from foods like butter and cheese to cloth for making clothes.<sup>2</sup>

While the home economics movement did lend importance to women's roles as homemakers, American society, including the academic community, continued to view men and women's work as different in nature and importance. The establishment of the Federal Extension Service in 1914 created a need for college-educated men and women to serve as agents who would deliver instruction to farm families. However, the land grant colleges that housed state Extension offices often viewed men's agricultural work as more important than the domestic responsibilities of women. In academic settings, male colleagues of home economists sometimes overlooked the scientific aspect of women's work, viewing courses in nutritious meal preparation as simple cooking classes. The organizational divisions present within Extension also continued to reinforce sex-based labor divisions within rural families as administrators divided Extension work into two distinct categories aimed at men and women separately.<sup>3</sup>

Such separation within Extension helped shape the development of North Carolina 4-H. The gender divisions present within youth club work in the state emerged even before the official formation of the 4-H and stemmed largely from the ways in which farm labor was divided. Beginning in 1909, I.O. Schaub, who worked for the

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<sup>2</sup> Megan J. Elias, *Stir It Up: Home Economics in American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 20-26; Carolyn E. Sachs, *The Invisible Farmers: Women in Agricultural Production* (Totowa, NJ: Rowan & Allanheld, 1983), 46, 57.

<sup>3</sup> Sachs, 54, 57; Elias, 27.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and would become the first director of North Carolina's Extension Service, organized corn clubs within the state aimed at farm boys with the purpose of improving cultivation practices in a new generation of farmers. While these first clubs were designed with boys in mind, Schaub and others wanted to expand the program to reach farm girls as well. Rather than integrate girls into corn clubs, however, USDA workers instead opted to establish clubs more suited to teaching girls skills that they would one day need as farm homemakers. The very earliest clubs for girls, established in North Carolina in 1911, taught both gardening and canning skills. Girls, instructed by home economists hired by the Extension Service, learned how to effectively grow garden tomatoes and preserve them for future use through canning.<sup>4</sup>

The model adopted by Schaub followed a larger tradition of sex-segregated instruction in matters related to rural living that preceded the formation of youth clubs. The Morrill Act of 1862 provided funding for land-grant universities, such as those that became North Carolina State University and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, whose purpose was to educate men in new agricultural and engineering practices. While some land-grant institutions eventually admitted women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women's instruction often involved training in home economics. With youth clubs, early pioneers believed that the training provided should help young people with their future vocations. Seaman Knapp, largely responsible for the birth of agricultural demonstration work in the United States, had

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<sup>4</sup> Jane S. McKimmon, *When We're Green We Grow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1945), 1-6.

gender roles clearly in mind when he first conceptualized ways to approach youth club work. Knapp believed that the training that young people received in such clubs should assist them in their adult work as either farmers or farm homemakers, and so he emphasized agricultural training for boys and domestic instruction for girls.<sup>5</sup>

Gender divisions were also present within the earliest leadership of the clubs that would become North Carolina 4-H. Prior to 4-H's formal establishment in the state in 1926, the Extension Service worked with the new youth clubs, both organizing and administering them. Club work for boys remained under the direct supervision of I.O. Schaub, but in 1911 Schaub accepted funding from the General Education Board to hire a woman to oversee clubs for girls. He hired Jane S. McKimmon, a North Carolina native and graduate of the future William Peace University in Raleigh to do so. Providing outreach and instruction to rural families was not new to McKimmon as both prior to and while serving as the state's first home demonstration agent, she also worked with the North Carolina Farm Institute as both a lecturer and supervisor of women's services. As Extension work in North Carolina solidified over the next couple of decades, its gender divisions continued and even expanded. Schaub ultimately supervised the entire Extension program, but two divisions emerged within the organization. Female home agents provided instruction to farm girls and women in homemaking, while male farm agents taught both men and boys agricultural practices. As more home demonstration agents were hired, many of whom were trained in the home economics department of the future University of North Carolina at Greensboro, they fell under the supervision of

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<sup>5</sup> Elias, 4; McKimmon, *When We're Green We Grow*, 2.

McKimmon, though she reported to Schaub, who was responsible for the entire Extension service within the state.<sup>6</sup>

The expansion of available projects in the 1910s provided new opportunities for club members. Although growing corn and canning fruits and vegetables remained an important part of club work, Extension workers soon added other subjects for study as well, a process accelerated by agricultural needs stemming from the outbreak of World War I. As a result, club members could participate in a variety of new projects related to field crops, livestock, and foods and nutrition. The expanded curriculum also resulted in increased opportunities for girls to take on projects related to livestock. By 1917, for example, county agents allowed girls to join pig clubs in which they learned how to effectively care for sows and piglets. Though Extension agents continued, according to McKimmon, to hold to the belief “that 4-H Club work should train the girl on the home side and the boy in good agricultural practices,” girls did participate and earn achievements in livestock work, including winning club competitions at county fairs. While some fluidity existed for girls to participate in projects generally associated with boys, for the most part boys and girls in the 1910s remained separate from one another in club work with farm and home agents conducting sex-segregated instruction for girls and boys, respectively.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> McKimmon, *When We're Green We Grow*, 4; Wilma Hammett, Jan Christensen, and Joan Gosper, *Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Service to Family, Community, and North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Family and Consumer Sciences Foundation and North Carolina Extension and Community Association Foundation, 2011), 3-6.

<sup>7</sup> “Some Club Member Will Win Big Trip,” *Tar Heel Club News*, 1, no. 11 (1921): 45, *Green 'N' Growing: The History of Home Demonstration and 4-H Youth Development in North Carolina (GNG)*, North Carolina State University Libraries, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/247>; “Club Girls May

The fact that Extension agents allowed girls to participate in such project areas reflected the fact that farm women's experiences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries differed from middle-class ideals regarding domesticity. Like most American women in this period, women living on farms shouldered the responsibilities of caring for their children and performing homemaking tasks like cooking and cleaning. The nature of farm life meant, though, that these women might also perform agricultural work more typically associated with men. For example, women might assist their husbands with tending livestock or performing field work. This practice was more common in the South than in other regions of the United States due to the intense labor requirements of two of the region's key cash crops, cotton and tobacco. Although women provided needed labor, farm families endeavored to keep them out of the fields whenever possible as a matter of social respectability, as such work was viewed as inappropriate for both upper class and white women. In spite of the help that wives and daughters might provide in agricultural work, American society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries primarily viewed farming as a male profession. The contributions of wives did not mean that farm marriages were equal partnerships. For the most part, women were primarily subordinate to men in these relationships.<sup>8</sup>

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Make Money During Summer," 46, *Tar Heel Club News* 1, no. 11 (1921): 46, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/247>; McKimmon, 306; "Prize Winner Tells How She Raises Pigs," *Tar Heel Club News* 1, no. 3 (1920): 10, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/242>; S.J. Kirby, "Narrative Report on Club Work by Assistant State Agent," 3, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/445>; L.R. Harrill, *Memories of 4-H* (Raleigh: North Carolina 4-H Development Fund, 1967), 6.

<sup>8</sup> Sachs, 24, 28-29; Sally McMillen, "No Easy Time: Rural Southern Women, 1940-1990," in *The Rural South Since World War II*, ed. R. Douglas Hurt (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 68; Rebecca Sharpless and Melissa Walker, "'Pretty Near Every Woman Done a Man's Work': Women and Field Work in the Rural South," in *Work, Family, and Faith: Rural Southern Women in the*

The practice of keeping club members apart by sex extended to overnight programs as well, although in some cases camping provided an opportunity for boys and girls to interact with one another. The annual Short Course, later known as Club Congress and then as Club Camp Week, began in 1919 and was a program that brought top performing club members together for a week each year. Initially, Extension agents conducted two separate short courses every summer, one held for boys on the campus of the future North Carolina State University and another for girls, conducted at several different colleges, including the future University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the future William Peace University, and the future Elon University. Club members resided in dormitories and received instruction in either farming or home economics. During 1926, the first year North Carolina clubs were officially affiliated with 4-H, Extension agents held mixed-sex short courses for club members at North Carolina State University for white 4-H'ers and at the future North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University for African American club members.<sup>9</sup>

Even before the consolidation of the Short Course, though, there were some coed overnight events. By 1920 counties throughout the state with youth demonstration clubs were holding annual encampments for recreational and educational purposes that boys and girls attended together. L.R. Harrill, the first agent overseeing the state's entire 4-H

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*Twentieth Century*, eds. Melissa Walker and Rebecca Sharpless (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 43, 46; Lu Ann Jones, *Mama Learned Us to Work: Farm Women in the New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 7-9.

<sup>9</sup> "Looking Ahead to the Annual Short Course," *Tar Heel Club News* 1, no. 11 (1921): 47, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/247>; McKimmon, 311-313; "N.C. State Negro 4-H Short Course," *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/200>.

program, contended that in the early years of club work, camping was integral for encouraging initial club-related interactions between male and female members. Harrill viewed such encounters as a way to strengthen interest in 4-H, as it would provide participants with increased recreational and social opportunities that would result in greater enthusiasm for participating in club work. Though having boys and girls together on overnight trips might have been a potential cause for alarm among parents and other adults, McKimmon and Harrill both made sure to note that boys and girls slept apart from one another on these excursions. According to McKimmon, girls attending the Short Course were under the supervision of adult “house mothers” who served as chaperones and kept “serenading” boys at bay.<sup>10</sup>

While camping and short courses provided some opportunities for 4-H boys and girls to come together, club work itself would remain largely sex-segregated for almost two more decades. When L.R. Harrill assumed his position leading North Carolina’s newly formed 4-H program in 1926, one of his initial goals was to bring together the pre-existing Extension boys’ and girls’ clubs to unite them under 4-H. In fact, part of I.O. Schaub’s decision to appoint a single individual to oversee all youth club work within the state stemmed from his desire to tie programs for boys and girls more closely together. In doing so, North Carolina followed the trends taking place in other states that had also recently joined the national 4-H movement. Harrill spent part of 1926 observing how 4-H work was carried out in other states and returned to North Carolina with the belief that

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<sup>10</sup> McKimmon, 313; “How About That Club Camp?” *Tar Heel Club News* 1, no. 3 (1920): 11, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/242>; Harrill, *Memories of 4-H*, 6, 21; L.R. Harrill, Annual Report of 4-H Club Work, January 1, 1926 to December 1, 1926,” 9, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1025>.

Extension's youth program could be made more efficient and more easily expand its subject offerings through the use of coeducational clubs. Officials at the local schools that hosted club meetings, however, did not always support these endeavors. The fact that 4-H clubs sought to provide not only mixed-sex instruction but also coeducational recreational activities caused some school administrators to initially resist the changes Harrill endeavored to implement. According to Harrill, these officials did not believe that girls and boys could effectively work together "in any type of club, especially one that had a social aspect like a camp program," though he did not elaborate on whether administrators believed that coeducational club work would lead to boys and girls distracting one another, engaging in sexual impropriety, or some other problem. Whatever the concerns were, they were deep-rooted as it took "several decades" for all local school staff to overcome their reservations about coeducational clubs.<sup>11</sup>

Support for keeping 4-H clubs and activities segregated by sex likely stemmed not only from curriculum concerns but also from fears about the potential for boys and girls to engage in sexual impropriety. Such worries were not limited to 4-H but instead applied to an expanding youth culture emerging in the 1920s. As increasing numbers of adolescents attended high school, spending much of their days in the company of their peers, many sought social validation from other young people rather than adults, a change more prominent in urban rather than rural areas. Technological developments, especially the expanding prevalence of automobiles, provided young people with a way to escape adult supervision. Such opportunities, combined with ideas of sexuality morphing away

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<sup>11</sup> Harrill, *Memories of 4-H*, 9-11; McKimmon, *When We're Green We Grow*, 319.



from those of the Victorian era that were less critical of practices like dating, “petting,” or premarital sex between engaged couples, caused much alarm for older adults in the 1920s. Some adults expressed concerns over the breakdown of the social order and the emergence of rebellious or delinquent young people. Four-H clubs and camps had adult chaperones and many of the participants had not yet entered adolescence, as the minimum age to join was nine. Regardless of the facts, though, the school administrators Harrill encountered who were opposed to coeducational club work were likely influenced by these larger fears over deviant behavior among youth. Still holding ideas about what constituted appropriated mixed-sex interactions, they may have felt that Harrill’s plans for coeducational club work were improper and pushing young people toward deviancy.<sup>12</sup>

While Harrill was not as alarmed by the thought of mixed-sex socializing and club work, his intent was not to challenge prevalent gender roles. Harrill and his colleagues believed coeducational interactions could benefit club members and the 4-H program in general by providing, in addition to assorted skills training, increased opportunities for socialization. At the same time, however, he felt that projects should still emphasize farming for boys and homemaking for girls. Instead of having boys and girls approach these topics separately, agents conducting joint club meetings highlighted some of the ways in which girls’ and boys’ work intersected. At such gatherings agents might emphasize how boys and girls could come together to use their respective skills to accomplish a common goal. For example, to improve an old piece of furniture, boys

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<sup>12</sup> John Modell, *Into One’s Own: From Youth to Adulthood in the United States, 1920-1975* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 73, 76-77, 87-90; Susan K. Cahn, *Sexual Reckonings: Southern Girls in a Troubling Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 22-23, 26.

might draw on their woodworking skills to sand and repair it, while girls could utilize their training related to clothing and fabrics to reupholster it. Such strategies persisted for several decades. In 1945, for example, African American home demonstration agents working in Anson County noted that in some clubs boys constructed kitchen tools like “rolling pins, churn dashers, butte paddle wooden spoons and knives [sic],” while girls in the same club prepared baked goods and constructed assorted textile goods used in kitchens like “pot holders, dish towels, table clothes [sic] and napkins, aprons and caps.” This kind of complimentary approach enabled agents to bring boys and girls together in club work without encouraging them to violate gender norms.<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, however, early 4-H club work in North Carolina did allow for some flexibility with regard to gender. Just as some girls had joined livestock clubs in the 1910s, opportunities existed in the 1920s for both boys and girls to participate in projects and activities that were typically associated with the opposite sex. Remembering his early work with 4-H in the late 1920s, L.R. Harrill contended that in addition to assisting boys with farm projects, he also “helped make some farmers out of girls, too, or at least some mighty fine farmers’ wives” by teaching them principles related to agriculture rather than home economics. A desire to improve the overall state of commercial farming within North Carolina rather than an effort to challenge gender norms motivated Harrill. Similarly, home demonstration agents provided opportunities for 4-H boys, whom they fully anticipated would grow up to become farmers, to receive

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<sup>13</sup> McKimmon, *When We’re Green We Grow*, 306-307; “Anson County Home Demonstration Agent Annual Report 1945 (Negro),” 21, North Carolina Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports 1945.

some basic home economics training to potentially aid them in adulthood. Boys might, for example, receive instruction on tasks like preparing breakfast, not with the intention of making them more domestic or of dissuading them from pursuing a career in farming, but instead, to assist them on days when their future wives might be sick or away and unable to do so. In some instances, boys actively sought out instruction in homemaking projects. In 1927, 693 boys in North Carolina expressed an interest in the work of home agents and attended home demonstration meetings for youth. Although records do not indicate the scope of their participation in home projects or their motivations for undertaking such work, which theoretically could encompass a variety of factors including a desire to help out at home to an interest in meeting girls, at least some of these boys participated in home beautification activities, a project category that in the following decades would regularly attract 4-H'ers of both sexes.<sup>14</sup>

The move to unite boys and girls provided 4-H workers with the opportunity to develop projects and activities that taught the same concepts regardless of sex. Jane McKimmon took on this task when she set out to teach table etiquette at the 1932 Short Course to 680 coed club members. McKimmon contended that whether male or female, such skills were necessary and useful for 4-H'ers who might otherwise find themselves “out in the world with uncouth behavior which humiliates [them].” McKimmon noted that when offered, club members of both sexes eagerly sought such training to avoid committing social faux pas. Similarly, agents promoted the health project, in which club

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<sup>14</sup> Harrill, *Memories of 4-H*, 10-11; McKimmon, *When We're Green We Grow*, 307; Jane S. McKimmon, “Annual Report 1937 Home Demonstration Division,” 1,89, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/689>; “North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work],” 88, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1011>.

members' dietary and personal care practices were evaluated at both the start and end of the project, to both boys and girls, and required participating 4-H'ers to adhere to the same requirements, regardless of sex.<sup>15</sup>

Early poultry work, with instruction often provided by both home demonstration and farm agents, provided opportunities for not only mixed-sex instruction but also a way to encourage boys to move as adults into an area of agriculture previously dominated by women. Prior to this time, poultry cultivation served as one way, along with sewing family clothing or growing and canning vegetables for use during the winter months, that Southern farm women contributed to their households. Keeping flocks of chickens for meat and eggs supplemented family diets as well as incomes. Farm women found these birds to be especially useful in adding to family finances because, unlike cows, chickens required less feed and were easier to keep and care for. Both eggs and chickens provided women not only with increased food for their families, but also with a commodity to sell or trade with traveling peddlers and local merchants for either cash or needed home supplies. Money earned from such sales enabled women to not only pay for material goods but to also assist with paying family bills, including college tuition for their children. Such monetary contributions also made a significant impact on family finances during periods of crisis, including the boll weevil outbreak in the 1920s and the Great Depression of the 1930s. The economic value of such endeavors allowed some farm

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<sup>15</sup> McKimmon, *When We're Green We Grow*, 309-310; S. Virginia Wilson and Mary E. Thomas, "4-H Health Improvement," *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/56>

women greater autonomy in their spending practices along with increased input in family decision making.<sup>16</sup>

In North Carolina 4-H, both boys and girls enrolled in poultry projects, with boys winning at the state level even in the earliest years of club work. Since the 1910s, farm agents in North Carolina had looked for ways to get men more involved with poultry production as women's efforts demonstrated how economically valuable such work could be. Many men were reluctant to do so, however, because of poultry's traditional association with farm women. They simply did not view such work as masculine. Four-H, which had from its founding focused on teaching new skills to youth that adults were sometimes reluctant to adopt, was one such way that Extension agents could increase boys', and thereby later men's, interest in poultry cultivation.<sup>17</sup>

Though poultry brought not only club boys and girls but also farm and home agents together, in some instances joint youth work conducted by male and female agents created tensions among 4-H staff. Although Jane McKimmon reported in her memoir that L.R. Harrill had "a fine co-operative group" of farm and home agents to assist him in his efforts at creating a unified 4-H program, Harrill himself remembered his early experiences differently. In his first year, Harrill attributed some of the challenges he faced in implementing club work to "a lack of cooperation between farm and home agents." Tensions persisted at least through the mid-1930s. In 1935, Harrill wrote to I.O.

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<sup>16</sup> Sachs, 26, 40, 74; Jones, 37, 70-72, 75, 82, 91.

<sup>17</sup> McKimmon, "Annual Report 1937 Home Demonstration Division," 115; Jones, 84-85; L.R. Harrill, "Annual Report of 4-H Club Work December 1, 1926 to December 1, 1927," 11, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1026>; L.R. Harrill, "Annual Report of 4-H Club Work December 1, 1927 to December 1, 1928," 16, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840>.

Schaub expressing his frustration with what he viewed as “a concerted effort on the part of the Home Demonstration group or leaders of that group” to undermine his plans for 4-H club work within the state. Though vague on the specific details of the trouble that he had with the department, Harrill found the situation so intolerable that he was willing to resign from his position. While records do not reveal the home agents’ side of this conflict, Harrill’s assertion to Schaub that Extension needed “a definite policy and a clear understanding of responsibilities and duties of those directly connected with and held responsible for the program of 4-H” indicates that both sides may have clashed on the issue of who had ultimate supervision over girls’ club work in North Carolina. Agent workload may also have factored into the rift as a 1934 report on 4-H work conducted by home demonstration staff noted that it would be helpful if “more time [could] be given to club work by farm agents, if possible. No agent can do his or her best work without the cooperation of the other agent,” a remark that further reinforced Harrill’s claim that the home and farm divisions of Extension work were not working together harmoniously.<sup>18</sup>

The Extension Service likely alleviated some of the tensions between 4-H and home agents by including more women from that department in the state level administration of 4-H. Two years after Harrill wrote offering his resignation in response to the conflict he experienced with home agents, Schaub appointed Frances MacGregor, a home agent, to serve as the assistant state club leader under Harrill. From this period

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<sup>18</sup> McKimmon, *When We’re Green We Grow*, 319; Harrill, *Memories of 4-H*, 14; L.R. Harrill to I.O Schaub, March 17, 1935, Box 1, L. R. Harrill Papers, MC 17, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina; Ruth Current, “Annual Narrative and Statistical Report 1934 [4-H Girls’ Club Work],” 27, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/703>.

forward, the state leader, a position filled exclusively by men through at least the 1970s, had at least one woman assistant serving in the state 4-H office.<sup>19</sup> Although the structure and focus of 4-H and Extension work would change over the decades, the inclusion of a home agent at the state level of administration presented an opportunity for greater collaboration between male and female agents, with neither group perhaps feeling excluded from the process of developing 4-H programming.

In spite of the tensions that existed between farm and home agents, the increased workload resulting from the Great Depression and New Deal programs motivated them to move away from single-sex 4-H club work. Male and female agents endeavored to more closely collaborate in order to assist farm families in producing and conserving food for home use in order to reduce food budgets. During this period, 4-H clubs received less attention from farm agents, who instead were working to implement crop control measures initiated by the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA). In response, home agents proposed altering 4-H programming in such a way that would allow for more instruction in subjects that were of possible interest and relevance to both boys and girls, a change that would allow home agents to take over some of the responsibilities of farm agents. The health project was one area that allowed home agents to achieve this goal. Clothing projects were, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, another. As AAA restrictions inhibited club members from taking on some of the agricultural projects regularly pursued by boys, such as growing field crops like cotton and tobacco, some boys chose to branch out into new subjects, such as the 263 North Carolina 4-H boys who

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<sup>19</sup> McKimmon, *When We're Green We Grow*, 320.

enrolled in clothing projects in 1934. Home agents strove to make this work relevant to boys by introducing new categories of garments for participants to sew. Whereas in the past such projects largely centered around sewing and coordinating girls' outfits for various occasions like school and church, new additions for boys involved, among other things, the construction of Boy Scout, basketball, and football uniforms.<sup>20</sup>

Development and promotion of coeducational activities did not mean that agents in North Carolina were necessarily eschewing traditional gender roles in response to the strain on both agents' time and farm families' budgets. When referencing the efforts of all agents to work together to improve rural diets, home agents still firmly acknowledged that males and females had different parts to play in this endeavor. Jane McKimmon, who by this point oversaw all home demonstration work at the state level, used the analogy of a farm family to explain the different roles that she believed farm and home agents should play in conducting joint Extension work. She contended that in order for this effort to be effective, it needed to function like a farm family where both men and women had separate responsibilities, with men "dealing with earning an income for the family's support," women "managing the household machinery," and both coming together to ensure "the welfare of the whole family." Such an analogy reveals that McKimmon clearly valued the traditional sex-based labor divisions present in rural

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<sup>20</sup> Ruth Current, "Annual Narrative and Statistical Report 1933 [4-H Girls' Club Work]," 7, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/457>; Jane S. McKimmon "Annual Report 1931 Home Demonstration Division," 9-10, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/476>; L.R. Harrill, "Annual Report of 4-H Club Work December 1, 1932 to December 1, 1933," 2, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/994>; L.R. Harrill, "Annual Report of 4-H Club Work December 1, 1933 to December 1, 1934," 4, 24, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/995>; Current, "Annual Narrative and Statistical Report 1934 [4-H Girls' Club Work]," 25.



families. Regardless of the new developments in 4-H stemming from the challenges Extension agents faced in the 1930s, leaders like McKimmon did not want to reject the organization's emphasis on separate and distinct roles for boys and girls.<sup>21</sup>

Despite these initial endeavors in the 1920s and 1930s to bring boys and girls more closely together in 4-H club work, clubs remained largely sex segregated until the 1940s when World War II accelerated the process of creating a truly coeducational program in North Carolina. A variety of wartime factors helped expedite this shift. Beginning in 1940 and continuing through the duration of the war, 4-H, along with the larger Extension program, placed heavy emphasis on increasing food production and preservation. To an extent, this focus continued to reinforce traditional gender roles, as girls were encouraged to can and freeze food to supplement their families' diets and to help comply with rationing requirements. Club programming for girls prompted them to consider planning nutritious meals for their families as part of a response to the poor health of military recruits from North Carolina through the "Three Meals a Day the Victory Way" foods and nutrition project. Girls were also encouraged to "Make and Mend for Victory" in the clothing segment of their homemaking projects. Similarly, agents encouraged boys to take on field crop and livestock projects. However, the wartime food needs prompted Extension workers to more actively encourage club members to adopt projects that crossed gender lines.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> McKimmon, "Annual Report 1931 Home Demonstration Division," 8-9.

<sup>22</sup> Harrill, *Memories of 4-H*, 11; "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual Report 1943 [Boys and Girls 4-H Club Work]," 37, 40, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1004>.

For the most part during World War II, this loosening of gender restrictions had a greater impact on girls than on boys. Although girls had participated in field crops and livestock projects prior to the 1940s, the labor demands of the war, which resulted in many rural boys and men leaving their farms to either serve in the military or work in war industries, created a situation in which rural girls and women had to assume farm duties usually performed by males. African American agents noted, for example, the fact that two sisters, the eldest of whom was twelve, took on their brothers' livestock responsibilities during the war. Their father remarked that as a result of their 4-H training, they were "doing the job just as well as I used to do it." Generally, 4-H girls were encouraged to take part in food production. Under North Carolina 4-H's "Feed a Fighter" program, agents prompted club members to either produce or conserve enough food to support a soldier for an entire year. Canning, a traditionally female project, was one option permitted under Feed a Fighter. However, the rest of the program promoted food production through endeavors that, up until this point, 4-H leadership had viewed as outside the main areas for girls' work. For example, agents encouraged club members to grow field crops like corn and potatoes; to raise livestock for meat, eggs, and milk; and to grow vegetable gardens. While girls had enrolled in such projects prior to the 1940s, agents more actively promoted them to boys and girls during the war.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Harrill, *Memories of 4-H*, 55-56; "State Agent-Agr. and 4-H Club (Negro) Annual Report 1943," 24, (National Archives Microfilm Publication T-878, roll 129), North Carolina, 1909-44, Extension Service Annual Reports, Record Group 33 National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland; "Join the 4-H Club in the Food for Freedom Fight," *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/80>; "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual Report 1943 [Boys and Girls 4-H Club Work]," 23; "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual Report 1940 [4-H Club Work]," 140, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1001>.

Such changes in 4-H reflected larger wartime trends affecting farm women. Many of them experienced a considerable increase in their responsibilities and workloads. Farm wives whose husbands and sons entered the military and defense industries had to take over field work to not only ensure the survival of their families, but to also assist in supplying wartime food needs. Rural women also found employment working in defense plants. In both instances, the women who assumed these new tasks still had the responsibility of completing their own homemaking duties. Through the Extension Service, the federal government encouraged farm women to engage in thrift measures to assist with food and commodities rationing, promoting practices like canning fruits and vegetables and conserving resources like cloth. Extension agents in the South focused heavily on promoting healthier diets during World War II as the military rejected many rural draftees from the region for not meeting physical requirements. As a result, home agents instructed farm women in preparing more balanced meals for their families. Farm nutrition further improved as a result of a wartime emphasis on growing vegetable gardens.<sup>24</sup>

World War II did not result in any drastic changes for boys in terms of the projects they were encouraged to adopt, as producing food through field crop and livestock projects fit into the traditional realm of boys' club work. Boys were, however, provided with some instruction in food and nutrition as leaders endeavored to use the wartime context to promote more healthful eating habits to both boys and girls. Additionally, agents in 1943 promoted an increased use of whole wheat flour for both

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<sup>24</sup> McMillen, 63-65.

human food and poultry feed. They encouraged boys to not only grow an acre of wheat for home use but to also assist with some stages of wheat preparation, including washing and cracking wheat.<sup>25</sup>

By the end of the war, North Carolina 4-H offered girls increased flexibility in project selection. In the prewar period, agents typically viewed homemaking projects as the primary focus of girls' work in 4-H.<sup>26</sup> As a result, during that period girls were expected to carry at least two projects in homemaking. By the end of the war, however, state leaders changed the annual requirements for girls, freeing them from taking on two homemaking projects. While one of their major projects each year was still supposed to come from this category, girls' could now "substitute poultry, gardening, rural electrification, safety or livestock projects" in place of a second homemaking activity. It is true that these new options were in many ways still domestic in nature. For example, gardening might provide girls with vegetables needed for canning or freezing, while rural electrification could potentially focus on using electricity to assist with household chores like laundry or food preparation. However, nothing officially required girls to make their second projects related to homemaking. Four-H girls in the postwar period had broader options for club work than they had in the past, likely because the promotion of wartime

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<sup>25</sup> "Eat Three Meals a Day the Victory Way" *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/146>; "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual Report 1943 [Boys and Girls 4-H Club Work]," 88.

<sup>26</sup> Project requirements varied throughout 4-H's history. Depending on the period, club members might have been required to participate in at least one or two projects and attend club meetings. Beginning in the 1960s, new efforts at making club work more flexible, including the introduction of special interest groups and televised instruction, led to an easing of some of these requirements. In the 1940s, though, the organization wanted all club members to carry and complete at least two projects, a goal not always achieved.

food production left agents with little time to spend with 4-H'ers, necessitating an expansion in projects available to girls.<sup>27</sup>

Wartime changes with regard to gender roles would persist, both in terms of 4-H's work with youth and the larger American society, in the postwar period. Although many southern farmers, especially sharecroppers, were excluded from the economic prosperity that followed World War II, others had benefitted from the wartime increase in both crop production and prices, entering the 1950s more financially stable than they had been prior to the war. Increased family funds, along with the expansion of rural electrification stemming from New Deal programs, allowed many farm households to electrify their homes and purchase new appliances and machinery to assist with daily work. Such changes affected both men and women's traditional work. Male farmers might benefit from developments like lighted barns, milking machines, and electric fences. At the same time, female homemakers' jobs were altered by the acquisition of things like washing machines, electric stoves, freezers, and electric lights. Freezing food for later use, for example, made food preservation much easier than it had been by canning. Electric lights, which were brighter than oil lamps, actually motivated some rural women to engage in vigorous housecleaning as they could now better see the interiors of their homes. Postwar economic prosperity, combined with electrification, actually increased the amount of sewing performed by women during the 1950s. Women who could afford

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<sup>27</sup> "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual Report 1940 [4-H Club Work]," 140; "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual Report 1945," 17, 20, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1006>; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 [4-H Club Work]," 58, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1013>; "Advanced Electric Project Record Book," Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications, UA 102.200, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina.

to purchase sewing machines now had a greater selection of manufactured fabrics to choose from for creating clothing. For both men and women, electrification allowed more flexibility in the completion of work as they were less reliant on sunlight.<sup>28</sup>

After World War II, rural women endeavored to adapt to economic changes. Encouraged by Extension agents, farm women responded to postwar inflation by continuing to maximize family resources through practices like food preservation and selling homemade products like canned goods. Developments taking place in agricultural production meant, however, that many of these women would eventually have to work for wages outside of the home. As New Deal policies, farm consolidation, and technological advancements like mechanization led to a decline in sharecropping, family farms, and agricultural labor needs in the 1950s, many farm families found themselves displaced as a result. Wives of former farmers increasingly sought wage labor to assist their families, often finding employment in low-paying industries like textile manufacturing and food processing plants. By the 1970s, the majority of rural women no longer tended flocks of chickens, sewed their families' clothes, or grew food for home consumption. Instead, they worked for wages to purchase manufactured goods and food.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> McMillen, 66, 74-76.

<sup>29</sup> McMillen, 67, 81-83, 93; Anthony J. Badger, *North Carolina and the New Deal* (Raleigh: Department of Cultural Resources Division of Archives and History, 1981), 2, 19, 27; Gilbert C. Fite, *Cotton Fields No More: Southern Agriculture, 1865-1980* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 142; Donald Holley, *The Second Great Emancipation: The Mechanical Cotton Picker, Black Migration, and How They Shaped the Modern South* (Fayetteville, AK: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 119; Donald L. Winters, "Agriculture in the Post-World War II South," in *The Rural South Since World War II*, ed. R. Douglas Hurt (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 13-14.

Social attitudes regarding working women, especially those who were married, also began to shift during and after World War II. The wartime labor needs had created a situation in which women were encouraged to work outside of the home and, unlike during the Great Depression, public opinion supported such action, as women were viewed as aiding the war effort rather than taking jobs from men. By the end of the war, the majority of wage-earning American women were married mothers. In the immediate postwar period, women workers lost many of the jobs they had held in areas like skilled manufacturing. While some returned to homemaking exclusively, others in the late 1940s found employment in fields viewed as more socially acceptable for women, like secretarial and clerical positions, that failed to pay much as defense jobs. In spite of the postwar baby boom, growth in women's employment continued in the 1950s. The expanding economy created a need for more workers and families found that having dual earners enabled them to more easily purchase many of the new consumer goods available in this decade. Although homemaking might have been the societal ideal for women, by the end of the 1950s Americans accepted women workers, both married and single.<sup>30</sup>

In the midst of such social transformations, promoting the roles of farmer and farm homemaker continued to shape 4-H's work in North Carolina throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, though the organization did continue to provide boys and girls with flexibility in project selection. In this period, the practical nature of the organization created a willingness to accommodate club members desiring to participate in projects

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<sup>30</sup> Coontz, 159-161; Filene, 175, 178, 180-182; Michael C.C. Adams, *The Best War Ever: America and World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 123-124; Rochelle Gatlin, *American Women Since 1945* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1987), 28-30, 33; Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Viking, 2000), 19-21.

outside of traditional gender roles. L.R. Harrill believed that it was important for 4-H to “broaden and enlarge project activity” to better serve the needs of farm youth in North Carolina, and allowing flexibility across gender lines in project selection fit in with his vision for 4-H. Additionally, agents believed that projects had value that extended beyond vocational training. State leaders recognized that livestock projects helped train future farmers and improve the overall quality of livestock herds within the state, but they also contended that the process of completing these projects improved both the citizenship and leadership skills of the boys and girls who did so. As a result, agents viewed the projects as benefiting club members regardless of whether they would continue to work with livestock as adults. This philosophy regarding club work accounted for some of the flexibility afforded girls after World War II.<sup>31</sup>

For the most part, project selection in the postwar period that crossed gender lines continued to involve girls taking on projects originally aimed at and associated with boys. Between 1947 and 1959, girls participated in traditionally male projects for at least nine of those twelve years. Annual reports record boys’ participation in homemaking projects only once in that same period. Agents recognized this tendency, noting in 1950, that while both boys and girls had received training in projects relating to the production and sale of agricultural products and livestock, only girls got instruction in “home management, child care, foods and nutrition, and clothing.” State leaders never specifically stated that boys were prohibited from participating in such projects, but

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<sup>31</sup> Harrill, *Memories of 4-H*, 54; “North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work],” 96.



throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, boys were not enrolling in them. The prevalence for girls to participate in livestock projects, however, was so great that by 1957 leaders came to view it as a project area of benefit to both sexes, a change from just two years earlier when they considered it to be primarily aiding 4-H boys.<sup>32</sup>

Several factors may account for these trends in project enrollment. Reflecting on her work with 4-H in its first two decades, Jane McKimmon noted that many club boys simply were not interested in homemaking projects. Societal gender norms may have also been an influencing factor in boys' project selections, as homemaking projects by their very nature fell into the realm of domestic work, which, in the 1940s and 1950s, was still socially associated with women and girls. The two main home-based projects that were not directed primarily at girls, garden and home grounds beautification, provided boys with opportunities to engage in what might be socially viewed as more masculine activities like crop cultivation, landscaping, minor construction projects, and painting.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual Report 1947 [4-H Club Work]," 45, 48, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1008>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1948," 31, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1009>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1949 [4-H Club Work]," 46, 48, 53, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1010>; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work]," 13, 53; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1951 [4-H Club Work]," 75, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1012>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1953 [4-H Club Work]," 62, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1014>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1955 [4-H Club Work]," 51, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1016>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1957 [4-H Club Work]," 44, 49, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1018>; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1958 [4-H Club Work]," 49, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/10191958>; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1959 [4-H Club Work]," 41, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1020>.

<sup>33</sup> McKimmon, *When We're Green We Grow*, 306; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1949 [4-H Club Work]," 61; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work]," 88-90.

Economic considerations may have also contributed to the project choices made by both boys and girls. Traditionally, male projects like field crops and livestock had considerable money-making potential, as successful 4-H'ers could sell their harvests or animals upon completion of the activity. Homemaking projects had economic value as well, but it was often indirectly realized. Clothing projects, which were very popular among girls, might enable 4-H'ers and their families to save money since girls could construct their own garments rather than purchase pre-made ones. However, this particular project would not directly generate cash in hand in the same way that commodities-producing ones, like field crops or livestock, would. At the same time, however, personal interest could also be a factor as girls participated in projects like forestry that were initially designed for boys and did not offer any direct financial incentives to club members completing them. Additionally, annual reports do not indicate that boys were eagerly enrolling in canning, which was a homemaking project that, at least in the early years of 4-H, did result in a marketable commodity. By the mid- and-late 1950s, though, the canned goods girls produced largely supplemented family diets instead of generating sales.<sup>34</sup>

Not only did 4-H girls in the late 1940s and 1950s enroll in traditionally male areas, but in a few instances they won at the state level. Between 1945 and 1959, black and white girls won state awards at least five times for their work in livestock,

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<sup>34</sup> “Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual Report 1947 [4-H Club Work],” 43, 47-49, 56-57; “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1948,” 34, 39-40; “North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work],” 80, 92; “North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 [4-H Club Work],” 56, 58; McKimmon, *When We're Green We Grow*, 36, 39-40; “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1955 [4-H Club Work],” 58.

agriculture, and forestry, three project areas 4-H had initially developed for boys.<sup>35</sup>

When Lucille Hampton won the state award for cotton cultivation in 1948, she was the first girl in North Carolina to do so in any field crop. Her success surprised state leaders so much that when referring to it in the annual report for 1948, they noted that

“something very unusual took place in the history of 4-H Club work in North Carolina.”

Leadership’s observations about Hampton’s accomplishment remained true for the rest of the 1940s and 1950s. After Hampton, no other girl in the 1940s and 1950s was able to win a field crop award, although in 1958 a two-girl demonstration team did win at the state level for their presentation on the most profitable grades of tobacco.<sup>36</sup> While 4-H girls did occasionally win in project areas traditionally associated with boys, such victories were relatively rare.

Though it occurred less frequently, boys did occasionally participate in projects traditionally dominated by girls. In some instances, 4-H staff influenced such behavior. In 1945, for example, African American home agents working in Anson County required all 4-H’ers in one particular club to learn how to make biscuits. The agents noted that when evaluating the finished products, biscuits made by a male club member scored the second highest out of the entire club. Similarly in 1943, black home agents throughout

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<sup>35</sup> This figure is based on winners listed in annual reports from 1946 to 1959 and does not include girls who won for their work in poultry or vegetable gardens, as these were two areas traditionally associated with farm women, nor does it include mixed-sex demonstration teams.

<sup>36</sup> “North Carolina State Club Leader (Negro) Annual Report – 1945,” 19, North Carolina Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports 1945, Extension Service Annual Reports, Record Group 33 National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland; North Carolina Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports 1945 “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1948,” 31; “North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work],” 92; “North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1958 [4-H Club Work],” 49; “North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1959 [4-H Club Work],” 41.

the state taught coeducational classes in preparing foods with cornmeal, in some instances focusing on boys who did not have sisters enrolled in 4-H and encouraging them to be more attentive in learning the lessons than boys who did have female siblings. Such efforts had an effect on the family of at least one participant as agents reported that recipes prepared at home by one boy inspired his mother and aunt to join an adult home demonstration club.<sup>37</sup>

In other cases, though, boys voluntarily participated in homemaking projects. In 1945, several African American boys in Bladen County actively sought instruction from home agents in bread making. In this particular instance, the boys involved became interested in the material after attending a mixed-sex county meeting at which home agents gave a talk on “Better Breads.” One boy who attended took over the task of morning bread baking from his mother. In 1948, a boy won the white state-level award in the Home Improvement project. The winner, Carlisle Franks, was aware of the feminine associations with the project he completed and recognized that some other 4-H boys might think him less masculine or, as Franks phrased it, a “sissy” for taking on a project typically completed by girls. However, he believed that home improvement actually allowed boys opportunities to express their masculinity, contending that boys would enjoy their rooms “better if [their] mother[s] didn’t do all of [their] thinking for [them]” and instead set up and decorated their rooms according to their own interests and

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<sup>37</sup> “Anson County Home Demonstration Agent Annual Report 1945 (Negro),” 25; “State Agent-Agr. and 4-H Club (Negro) Annual Report 1943,” 32.

preferences.<sup>38</sup> Although the experiences of these club members indicate that some 4-H boys were willing to cross gender boundaries, the majority instead opted to enroll in projects aimed either more toward males or to both sexes.

As the organization became more fully coeducational, North Carolina 4-H also allowed boys and girls to collaborate with one another on demonstration teams. Between 1946 and 1959, at least nineteen white mixed-sex demonstration teams won at the state level in a variety of project areas, including dairy production and marketing, poultry, livestock, field crops, and fruits and vegetables.<sup>39</sup> In the majority of cases these teams were premade, with the boys and girls coming together on their own to enter the competition. The 1956 dairy judging team, however, was composed of the four top-scoring individuals in the state, one of whom happened to be a girl. In at least four of these instances, the winning mixed-sex team was composed of siblings. While annual reports do not reveal broader trends within teams that did not win, the prevalence of mixed-sex winning teams increased significantly in the second half of the 1950s. Between 1946 and 1955, only three mixed-sex teams won at the state level. From 1956 to 1959, however, such teams won sixteen times. The introduction of new awards, focused on fruits and vegetables and farmer cooperatives, may have contributed to the

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<sup>38</sup> “North Carolina Bladen County Home Demonstration Agent Annual Report 1945 (Negro),” 41, North Carolina Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports 1945; “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1948,” 25.

<sup>39</sup> This figure is based on winners listed in annual reports from 1946 to 1959.

rise, as they were aimed at both boys and girls. Six of the mixed-sex teams won in these new categories.<sup>40</sup>

Although 4-H girls in the 1940s and 1950s experienced increased flexibility in project selection, in the same period 4-H continued to emphasize its expectation that girls should take on the traditional role of farm homemaker upon reaching adulthood. Several projects and awards throughout these two decades specifically linked girls to domestic activities that they might complete later in life as farmers' wives. In selecting the winner of the girls' record award, which was based on girls' overall accomplishments during their 4-H career, agents only considered work a girl club member had done in "projects which are directly related to the home such as clothing, canning, home improvement, home grounds beautification, garden and poultry." While girls might excel in other project areas offered by 4-H, such as livestock or health, this particular award failed to

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<sup>40</sup> "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work]," 100; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1953 [4-H Club Work]," 59; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1954 [4-H Club Work]," 60, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1015>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1956 [4-H Club Work]," 44, 52, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1017>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1957 [4-H Club Work]," 44, 46, 47, 51, 53; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1958 [4-H Club Work]," 49, 52, 53, 55; "Report of Work with Negro 4-H Club Members Annual Report for 4-H Club Work, A. and T. College, Greensboro, North Carolina, 1958," 19, in "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1958 [4-H Club Work]", 1947 North Carolina Plant Pathology Thru Alamance, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports, 1946-60, Records of the Federal Extension Service, Record Group 33, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1959 [4-H Club Work]," 42; "Report of Work with Negro 4-H Club Members Annual Report for 4-H Club Work, A. and T. College, Greensboro, North Carolina, 1959," 16, in "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1959 [4-H Club Work]", 1947 North Carolina Plant Pathology Thru Alamance; Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports, 1946-60.

take those achievements into account. Four-H leadership viewed this particular award as an important step in training girls for their future vocations as homemakers.<sup>41</sup>

Descriptions of projects primarily completed by girls sometimes differed from those more often associated with boys or mixed-sex participation, communicating assumptions held by 4-H leaders about the nature of girls. When describing girls' involvement in the home improvement project in 1955, state leaders contended that "the inside of the home is dear to the heart of many 4-H Club girls." The implications of such a statement suggest that leaders felt that girls had an almost innate interest in taking care of their homes. Agents did not, however, describe boys' work with farming in similar terms. That same year, for example, leaders noted that "livestock projects are among the most popular for boys in North Carolina," and contended that by participating in them boys would learn how to properly select and care for animals as well as "the economic importance of buying and selling and the margin of profit." Such comments certainly reveal the appeal livestock projects held with boys along with some of the skills acquired by engaging in them but did not suggest that livestock, or any other 4-H projects for that matter, were "dear to the heart" of male club members.<sup>42</sup>

Some girls' project manuals contained language that went beyond simply explaining the practical value of projects or the directions for completing them and instead communicated societal assumptions about and expectations for girls. A 1958

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<sup>41</sup> "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work]," 67; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 [4-H Club Work]," 42.

<sup>42</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1955 [4-H Club Work]," 51, 62.

manual for the “Help Mother with Housecleaning” segment of the home management project not only reported techniques for effective cleaning but also explained to the girls enrolled in the project the social value of housework. Rather than emphasizing scientific sanitation principles, the manual informed participants that “people judge what kind of a girl you are by the way you keep your room” and explained that by keeping one’s house clean, “you won’t have to feel embarrassed when your friends come to visit you.”<sup>43</sup> In this way, North Carolina 4-H went beyond simply giving practical instruction, communicating to girls that their social reputations were tied to housework.

Assumptions about girls’ natures, along with this link to their social standing, came through in 4-H guides relating to female appearance. A 1936 publication instructing girls in color selection for sewing projects began by asserting that “naturally every girl likes to be well dressed,” communicating the message that physical appearance, specifically in terms of clothing, was of great importance to female club members. North Carolina 4-H delivered this message not just in terms of style of dress, but in relation to girls’ physical features as well. Manuals instructing girls in 1959 on how to design dressing areas for their bedrooms noted that such spaces were useful in helping a girl “make her pretty face prettier.” Although the rest of the guidebook went on to address the practical reasons for setting up a dressing area, along with the work involved in doing so, it began by briefly emphasizing personal physical appearance to the girls taking on the projects. Such an emphasis in project manuals continued into the 1960s. A 1962 guide to clothing selection informed female 4-H’ers that “not many girls

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<sup>43</sup> “Help Mother with Housecleaning,” 1, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/63>.



are so lucky” as to have a perfect figure, which it defined as “5’5” and in perfect proportion.” Therefore, it asserted, most girls needed to “seek correctional clothes to improve their figures,” something that could best be achieved if a girl was willing to address her “figure faults.”<sup>44</sup> Although the purpose of this particular publication was to assist girls in selecting clothes cut for their respective body types, its introductory wording communicated that girls whose bodies were not five and half feet tall were not simply different, but were instead flawed and needed correction.

This focus on altering one’s physical appearance to meet societal definitions of attractiveness surfaced perhaps most directly in the better grooming project, which was first offered in 1951. Categorized as a homemaking project, only girls could win awards in better grooming from 1951 to 1966, the last year that 4-H leaders reported it as a project eligible for a state level award. The girls who won noted that they made several changes in their daily grooming habits. Some of these changes focused primarily on hygienic practices, such as increasing overall cleanliness and improving dental care through regular tooth brushing. Other changes made by winners involved them altering their physical appearance through methods like choosing new clothing fashions, styling their hair, and maintaining their fingernails. One final method often utilized by winners was weight loss, a practice promoted as part of overall improved grooming. In fact, the 1956 winner’s main “grooming problem [was] losing weight.” At least two girls who

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<sup>44</sup> Julia McIver, “Color for the Individual,” 1, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/142>; Josephine R. Cusick, “My Dressing Unit,” 1, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/68>; Mary Em Lee, “Line Up Your Figure,” 1, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/66>.

won the grooming award noted that after making the changes, their social lives and confidence improved.<sup>45</sup>

The better grooming project represented a turning point in how North Carolina 4-H approached issues like hygiene and weight management. Previously, it had emphasized such practices as part of the health project, which had encouraged club members to maintain a medically-determined healthy weight by not only losing weight but also by gaining it if club members were deemed underweight. With the better grooming project, however, the emphasis on weight, as well as other practices like dental care and controlling acne, was no longer related to promoting good health. Instead, this new project linked these activities to maintaining a socially acceptable appearance. The health project did link improved health practices to a better physical appearance, but this was placed in the context of the overall benefits of making healthier lifestyle choices based on guidelines established by medical professionals. As North Carolina 4-H categorized the better grooming project under homemaking, and since only girls were eligible to win, the organization was essentially communicating these messages about appearance exclusively to female club members.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1951 [4-H Club Work],” 70; “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 [4-H Club Work],” 57; “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1953 [4-H Club Work],” 54; “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1954 [4-H Club Work],” 52; “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1956 [4-H Club Work],” 59; “North Carolina 1966 Awards Handbook for Projects, Demonstrations, Scholarships,” Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

<sup>46</sup> S. Virginia Wilson and Mary E. Thomas, “4-H Health Improvement,” 1-2, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/56>.

The emphasis on girls' physical appearance and bodily features in many ways reflected larger fashion trends that existed throughout the twentieth century but intensified in the post-World War II era. Concerns about beauty and fashion were certainly not exclusive to the twentieth century. The industrial advances in manufacturing techniques of the 1800s fostered a growing consumer culture in which people defined and expressed themselves through the increasing quantities of products available to purchase. Many of these new goods were aimed at women and associated with fashion and personal image, including items like clothing and cosmetics. By the early 1920s, numerous cultural developments, including the advent of the Miss America beauty pageant in 1921, communicated to Americans that "beauty out to be a woman's primary goal." This emphasis' only expanded in the mid-twentieth century as the economic prosperity that followed the end of World War II led to greater consumerism. Social norms for female beauty encompassed several different characteristics such as utilizing cosmetics, keeping up with current trends in fashionable clothing, and sporting recent hairstyles, many of which required trips to beauty parlors. As a result of such emphasis on beauty standards, communicated to and embraced by both adult women and teenage girls, it is not surprising that the clothing guide book from the 1930s referenced the desire of "every girl" to have fashionable clothing.<sup>47</sup>

Twentieth-century American society also emphasized thinness as an important component of female attractiveness. In the 1920s, such a focus connected to women's

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<sup>47</sup> Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 16, 271, 278; Kate Mulvey, *Decades of Beauty: The Changing Image of Women from the 1890s to the 1990s* (New York: Facts on File, 1998), 118; McIver, 1.

increasing presence within sports with beauty standards centering on “a slim body with good muscle tone.” By the 1950s, however, female athleticism had largely declined, though women and teenage girls were still expected to maintain slim waists, which fashionable clothing of the decade often emphasized. The 1960s marked a noticeable shift in beauty standards, with the “vogue of extreme thinness” dominating women’s fashion as models went from being “elegant and womanly, if a little slimmer [than in previous decades]” in the 1950s “to gangly and waif-like” in the following decade. Though home agents had long communicated the importance of good nutritional practices to 4-H’ers of both sexes, their work with regard to girls’ grooming practices in the 1950s and 1960s reveals the degree to which they were influenced by larger fashion trends pertaining to body size.<sup>48</sup>

Although 4-H club work did reinforce traditional gender roles in many ways during its first four decades, in this same period it provided leadership opportunities to all club members, regardless of sex, through elected offices. Such positions were available at the state, county, and individual club levels, and those elected were chosen by their fellow club members rather than by adult leadership. At all three levels and in both the black and white programs, girls and boys alike were elected as 4-H officers. In 1928, the first year North Carolina 4-H’s white program had state level officers, boys served as the state president and historian, but girls filled the roles of vice president and secretary-treasurer. The following year, Mary Emma Powell was elected the first female president at the state level of North Carolina 4-H’s white program. African American 4-H’ers also

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<sup>48</sup> Banner, 283, 285, 287; Mulvey, 76, 148.

chose girls to serve as state officers, electing in 1949, for example, Teresa Walden of Northampton County, Dolores Shaw of Pender County, and Gladys Knox, a Mecklenburg County girl to serve as vice president, secretary, and historian, respectively. This trend of electing girls to leadership positions continued over the decades at lower levels of the organization as well. For example, Dorothy Shields, a white girl from Cherokee County served in every office in her local club during her involvement with 4-H in the 1940s. Over the decades that followed, both girls and boys continued to be elected to leadership offices at all levels of North Carolina 4-H.<sup>49</sup>

Leadership opportunities for both sexes were available outside of elected office as well. In spite of 4-H's agricultural origins, L.R. Harrill noted in 1928 that he wanted leadership training to be a key component of the organization's work with young people. He envisioned the annual short course, the event at which state officer elections were held, as serving largely as a venue to train youth leaders in 4-H. By 1946, North Carolina 4-H offered an annual leadership award to club members who served in various capacities as leaders within the organization. This award, which was based on overall performance and not a specific project, went each year to one boy and one girl. Although the leadership award had separate categories for boys and girls, ultimately both male and female club members who won completed very similar activities. Irrespective of sex, leadership winners typically had been involved with 4-H for a few years, had completed a

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<sup>49</sup> L.R. Harrill, "Annual Report of 4-H Club Work December 1, 1927 to December 1, 1928," 11; L.R. Harrill, "Annual Report of 4-H Club Work December 1, 1928 to December 1, 1929," 14, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1028>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1949 [Negro]," 15, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/464>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1949 [4-H Club Work]," 40.

variety of projects, often served as elected officers, gave public talks and demonstrations on 4-H, wrote news pieces about the organization for local newspapers and radio shows, and assisted other 4-H'ers with their own projects.<sup>50</sup>

Four-H's emphasis on fostering leadership was to an extent in conflict with its focus on training future farmers and future farm homemakers in the period from the 1920s through the 1950s. State agents wanted both male and female club members "to become strong leaders in their communities, counties, state and nation."<sup>51</sup> Such a goal is somewhat surprising, as strong leadership abilities might not initially seem in line with the objectives of an organization preparing rural girls for future lives of homemaking. While girls might serve as leaders within 4-H, a career in homemaking could potentially limit adult leadership opportunities, especially at the state and national levels.

Four-H granted separate awards for boys and girls in project areas other than leadership. Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, the organization offered dual awards for work in categories like public speaking, achievement, electricity, health, citizenship, community relations, and even floor sanding. The existence of separate boys' and girls' awards in the same categories suggests that leadership felt that there were inherent differences, such as physical ability, between the sexes that would result in boys and girls

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<sup>50</sup> L.R. Harrill, "Annual Report of 4-H Club Work December 1, 1928 to December 1, 1929," 12; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1949 [4-H Club Work]," 40; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work]," 65; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 [4-H Club Work]," 41-42; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1958 [4-H Club Work]," 40-41, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1019>; "4-Hward: 1963 Awards Edition," 1, in "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report 4-H Club Work 1963," *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1024>.

<sup>51</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1953 [4-H Club Work]," 41.

completing different activities to win in these areas. This was not, however, always the case. Achievement awards were based on a club member's outstanding performance over several years of club work, regardless of the area. Public speaking participants were directed to give talks on topics related to "some phase of their 4-H experience," with many winners choosing to focus broadly on the benefits of the organization. Similarly, club members completing projects in community relations focused primarily on creating an overall public awareness of 4-H by engaging in activities like giving speeches on club work, completing community service projects, writing news stories for local media, and even appearing on local radio and television programs to promote 4-H.<sup>52</sup> In spite of having separate awards for boys and girls in these categories, many of the activities performed by the winners were not sex-specific.

In some instances, 4-H leaders developed instructional material that did provide sex-based guidance for completing dual award projects. With activities relating to electricity, boys and girls received different suggestions for how to approach the project, but that information did not always shape their work. The manual for the advanced electricity project proposed different activities that tended to emphasize farm work for boys and homemaking for girls. It encouraged boys to design electric feed distributors or construct electrically heated pig and chick brooders. The same manual prompted girls to visit stores to research new electric appliances, incorporate frozen foods into family diets,

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<sup>52</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1949 [4-H Club Work]," 40-42; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1951 [4-H Club Work]," 52, 53, 59-60, 66; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 [4-H Club Work]," 44, 45; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work]," 69; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1957 [4-H Club Work]," 39, 41.

and plan better ways to light their living rooms. Both sexes were encouraged to look for home electrical hazards and investigate rates of electrification within their respective counties.<sup>53</sup>

Girls who won awards for project work with electricity, however, did not always stick exclusively to domestic activities. In 1951, Jimmie Margaret Gilliam won the state-level award in electricity by not only engaging in endeavors related to homemaking, such as organizing an electrified laundry room for convenience, but also by wiring electric lights in her family's barn, constructing an electric fence to contain dairy cattle, and "installing extension circuits" within her family's home. The 1953 winner, Joan Carol Coltrain, did focus primarily on the interior of her home with her work in electricity, but rather than just research appliances, Coltrain actually installed outlets and a wall switch in her house.<sup>54</sup> In both instances, girls took on activities well outside of the expectations set by agents in the project manual.

Beginning in the second half of the 1950s, North Carolina 4-H began to slowly break down some of the sex-based divisions in project work, especially with regard to those for boys. Increasingly, the organization encouraged boys to participate in projects traditionally dominated by girls, such as grooming. In 1957, 4-H released a guide for clothing and accessory selection with sections aimed at both boys and girls. Six years later, the organization published two new grooming guides, divided by sex, which

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<sup>53</sup> "Advanced Electric Project Record Book," Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

<sup>54</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1951 [4-H Club Work]," 60; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1953 [4-H Club Work]," 45.



emphasized the selection of appropriate clothing for different occasions, along with basic information on caring for one's physical appearance. Although there were some differences in the instructions given to boys and girls, the two manuals were largely similar. The guide for girls provided instruction in the use of makeup, and posture recommendations for the two sexes differed slightly, but for the most part, both guides encouraged all club members to essentially keep their bodies and clothes clean and instructed them on what to wear to different places depending on formality. Boys would not be eligible for a grooming award, however, until 1965 with the introduction of the personal appearance award.<sup>55</sup>

From the late 1950s through the 1970s, the gendered nature of 4-H programming declined as the organization adjusted to new developments both within the state's economy and 4-H itself. Adjusting to the decline in agricultural career opportunities and outreach to urban and suburban youth affected the way leadership treated gender when designing 4-H projects and awards. During this period of adjustment and adaptation, 4-H offered an increasing number of projects aimed at both sexes that were not directly connected to farm life. This transition began in the late 1950s, with the introduction of projects in care for recreational horses, as well as dog care and training. It also participated in a pilot program from 1957 through 1959 that taught automotive care and safety, which was open to both girls and boys. In the first year of the program, girls

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<sup>55</sup> Mary Em Lee, "What's Your T.Q. in Dress?" *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/65>; Martha Ann Hurt, "How to Look Your Best," *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/76>; Martha Ann Hurt, "How to Look Your Best in What You Wear," *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/77>; <sup>55</sup> "North Carolina Awards Handbook for Projects, Demonstrations, Scholarships - January, 1965," Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

comprised 55 percent of the participants. Although their participation fell to 49 percent the following year, girls were still well represented in automotive enrollment. While more girls likely drove cars than operated tractors, the rate of enrollment for girls in the automotive care and safety program did mark a bit of shift in North Carolina 4-H as previously the primary project focused on a vehicle, tractor care, was open only to boys and would remain that way until 1970.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to the climate of economic change, North Carolina 4-H implemented many innovations in its curriculum and offerings in a time when American women's social and legal standing were undergoing significant transformations. During the 1960s, feminists began to push more heavily for equitable treatment of and opportunities for women than had occurred in the period following the Nineteenth Amendment. Diverse groups of women engaged in such activism. Some were middle-class housewives frustrated with expectations of domesticity, while others were younger women who took part in the Civil Rights Movement, only to become disillusioned with the sex-based inequalities they encountered within it. As a result of these women's efforts, by the 1970s even more women were working outside the home, with legal protections in place against workplace discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Additionally, more reliable contraceptives were legally available and divorces were easier to obtain.

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<sup>56</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1961 [4-H Club Work]," 7-8, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1021>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1957 [4-H Club Work]," 42; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1958 [4-H Club Work]," 43; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1961 [4-H Club Work]," 7-8, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1021>; "North Carolina 1970 Awards Handbook for Projects, Demonstrations, Activities, Scholarships," Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

Opportunities for women, both financially and socially, expanded during these two decades.<sup>57</sup>

Married women were not the only segment of American society experiencing a departure from tradition; gender norms were changing for others as well. Economic necessity forced men to come to terms with no longer filling the role as the sole earner for their families. Challenges to women's gender roles also caused some American men to question norms pertaining to masculinity. Some men began to explore their abilities in areas traditionally viewed as feminine, such as cooking or sewing. Men also began to more openly discuss and express their emotions, rejecting the societal belief such displays demonstrated personal weakness. The climate of the 1970s enabled gays and lesbians in America to gradually become more open about their sexuality, as well as to begin pushing for increased rights and protections.<sup>58</sup>

The changes taking place in the 1960s and 1970s did not mean, however, that the traditional gender roles for men and women in America simply disappeared. Older ideas about masculinity and femininity persisted through the end of the decade and beyond. Some women continued to embrace homemaking as a career, although the economic downturn of the 1970s compelled even more married women to find paid employment to financially aid their families. Even within dual-earning households, women still continued to devote a greater percentage of their time to housework than men. A conservative backlash, sparked partially by the radicalization of the Civil Rights

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<sup>57</sup>Coontz, 164-166, 197; Filene, 209-210; Rosen, 4-8, 105-108; Gatlin, 78-19, 83; Chafe, 96-97.

<sup>58</sup>Filene, 233-236; Gatlin, 118-119; Rosen, 166.

Movement but also in response to the women's movement, emerged during the 1970s. Conservative men and women alike expressed concerns about issues such as rising divorce rates and what they perceived as national moral decline as Americans questioned or rejected traditional gender roles. While such backlash helped defeat the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment in 1983, the expectations and roles for American men and women were significantly different and more fluid by the 1980s than they had been at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>59</sup>

Though official records for North Carolina 4-H did not comment on these larger developments, the organization did increasingly introduce in the 1960s and 1970s a greater number of new activities and projects not associated primarily with either sex. State leadership in the 1960s viewed career exploration, one of these new project areas, as especially important for boys and girls, as agents recognized that as adults, both would likely need to find paid employment in a non-farm setting. The project was clearly aimed at both sexes, as the guide for adult leaders used both male and female pronouns to refer to participants and the manual for 4-H'ers featured an image of a boy and a girl on the cover. Other new projects and activities developed during this period also reflected 4-H's efforts at accommodating non-farm youth, as well as its transition away from the traditional sex divisions that had long defined the organization. New projects like photography, science education, soil testing, leisure education, bicycle care, and veterinary science could not only be completed by rural, suburban, and urban youth, but

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<sup>59</sup> Filene, 225-227, 230, 232; Gatlin, 223-224; Rosen, 332-333; Alan Brinkley, "The Problem of American Conservatism," *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 2 (1994): 423-424.

they also fell outside of the traditional gender-based division of farmer/farm homemaker. This divide was even further weakened with the renaming of home economics projects to consumer education in 1973, reflecting a national trend in which home economists endeavored to adapt to the growing consumer culture and the decline of family farming in the post-World War II period, providing less domestic training and more guidance on making wise choices as consumers.<sup>60</sup>

Throughout the 1960s, North Carolina 4-H continued to work on making project areas that had typically been associated with girls in earlier decades more appealing to and inclusive of boys. Clothing was one area in which this transition occurred. Early in the 1960s, the organization began emphasizing better grooming practices as a potential project for boys. By the middle of the decade, however, the grooming guide for boys not only provided them with information on how to choose appropriate clothes for different occasions, but also instructed them on how to select clothing for purchase. The manual introduced new elements to boys, including the importance of considering the fabric and fit of garments when buying them. In a more advanced unit of the personal appearance project, boys learned some basic skills relating to the care of their clothes, including ironing and minor repairs like darning. By 1966, North Carolina 4-H was offering a

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<sup>60</sup> “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1964,” 1-2, 4; “Career Exploration: A Guide for Leaders,” Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; “Career Exploration: 4-H Record Book,” Box 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1967,” 13, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/434>; North Carolina 4-H Staff, “North Carolina 4-H Youth Progress Report, Fiscal Year 1976: A Concise Assessment of Results and Changes in Important 4-H Program Areas,” 7, *GNG* <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/472>; “1971 4-H North Carolina Awards Handbook,” 2, Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; “North Carolina 1967 Awards Handbook for 4-H,” 6, Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; “1973 North Carolina Handbook – Awards,” 6, Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; Elias, 138-139, 167.

more focused project in clothing care aimed exclusively at boys, the manual for which was aptly titled, “Young Man ---- ‘Care for Your Clothes.’” This project provided expanded information on laundry and ironing methods, protective ways to store clothing, and basic sewing repairs. While boys did participate in clothing projects during the Great Depression, the 1960s were the first time that 4-H designed project manuals in this area specifically aimed at them.<sup>61</sup>

By the 1970s, 4-H boys were not only learning basic clothing repair techniques, but they were also enrolling in sewing projects and constructing their own garments. Several factors account for the expanding role of boys participating in clothing projects. Though agents focused primarily on boys’ actual presence within these projects rather than their motivations for being there, it is likely safe to infer that many of the male participants were influenced by some of the same reasons that girls had been drawn to clothing over the decades. In the process of completing certain segments of the project, 4-H’ers actually sewed their own garments, which they often produced less expensively than if they purchased similar premade items in a store. From the 1920s onward, American teenagers especially had been part of an ever-growing youth culture that, among other things, placed great value on having fashionable clothing, a trend further amplified by the increasing consumerism of the 1950s and 1960s brought on by postwar prosperity. During this period retail marketers began to view adolescents, who had more access to disposable income than their predecessors in earlier decades, as a demographic

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<sup>61</sup> “Young Man: Dress Right/Look Right,” Box 5, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; “Personal Appearance for the Young Man Leaders Guide,” Box 5, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; “Young Man ---- ‘Care for Your Clothes,’” Box 5, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

to target leading them to use media like teen magazines and television shows to promote their products youth. Clothing projects provided boys and girls alike a way to more affordably acquire the items they needed to keep up with the latest fashion trends. Male participation in such activities was so prominent that in 1974 the organization introduced a state-level boys' fashion revue, though only four boys participated in it. Competing boys often sewed dress garments, much like girls did. The 1975 male fashion revue winner not only made a suit to wear to his high school prom, but he also sewed a dress for his date to wear.<sup>62</sup>

Agents had their own reasons for encouraging boys to take a greater interest in clothing projects. By the mid-1960s they were aware that some of the gender roles that had long been associated with the families Extension served were beginning to crumble. As families moved out of full-time agriculture and women increasingly found employment outside of the home, agents recognized that clothing selection and care were becoming matters of concern for "all family members" rather than just those of full-time homemakers, a development perhaps reflected in the "Young Man ---- 'Care for Your Clothes,'" which included instruction in proper laundering techniques and minor repairs. Agents also focused on textile innovations in the postwar period, contending in 1965 that there was an "ever increasing number of new fabrics and finishes" with which many

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<sup>62</sup> Mulvey, 118; Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York, Basic Books, 1996), 45, 101-102, 109-110; Jessica Huneycutt, "First Male Fashion Review," 5, *Clover Leaves*, July 23, 1974, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/298>; "Fellows Chosen," 4, *Clover Leaves*, July 24, 1975, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/304>; Huneycutt, "He Made Dates Gown," 4, *Clover Leaves*, July 24, 1975.

people might not be familiar in terms of use and care. Reflecting home agents' shift from training homemakers to increasingly engaging in consumer education, new clothing projects like the 1965 "Young Man – Dress Right/Look Right" introduced male 4-H'ers to differences in fabric types and encouraged them to conduct further research. To an extent, agents' focus on including more boys in clothing construction projects reflected more of a rejection of postwar consumerism than of traditional gender norms. The 1960s were a period in which America's fashion industry was rising to prominence, with consumers becoming more inclined to seek out garments with name brand labels. However, agents working with 4-H continued to promote the organization's emphasis on thrift, undertaking a campaign in the mid-1960s to improve the quality of clothing produced at home, which home agents contended had declined in the late 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>63</sup>

North Carolina 4-H also began to make food and cooking projects less directed at girls and more inclusive of boys. In 1960, the organization published a new manual for introductory food preparation that included on its cover an image of both a girl and a boy adorned in aprons and engaged in some undefined kitchen activity. Although the rest of the illustrations within the manual depicted only girls and women, the cover suggests that North Carolina 4-H was making an early effort at changing the primarily feminine image associated with this project. Three years later, the manual for the enriched corn meal

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<sup>63</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report – Project V – Home Economics – 1965," 21, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/698>; "Young Man ---- 'Care for Your Clothes'"; "Young Man: Dress Right/Look Right"; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report – Project V – Home Economics – 1964," 39, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/697>; Banner, 287-288.



activity featured only girls in its illustrations, but in terms of participation, its wording stated that the project was open to “any Junior 4-H club member enrolled in the food preparation project,” which marked a major turning point from the 1950s when this project was open only to girls. In the later part of the decade, 4-H went even further in its efforts to change the image of food preparation, initiating an outdoor meal project focused on preparing picnics and grilling out. The accompanying guidebook specifically stated that it was aimed at both sexes. Much like older food preparation manuals, the outdoor meals manual encouraged club members to prepare nutritious dishes to serve to their families. The main purpose of foods and nutrition projects did not change, even if the target audience did.<sup>64</sup>

By the 1970s, foods and nutrition had transitioned into a project area that essentially abandoned the homemaker emphasis of the past, a process culminating with the introduction of the immensely popular *Mulligan Stew* television series in 1973. This show, devised as a way to expand 4-H’s reach to new demographics, made instruction in foods and nutrition appealing to both boys and girls. It accomplished such a feat largely by featuring a mixed-sex group of young people in early adolescence, playing rock songs about nutrition and embarking on adventures related to the topic as well. Reaching over one hundred thousand young people via television broadcasts, the show was so popular with both sexes that by 1975 4-H’s video tapes degraded to the point where they could no

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<sup>64</sup> “Adventures in the Kitchen: A Project Manual for Beginners in 4-H Food Preparation,” *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/71>; “North Carolina Junior 4-H Enriched Corn Meal Activity,” *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/72>; “North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1958 [4-H Club Work],” 60; “Outdoor Meals,” Box 5, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

longer be played from overuse. *Mulligan Stew*'s mixed-sex cast presented foods and nutrition information as something important for boys and girls, a considerable change from 4-H's first three and a half decades, when foods and nutrition was classified as a homemaking project area aimed almost exclusively at female club members.<sup>65</sup>

Despite the fact that in the 1960s North Carolina 4-H was moving away from many of the sex-based differences related to projects, it continued to send girls specific messages about their body sizes that differed somewhat from those communicated to boys. The 1967 grooming guide for girls still presented weight as an "improvement" that girls could make in relation to grooming. The guide also communicated other messages about height and weight for girls. Four-H girls falling in the "short slim" category learned that they would "have the problem of adding both height and weight" when selecting clothes, while "tall plump" girls were told, "you probably will want to minimize your size." In fact, the only body type that escaped critique was "tall average," provided that the girls who fell into it were "well-proportioned." A similar manual for boys also focused on the physical dimensions of male club members' bodies with some critique for larger boys, though not to the same degree as girls. The boys' manual, for example, explained that the lines on clothing could assist them in hiding "defects" related to weight and height. However, the guide for boys did not go so far as to present weight as

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<sup>65</sup> "Mulligan Stew: A 4-H Television Production with Expanded Nutrition Programs," Carton 9, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records, UA 102.010, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina; "Summary of 4-H TV 'Mulligan Stew' Enrolled Participation 1973," Carton 9, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "Summary of 4-H TV 'Mulligan Stew' Enrolled Participation 1974," Carton 9, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; Lyman B. Dixon, "4-H TV Programming," *4-H News*, X, no. 4 (1974): 1, Box 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

something to alter as part of a grooming “improvement” like the girls’ manual did. The 4-H of the 1960s may have eliminated some differences with regard to sex in its programming, but it did still present a slightly divergent set of standards for girls’ weight when compared to boys, a distinction likely connected to larger cultural trends relating to sex and physical appearance. Though concern emerged in the 1950s and 1960s about weight gain in boys and men stemming from increasingly sedentary lifestyles, girls and women remained the primary targets of messages relating to weight as extreme thinness for females became fashionable in the 1960s.<sup>66</sup>

Even before North Carolina 4-H completed its process of eliminating sex-based differences in projects and activities, it was far less sex-segregated than some comparable 1960’s youth organizations. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, for example, were by their very nature youth groups divided by sex. While leaders within both scouting programs provided occasional opportunities for boys and girls to socialize together in the 1960s, the two scouting groups did not conduct coeducational club meetings in the same way that 4-H did. Future Farmers of America (FFA) and Future Homemakers of America (FHA) provided instruction to youth in farming and homemaking but were segregated by sex. Unlike 4-H, the national office of FFA refused to allow girls to even join the organization, although some had secretly done so, with their local leaders registering them by using only their first initials and last names. FFA did not open its membership to girls until 1969. Similarly, FHA initially limited its membership just to girls but began

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<sup>66</sup> “4-H Girls Personal Appearance and Grooming Manual,” Box 5, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; “Young Man: Dress Right/Look Right”; Jesse Berrett, “Feeding the Organization Man: Diet and Masculinity in Postwar America,” *Journal of Social History* 30, no. 4 (Summer 1997): 806-808; Banner, 287.

attempting to revise its curriculum to reach both sexes in the early 1970s. The variety of project opportunities 4-H offered girls helped it attract members who felt constricted by FHA's heavy emphasis on homemaking. While acknowledging that experiences may have differed in other FHA chapters, Jean Jackson, a Vance County 4-H'er in the mid-1960s and early 1970s, contended that her brief stint as a member in FHA was less fulfilling than her work with 4-H, largely because of the diversity of projects 4-H allowed her to pursue. Even as late as 1977, 4-H promoted its coeducational nature as a characteristic that made it unique among youth groups and potentially attractive to new members.<sup>67</sup>

The 1970s marked a turning point in the relationship between sex and award eligibility for North Carolina 4-H. While it had endeavored in the 1960s to make project areas traditionally associated with girls, like foods and nutrition or grooming, more open to male 4-H'ers, some awards remained sex-segregated throughout the decade. In 1965, eligibility in eight award categories was restricted by sex, although the overwhelming majority of awards were open to either sex. Out of those eight, three – sewing, dress revue, and better grooming – were available exclusively to girls while only boys were eligible for the remaining five, which included cotton production and marketing, forestry, sheep shearing, tractor operator, and personal appearance. As the 1965 breakdown reveals, the majority of awards that did have sex-based eligibility requirements tended to

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<sup>67</sup> Tammy M. Proctor, *Scouting for Girls: A Century of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2009), 120; Allen Talbert et al., *Foundations of Agricultural Education*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Danville, IL : Professional Educators Publications, 2007), 446; Lisa M. Miller, "Where the Boys Are: Home Ec," *New York Times*, December 16, 1993; Jean Jackson, interview by author, recording, Raleigh, North Carolina, March 12, 2010, in author's possession; "Parents, 4-H is For Your Son or Daughter," 1977, Box 5, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

follow traditional divisions that had been with 4-H for decades. Beginning in 1967, however, the number of sex-restricted awards declined, with two, sewing and dress revue, open only to girls and tractor operator going only to boys. In 1970, this number declined again as the tractor operator award finally became open to all club members regardless of sex. Although sewing remained the last sex-restricted award category, after 1975 the organization had eliminated all sex-based restrictions on awards.<sup>68</sup>

The practice of offering dual awards to boys and girls in certain categories also ended in the 1970s. Throughout the 1960s and most of the 1970s, North Carolina 4-H continued offering separate awards for male and female club members in project areas like electricity, health, public speaking, leadership, achievement, and citizenship. The organization even introduced two new dual award categories, personal appearance in 1969 and automotive driving skills in 1973. Rather than slowly phasing out the number of dual awards, state leaders instead abruptly ended the process in 1978. With the end of this practice, North Carolina 4-H had completely abandoned, at least formally, the gender divisions that had characterized the organization since the establishment of the first corn and canning clubs in the 1900s and 1910s. Such a change was in line with national trends. Although it did not apply to North Carolina 4-H, as by the 1970s the clubs no longer met in schools, Title IX of the Educational Amendment Acts of 1972 ended sex-

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<sup>68</sup> “North Carolina Awards Handbook for Projects, Demonstrations, Scholarships - January, 1965”; “North Carolina 1967 Awards Handbook for 4-H,” 4; “North Carolina 1970 Awards Handbook for Projects, Demonstrations, Activities, Scholarships,” p.6; “1973 North Carolina Handbook – Awards,” 6; “1975 Awards North Carolina 4-H Handbook,” 3-8, Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

restrictions in public schools, which meant that boys and girls throughout the United States could now enroll in home economics or shop courses, respectively.<sup>69</sup>

In spite of North Carolina 4-H's policy and project changes, single-sex activities continued to occur even in the 1970s. In 1975 in Granville County, 110 girls, some from 4-H and others from the county's Junior Woman's Club, received baby sitting training from 4-H volunteer leaders. Reports do not indicate, however, if boys were actually excluded from this event or if they simply chose not to enroll in it. Five years later, though, agents reported the enrollment of both girls and boys in a similar training program in Watauga County. Agents held a retreat for boys in 1978 with the theme "Growing Up and Liking It." Records do not reveal whether or not girls were able to attend a similar program.<sup>70</sup> While such single-sex activities did occur within North Carolina 4-H, on the whole, the organization had by the late 1970s essentially ended all sex-based restrictions on its programming.

Although many agents, at least officially, remained silent on the changes taking place within 4-H, those that were outspoken offered mixed reactions. There were those who supported the shift away from letting traditional gender roles dictate the course of 4-

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<sup>69</sup> "North Carolina Awards Handbook for Projects, Demonstrations, Scholarships - January, 1965"; "1975 Awards North Carolina 4-H Handbook," 4; "North Carolina 1969 Awards Handbook for Projects, Demonstrations, Activities, Scholarships" 6; "1973 North Carolina Handbook – Awards," 6; "1978 North Carolina 4-H Awards," 9, Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; Elias, 174.

<sup>70</sup> North Carolina 4-H Staff, "North Carolina 4-H Youth Progress Report, Fiscal Year 1975," 6, Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Annual Reports, UA 102.002, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina; "Across Our State with 4-H," *Rapport* VII no. 2 (1980): 3, Box 2, North Carolina Association of Extension 4-H Agents Records, UA 102.054, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina; "Across Our State with 4-H," *Rapport* VI no. 3 (1978): 3, Box 2, North Carolina Association of Extension 4-H Agents Records.

H programming. Lois C. Hunley, a Union County 4-H agent, expressed support for the inclusion of boys into the fashion revue, contending that there was no reason for boys to have their own separate clothing category and that it was acceptable for them to compete against girls. Margaret E. Clark, a retired district agent first hired by 4-H in 1936, praised 4-H's efforts at becoming a more gender-neutral organization. When interviewed in October of 1977, she reflected on her own experiences with 4-H and lamented the fact that some club members over the decades might have missed out on opportunities due to gender restrictions. Clark instead believed that it was better for 4-H to "let the boy or girl select the project that best fits into his [or her] life."<sup>71</sup>

Not all responses were entirely favorable, however. L.R. Harrill did not go so far as to publicly criticize the organization's easing of gender divisions in the 1960s and 1970s, but he did express some uneasiness over the new developments. While strongly emphasizing the fact that there should be no difference between boys and girls "as far as having an opportunity," Harrill noted in the same 1977 interview with Clark that 4-H should still "acquaint the girl with the fact that she is a girl and she has a place in the world all of her own and that the boy, when he grows into a man, he will have a similar position." Although Harrill offered no further elaboration on what he meant by this point, he did choose it as the final idea he wanted to emphasize during the interview, indicating that he felt this point was of great importance to the future of 4-H. During his thirty-seven years leading North Carolina's 4-H program, Harrill had voiced support for

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<sup>71</sup> Lois C. Hunley to Chester D. Black, August 26, 1974, Carton 9, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "Interview of L.R. Harrill and 7 Former 4-H Club Participants," by Wally Ausley, October 3, 1977, recording, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1035>.

allowing club members to take on projects that were useful to them, which sometimes resulted in 4-H'ers enrolling in activities traditionally associated with the opposite sex. As the 1977 interview reveals, though, Harrill clearly did not believe in completely rejecting traditional gender roles and felt that 4-H should work to promote such roles to some degree, even as American society increasingly accepted more flexibility within them.<sup>72</sup>

Several factors could account for the reactions or lack thereof to the changes relating to gender and North Carolina 4-H. Certainly agents working for the organization were susceptible to the larger trends taking place throughout the state and the nation, where women were increasingly working outside the home and were pushing for increased social and legal protections. In addition, the decline of the farming profession in North Carolina meant that boys and girls simply did not need to be trained in agriculture and farm homemaking in order to thrive as adults. The process by which North Carolina 4-H dropped all of its sex-based restrictions on projects and awards was gradual in nature. It declined over the years, providing agents with time to adjust to the changes. The organization also experienced more substantial developments during the 1960s, including the transition out of public schools to community based clubs and the integration of its white and African American programs. In comparison, letting boys enter the fashion revue or girls compete for a tractor operator award were relatively minor changes. Finally, the organization had always allowed some degree of flexibility for its members, regardless of sex, meaning that the new policies in the 1960s and 1970s

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<sup>72</sup> "Interview of L.R. Harrill and 7 Former 4-H Club Participants."



relating to sex and gender were not entirely out of line with its past. Four-H's changes certainly were not as dramatic as when FFA began allowing girls to officially join its ranks in 1969. Alterations in 4-H programming and eligibility did mean that boys and girls would have more equitable experiences, but the organization had never adopted the same level of exclusionary practices of other youth groups.

By the end of the 1970s, North Carolina 4-H club work for both boys and girls was much different than it had been when the organization was officially established in 1926. The overwhelming majority of member interactions were coeducational; while agents and leaders did hold occasional single-sex activities, clubs were no longer officially divided by sex. Over the decades home and farm agents increasingly collaborated to ensure the success of the total 4-H program. The traditional gender roles and sex divisions that shaped the early work of the organization as it endeavored to produce future farmers and future farm homemakers increasingly became unrealistic expectations for North Carolina youth. Instead, programming in the 1960s and 1970s gradually reflected not only changing ideas about gender roles but also the economic transformation taking place within the state. Even when traditional roles for boys and girls influenced the scope of 4-H club work, the organization retained a degree of flexibility regarding gender absent from similar programs for youth, like FFA and FHA. While leaders within North Carolina 4-H did not advocate a complete rejection of social norms regarding gender, they did recognize that in some instances there were practical benefits for club members who took on projects traditionally associated with the opposite sex. This emphasis on practicality enabled some 4-H'ers to cross gender lines with

regard to project selection, in some cases decades before the women's movement changed the way American society viewed gender.

## CHAPTER V

### “TRAINING YOUTH IN THE ART OF LIVING”: EFFORTS AT CHARACTER BUILDING IN NORTH CAROLINA 4-H

From its earliest days, North Carolina 4-H provided instruction to club members in more than just farming and farm homemaking; it also tried to also shape the character of 4-H'ers. Leadership contended that 4-H should engage in efforts to help club members become well-rounded individuals both during their youth and when they reached adulthood, or as thirty-seven-year state leader L.R. Harrill often phrased it, “train them in the art of living.” The impetus for such work can even be found in the Hs associated with its name; in addition to 4-H wanting youth to improve and utilize their hands (labor), head (knowledge), and health for the betterment of agriculture and rural communities, it also stressed the importance of developing club members’ hearts. As part of its effort to do so, the organization endeavored to influence 4-H'ers’ values and behavior relating to areas outside of farming, including what it viewed as the appropriate use of leisure time, spiritual development, and good citizenship. To address these areas, agents utilized a variety of methods, both formal and informal, with leisure and citizenship eventually having their own project categories. While North Carolina 4-H'ers never participated in a project area devoted solely to spiritual training, they still received

instruction in it through other means, including Christian messages delivered at assorted 4-H gatherings.<sup>1</sup>

In examining both why and how 4-H engaged in character building, it is important to also consider the way agents and leaders viewed the young people with whom they worked. On the whole, representatives of 4-H maintained a supportive attitude toward club members. While North Carolina agents did from time to time express concerns about the choices made by 4-H'ers, they largely resisted the pessimistic and alarmed attitudes held by many adults regarding American youth in the twentieth century. For the most part, agents typically maintained a positive view of club members and approached character training from the standpoint of assisting in youth's overall growth and development into adulthood. In instances where agents were critical of young people, they often blamed parents, society, or other factors for what they viewed as club members' unwise choices. Even on the occasions where 4-H staffers placed the blame for poor behavior fully on youth, the organization took the stance that young people needed additional guidance and instruction rather than punitive measures to assist them in making better life decisions.

Though an organization whose founding purpose focused on agricultural training, 4-H's policy of incorporating character building into its overall curriculum makes sense when considered within the larger context of how adult Americans perceived young people throughout the twentieth century. While ever-changing contemporary social

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<sup>1</sup> "4-H Objectives for 1941 – The Challenge," Box 5, L. R. Harrill Papers, MC 17, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina; L.R. Harrill, *Memories of 4-H* (Raleigh: North Carolina 4-H Development Fund, 1967), 4.

issues influenced their perspectives, twentieth-century American adults repeatedly viewed young people with both concern and suspicion, often expressing fears over the potential for delinquent behavior in youth. Members of American society worried that without proper guidance, young people, especially adolescents, might succumb to negative influences perpetuated by both youth culture and the mass media. In response, adults engaged in a variety of endeavors, including club work, to shape the behavior of children and teenagers.

During the early twentieth century, a change took place in how American society viewed young people. Although Americans had previously recognized a distinction between children and adults, it was not until the first two decades of the twentieth century that the concept of adolescence first emerged. Drawing their conclusions from both biological and psychological observations, turn-of-the-century psychologists concluded that the teenage years represented a distinct period of human development during which young people were transitioning from childhood to adulthood. The increase in American high school attendance in the 1920s, sparked partially by a reduced need for industrial child labor associated with advancements in factory machinery, helped to further distinguish adolescents as their own social demographic since they now spent their days attending high school in the company of age-based peer groups rather than with adults. Widely recognized as an urban development, rates of high school attendance in the 1920s increased among rural youth regardless of race or sex, although considerable disparity in attendance existed between whites and blacks. High school attendance continued to rise in the 1930s as the economic crisis of the Great Depression lessened young people's

opportunities for finding work and led to a successful effort to reduce child labor to prevent adults from having to compete against lower-paid youth when looking for jobs. While adolescent high school attendance and graduation rates dipped somewhat during World War II, they continued, on the whole, to rise in the postwar decades, driven by a variety of factors including the wartime discovery of low levels of education attained by military recruits and a postwar push for better educated Americans to help develop the technology required to maintain the United States' rivalry with the Soviet Union, as well as uphold America's international reputation as a global leader. As more young people spent their days together, youth culture grew and flourished.<sup>2</sup>

North Carolina was not immune to this expansion in adolescent education, a development that had implications for 4-H club work in the state due to the organization's relationship with public schools. By 1930, just over 45 percent of all North Carolinians between the ages of fourteen to eighteen attended school. In terms of rural adolescents, the rate for whites was roughly the same as the state average, though African American youth in this same age category had a slightly lower attendance rate, with 43.4 percent attending. This rate was actually higher than the state average for all black youth of 37.1 percent. These numbers increased over the decade so that by 1940, 58.1 percent of adolescents attended school. The total rural percentage of 59.5 was

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 235, 236, 243; Aaron H. Esman, *Adolescence and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 21; John Modell, *Into One's Own: From Youth to Adulthood in the United States, 1920-1975* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 76-79, 122; Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York, Basic Books, 1996), 5, 45, 71, 169; Claudia Goldin, "America's Graduation from High School: The Evolution and Spread of Secondary Schooling in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Economic History*, 58, no. 2 (June 1998): 348.

slightly higher than the state average, though nonwhite rural rates still lagged at 50.8 percent. Such numbers do not mean that all adolescents who attended school graduated. In fact, in 1950 the median number of school years completed for North Carolinians over the age of twenty-five was 7.9. However, the rising percentages do reveal that the state's adolescents were increasingly spending their days in the company of their peers, a trend that steadily continued in subsequent decades. As a result, even when 4-H left public schools in the 1960s, its potential membership base was composed primarily of young people who attended school during their adolescent years and had likely been exposed to and participated in the new youth culture.<sup>3</sup>

Regardless of the decade, the expansion of youth culture worried American adults. In the 1920s, just when high school attendance was starting to rise, adults expressed fears over possible delinquency in adolescents, fueled partially by the freedom and influence stemming from new technological developments like cars and movies, respectively. While films could expose young people to lifestyles and values divergent from those of their parents, access to cars enabled them to evade adult supervision. Rising high school attendance in the 1930s resulted in young people increasingly looking

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<sup>3</sup> United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population, Volume III Part 2," 337, *United States Census Bureau*, [http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/10612982v3p2\\_TOC.pdf](http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/10612982v3p2_TOC.pdf) (accessed July 27, 2012); United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Sixteenth Census of the United States – 1940, Population, Volume IV," 820-821, *United States Census Bureau*, [http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/33973538v4p3\\_TOC.pdf](http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/33973538v4p3_TOC.pdf) (accessed July 27, 2012); United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "1950 Census of Population Advance Reports: Educational Attainment of the Population 25 Years Old and Over," 2, *United States Census Bureau*, <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/14127567ch2.pdf> (accessed July 27, 2012); United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "1960 Census of Population Advance Reports: General Social and Economic Characteristics: North Carolina," 5, *United States Census Bureau*, <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/15611103ch4.pdf> (accessed July 27, 2012).

to their peer group for social validation and engaging in behavior that shocked adults, such as smoking. Such concerns further intensified in the 1940s, due to a variety of causes including worries about children unsupervised while their mothers worked in defense industries and the changing nature of youth culture in the decade, which many adults characterized as overly materialistic and unconcerned with the future.

Adolescents' embrace of swing music and bobby-soxer style added to such adult apprehensions. Media sources exacerbated concerns, focusing heavily on actions committed by a minority of teenagers, such as "Victory Girls" engaging in sexual acts with soldiers, which gave the impression that such incidents were more widespread than they actually were. These fears about youth culture's link to delinquency persisted after the war. The 1950s emergence of rock music, a genre widely consumed by teens, alarmed white parents because of its African American influence and sexualized lyrics, performances, and dances. Such factors especially worried white Southerners who viewed the music, which led to interracial interactions between performers and audiences, as yet another challenge, like civil rights lawsuits, to the region's culture of segregation. Parents in the South and elsewhere feared it would make teenage girls more aware of and willing to explore their sexuality. Movies from the 1950s aimed at adolescents that glorified rebellious youth, such as *Rebel Without a Cause*, led to fears that youth would emulate the characters.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Kett, 249; Palladino, 5-8, 51, 74, 158; Susan K. Cahn, *Sexual Reckonings: Southern Girls in a Troubling Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 243, 250, 267-268.



American public perceptions of youth culture in the 1960s and 1970s revealed even greater fears that teenagers were essentially out-of-control delinquents. In the mid-to-late 1960s, adolescent rejection of middle-class values and norms left many adults convinced that American youth were both “short-sighted” and “hedonistic,” a characterization that only continued into the 1970s. Although in the minority, New Left youth activists involved in protest movements further heightened concerns, especially as media coverage created the impression that most young people were engaged in such activities. This perception, combined with youth’s growing disillusionment with the Vietnam War, caused many adults to adopt the view that youth culture had led to a decline in teenagers’ and young adults’ patriotism, confidence in their nation, and respectability. Adult perceptions of the anti-war movement, combined with increased drug and alcohol use by young people in the 1960s and 1970s, helped further a growing generational divide and adult criticism of youth.<sup>5</sup>

In response to their concerns, adults engaged in numerous attempts to shape adolescents’ values and behaviors. As early as the 1930s, adults produced media, primarily magazines, geared toward adolescents that attempted to shape young people's views and actions through features like fashion and advice columns, written in a tone that implied teen-generated content but was actually produced by adults seeking both to shape moral values as well as market consumer goods. The federal government also intervened throughout the twentieth century to try to curb perceived potential for delinquency, offering job training programs in the 1930s that instilled middle-class values in young

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<sup>5</sup> Palladino, 212-213, 223, 239.

people, establishing recreation centers and “teen canteens” during World War II to provide supervised socialization opportunities, and pushing Hollywood in the 1950s to self-censor its films after holding Congressional hearings on the impact of mass media on young people. Though concerned more with profit motives than moral imperatives, record companies seeking to capitalize on teenage spending also endeavored to shape youth culture, producing in the late 1950s rock music that moved away from the genre’s working-class, African American origins and was thereby less offensive to some parents. Strict codes of dress and behavior associated with musical television shows like “American Bandstand” also helped make the new style of music more acceptable to white, middle-class parents. Adults recognized that youth culture could not necessarily be controlled, but that it was possible to help manipulate elements of it.<sup>6</sup>

Though 4-H leaders never officially expressed concerns about pervasive delinquency, the organization itself was part of another tactic for molding the character of young people that actually began before the emergence of a distinctive youth culture. Organized club work first developed in the late nineteenth century as a variety of Protestant groups formed with the aim of saving young people in towns and cities from what they viewed as the moral deficiencies present within metropolitan areas. This work continued into the twentieth century, spurred in part by the establishment of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and the Young Women’s Christian Association

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<sup>6</sup> Palladino, 24, 26, 36-39, 81-82, 84-86, 133-134, 159; Modello, 224; Esman, 50; Dominick Cavallo, *A Fiction of the Past: The Sixties in American History* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 150-152; Richard Reiman, *The New Deal and American Youth: Ideas, and Ideals in a Depression Decade* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 29-30, 32-33; James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America’s Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 146, 162.

(YWCA). Although these two institutions originated in mid-nineteenth century Great Britain as non-denominational Christian prayer groups, by the early twentieth century they were present in the United States. They focused broadly on providing young, single adults in urban environments with a degree of moral guidance, since this demographic was away from home and outside the supervision of older relatives. While initially solely religious in nature, these organizations would, just as North Carolina 4-H later did, accept recreation as an important component of character development and, much to the dismay of more stringent Protestant clergy members, incorporate it into their programming. Originally located in large urban areas in the Northeast, the Y organizations began to expand to smaller towns in the early twentieth century and target younger members as well.<sup>7</sup>

The drive to shape the character of young people intensified in the early decades of the twentieth century, due both to the efforts of Progressive reformers and the establishment of new youth organizations. Echoing some of the sentiment of YMCA and YWCA leaders, Progressive reformers believed strongly in the need for adult supervision of the activities of young people and called for increased oversight of children's leisure time. These reformers did not reject play as a negative activity for young people; in fact, during the 1920s reformers' efforts helped lead to the creation of both public playgrounds and new recreational extracurricular activities. Like 4-H, the new youth groups forming

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<sup>7</sup> Kett, 248; Stephanie Yvette Felix, "Committed to Their Own: African American Women Leaders in the YWCA: The YWCA of Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1870-1970" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1999), 42-44; Paula Lupkin, "Manhood Factories: Architecture, Business, and the Evolving Urban Role of the YMCA, 1865-1925," in *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and YWCA in the City*, eds. Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 42, 43, 49.

in the early twentieth century lacked the religious background of institutions like the YMCA and YWCA. The Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Campfire Girls, for example, all emerged in the United States during the early twentieth century, incorporating the goal of character building into their initial missions. These groups were not, however, as present in rural areas as 4-H.<sup>8</sup>

The degree to which these institutions would retain their focus on shaping values and behavior varied throughout the twentieth century. The YMCA, for example, gradually moved away from its emphasis on character building during the mid-twentieth century, contending in the 1960s and 1970s that its efforts in this area had become irrelevant and that its member base was too broad for it to promote Christianity. As a result, the YMCA shifted its mission, instead concentrating more heavily on promoting physical fitness for health purposes. The Girl Scouts, on the other hand, continued to encourage its members to make what it viewed as appropriate life choices, ranging from general conduct to career decisions. The Boy Scouts remained even more steadfast in its efforts to shape the character of its members throughout the twentieth century, expressing concern at developments like youth drug use and hippie culture but contending that adolescents might be reformed through scouting.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Kett, 226-227, 251; David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 3; Tammy M. Proctor, *Scouting for Girls: A Century of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2009), 19; Helen Buckner, Mar F. Fielder and Martha F. Allen, *Wo-He-Lo: The Story of the Campfire Girls, 1910-1960* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), 3, 7-8.

<sup>9</sup> Clifford Putney, "From Character Building to Body Building: The YMCA and the Suburban Metropolis, 1950-1980," in *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and YWCA in the City*, eds. Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 231-232, 236-237; Proctor, 150, 155-156; Macleod, 299.

To an extent, North Carolina 4-H's work in character building followed the trends established by other youth organizations and reformers in the early decades of the twentieth century. The organization did attempt to guide members' values and behaviors relating to a variety of issues outside of farming. However, 4-H differed from other youth groups in that character building was not a part of the main objectives on which the organization was founded as it was with groups like the YMCA or the Boy Scouts. While the "heart" H did indicate a degree of commitment to this goal, the organizers of the first agricultural clubs that became 4-H began bringing young people together in an attempt to improve the state of agriculture and thereby aid them in making a better living as future farmers and farm homemakers. Even after single-subject clubs consolidated into the broader 4-H program, agriculture remained, at least in North Carolina, the organization's primary point of focus until economic and social changes motivated alterations to its offerings. Although firmly dedicated to its founding goal of agricultural training, even in its earliest years North Carolina 4-H would also work to shape the character of its members in areas including recreation and use of leisure time, spirituality, and citizenship.<sup>10</sup>

Like other youth clubs, North Carolina 4-H had, from its beginning in 1926, worked to shape the ways in which 4-H'ers spent their leisure time as part of its efforts in building character and creating well-rounded club members. From the 1920s through the 1970s and into later decades, the organization endeavored to provide 4-H'ers with

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<sup>10</sup> Franklin M. Reck, *The 4-H Story: A History of 4-H Club Work* (Ames: Iowa State College Press, 1951), 6, 7, 77-78, 208-209.

instruction in what it deemed appropriate uses of free time, as well as training in an assortment of recreational activities. Larger economic and social changes taking place both within the state and the nation altered the organization's approach to leisure education over time. Whereas in its first five decades 4-H strove to increase recreational opportunities for rural people whose lives were largely defined by agricultural work, in the 1960s and 1970s it changed its approach. With the decline of family farming, young people in North Carolina were increasingly freed from farm chores, a development that left agents worried about the ways in which youth might spend their growing free time if not provided guidance and education regarding leisure pursuits. During both periods, however, agents and leadership remained committed to the concept of structured recreation as an important part of overall youth development.

Four-H leadership viewed recreational decisions as representative of a person's overall character, contending that "the story of how an individual spends his leisure time usually determines what kind of individual this person is." This statement does not mean that agents were concerned exclusively with moral deficiencies; 4-H staff believed that some individuals actually needed more time for relaxation. Mindful of the demanding workloads endured by farm families, agents stressed the importance of recreation as a way to counteract the drudgery of farm work, incorporating it into many aspects of 4-H club work. They did not, however, simply permit members to freely engage in undirected play or socialization. Instead, agents and state leaders endeavored to train 4-H'ers in what they viewed as wise and productive uses of free time. Four-H staff members were certainly not opposed to young people having fun, but they did believe that recreation

needed to be directed, organized, and “wholesome,” and that club members needed instruction on appropriate recreational pursuits. Agents feared that without such training and left to their own devices, 4-H’ers, as well as youth in general, might succumb to laziness. In this way, agents differed somewhat from larger societal trends as being idle and wasting time were of more concern, at least officially, to 4-H staff than delinquency or sexual activity among youth. By presenting young people with guidance and training in organized and structured uses of free time, agents felt that they were providing 4-H’ers with “opportunities for skill acquisition and physical and healthful development.” Recreational training, therefore, was vital to shaping the nature of developing club members, giving young people a needed opportunity to relax but also remain productive.<sup>11</sup>

Agents and leadership developed a variety of projects and activities to instruct club members in what the organization considered to be appropriate uses of free time. Such pursuits were promoted to all 4-H’ers, irrespective of race or sex. Handicrafts, offered both as a camp activity and a project from 1930 to 1941, were one way that it provided this training. Four-H leadership believed that the creation of crafts like bookmarks, baskets, billfolds, or other assorted goods gave club members an opportunity to engage in a fun activity that was also useful and that doing so would benefit 4-H’ers

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<sup>11</sup> L.R. Harrill, “What Our Children May Do During Vacation Time,” Box 5, L. R. Harrill Papers; “North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work],” 67, *Green 'N' Growing: The History of Home Demonstration and 4-H Youth Development in North Carolina (GNG)*, North Carolina State University Libraries, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1011>; “North Carolina State Club Leader (Negro) Annual Report 1945,” 28, North Carolina, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports 1945, Records of the Federal Extension Service, Record Group 33, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.

well into adulthood. A directed leisure activity like handicrafts would prevent idleness and keep club members productive and valuing labor, even during free time. With a similar objective, the organization began offering white club members a formal project in 1948 to train them to be leaders in organized recreation. Winners in this area often engaged in activities like hosting socials and parties for club members, leading games, teaching folk dances, and attending recreational training workshops. While these pursuits might not emphasize productivity to the same extent as handicrafts, they did encourage organized, directed activities during free time, thus potentially diverting young people from engaging in delinquency. Although the African American program was unable to offer the recreation project due to a lack of financial sponsorship, it also placed value on the importance of training young people in what 4-H considered appropriate uses of leisure time, like supervised games and social gatherings, and engaged in some of the same techniques as the white program, including instruction in handicrafts at camp.<sup>12</sup>

Formal training in recreational leadership was not limited to club members enrolled in the recreation project. Group meetings and workshops afforded opportunities to other 4-H'ers and agents. Both the black and white programs participated, and the

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<sup>12</sup> L.R. Harrill, "What Our Children May Do During Vacation Time"; L.R. Harrill, "Annual Report of 4-H Club Work, December 1, 1929 to December 1, 1930," 45, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1029>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Narrative Report and Statistical Summary 4-H Club Work 1941," 126, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1002>; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 [4-H Club Work]," 43, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1013>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1958 [4-H Club Work]," 42, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1019>; "North Carolina State Club Leader (Negro) Annual Report 1945," 28; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1954 [Negro 4-H Club Work]," 24, 1947 North Carolina Plant Pathology Thru Alamance, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports 1946-60, Records of the Federal Extension Service, Record Group 33, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland.



annual Short Course provided one such avenue for training. As early as 1927, one of the main goals state leaders had for the Short Course was to teach club members about 4-H's views of appropriate recreational activities. Agents hoped that members who received such training at the Short Course or at a 4-H camp would take the knowledge they acquired, which could range from instruction in sports like tennis and softball to learning assorted folk dances, back to their home clubs. Such activities could then be incorporated into monthly meetings and other club-related gatherings to make club work more enjoyable. To ensure that county agents were also aware of effective ways of engaging 4-H'ers in directed recreation, North Carolina 4-H provided training for them as well, sometimes occurring during sessions set aside for agents at the Short Course. The North Carolina Recreation Commission also hosted workshops for agents, older club members, and adult volunteers to provide training in recreation leadership to improve and increase opportunities for organized recreation in 4-H clubs. This training was part of a larger effort by the Commission, the North Carolina Extension Service, and L.R. Harrill to improve rural quality of life by promoting increased recreation for both youth and adults.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> L.R. Harrill, "Annual Report of 4-H Club Work, December 1, 1926 to December 1, 1927," 6, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1026>; "North Carolina State Club Leader (Negro) Annual Report 1947," 12, 1947 North Carolina Plant Pathology Thru Alamance, Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports, 1946-60; R.E. Jones, "State Plan of Negro 4-H Club Work for North Carolina, 1939," 10, Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Annual Reports, UA 102.002, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1958 [4-H Club Work]," 42; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1953," 43, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1014>; Jane S. McKimmon, *When We're Green We Grow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1945), 221-222.

Ensuring that recreation factored early into 4-H club work provided several benefits for both the organization and its members that extended beyond character training. From the standpoint of agents, recreational pursuits provided a way to attract new 4-H'ers and keep them engaged. In early 4-H clubs, agents incorporated singing and “yells” into the beginning of meetings to help ease 4-H'ers into the lessons as well as break through some of the social awkwardness that accompanied early coeducational gatherings. Including a recreational component in monthly club meetings could make the experience more enjoyable for members. L.R. Harrill supported the practice of combining recreation with instruction, arguing that it made club work more fun and interesting for 4-H'ers. Perhaps keeping this objective in mind, the black Extension office in Greensboro suggested that county agents devote a portion of each monthly 4-H meeting to some type of recreational activity. Although most clubs came together once a month for around an hour, state leadership recommended that agents conducting these meetings set aside fifteen minutes out of that hour for recreation and closing exercises, which could involve a range of organized yet potentially fun activities, including group singing, dancing, or playing sports or games. Early 4-H leaders also contended that increasing leisure opportunities for rural youth had the potential to keep them on the farm as they became young adults, asserting that the encounters 4-H offered could help counteract the allure of urban areas, which agents acknowledged was partially tied to the greater availability of entertainment and pastimes in towns and cities than in rural locations.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Harrill, *Memories of 4-H*, 11, 20; R.E. Jones, “Plan of Work for 1937,” 2, Box 6, North Carolina

Similarly, recreation had the potential to attract new club members to 4-H because it offered young people a chance to have fun and a get break from the hard work of farm life. Early agents recognized that 4-H's camping program, which provided club members with organized leisure activities away from home, motivated some children and adolescents to join 4-H simply because it was one of the only ways that they would be able to go camping. Even after 4-H was well-established in North Carolina in the 1950s, agents continued to report the benefits of incorporating structured recreational activities into their work with young people. A Tyrell County agent in 1956, for example, reporting on a countywide recreational meeting, contended that "good planned recreation will help the county 4-H program more than any other single thing." The games, dances, sing-alongs, and other activities that agents arranged could provide rural youth with a diversion from the hard work associated with agriculture. Similarly, camping trips could be the only vacation on which farm youth, whose families might otherwise lack the time or funds for travel, would get to go. In these ways, recreation simultaneously helped expand and strengthen the 4-H program, while also providing opportunities for club members to have a good time. As the organization continued to push these activities in an era when adults increasingly worried about the potential for dating to lead to sexual impropriety, such activities may have also been a way for the organization to monitor social interactions between club boys and girls.<sup>15</sup>

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Cooperative Extension Service Annual Reports; "Why Does the Farm Boy and Girl Leave Home?" Box 6, L. R. Harrill Papers.

<sup>15</sup> L.R. Harrill, "Annual Report of 4-H Club Work, January 1, 1926 to December 1, 1926," 9, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1025>; "Radio Program for Saturday, March 24 [1956],"

Although agents and state leadership valued 4-H's emphasis on leisure activities for building character and strengthening club work, not all North Carolinians initially agreed that such training was of value. Recalling his first year of work as the state 4-H leader, L.R. Harrill contended that one of the major obstacles he encountered was convincing both young people and their parents that it was "no sin to play," as recreational endeavors, even in an educational setting, were deemed by some as a waste of time. Although the efforts of Harrill and the Extension service to increase recreation opportunities for North Carolina's rural population did help raise adult enthusiasm and support, negative attitudes of the public toward this aspect of club work persisted into the 1950s. When raising money for the construction of Camp Mitchell for African American 4-H'ers, black leaders feared that the organization would be unable to secure the needed funds because the camp would be "a place to 'play.'" Although 4-H leadership and agents may have disagreed with members of the public over the importance of leisure instruction initially, popular opinion did shift to support 4-H. The African American community, for example, helped provide the capital to build Camp Mitchell in spite of doubts. By 1960, Governor Luther H. Hodges publicly praised North Carolina 4-H for its recreation program, which he contended brought about "better community living."<sup>16</sup>

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Carton 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records, UA 102.010, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina.

<sup>16</sup> Harrill, *Memories of 4-H*, 20; McKimmon, 221-222; "Advice Worth Passing Along," *North Carolina Extension News* LXII, no. 11 (July, 1976), Box 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, Office of the Assistant Director, UA 102.005, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina; Transcript of a January 1, 1960 Radio Program, Carton 7, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

While 4-H's approach to recreational training continued on the same course in the 1960s as it had in previous years, by the end of the decade leaders' and agents' rationale for providing this kind of instruction shifted. The organization still endeavored to shape the ways in which club members engaged in leisure pursuits, but social and economic changes in the state gave agents new cause for concern regarding how rural youth spent their free time. Mindful of the fact that in North Carolina family farming and farm homemaking were declining as viable vocations, agents in the late 1960s noticed that 4-H'ers increasingly had more leisure time than previous generations of club members, a development stemming from the growth of the state's non-farm population as well as general economic prosperity. Families simply no longer needed their children to assist them with tasks related to farming. As a result, agents expressed concerns that 4-H needed to ensure that it was providing young people with adequate training on how they might spend this new free time.<sup>17</sup>

From a curriculum standpoint, North Carolina 4-H's approach to recreational training did not vary much in the late 1960s and 1970s from methods utilized in earlier decades. The organization continued to offer a project in recreation, although in 1976 leadership renamed it leisure education. Despite the name change, however, the project still emphasized club members learning about assorted organized recreational activities, including dance, music, games, and crafts. Four-H'ers attending the annual Club Congress, formerly the Short Course, received instruction in recreational leadership, and

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<sup>17</sup>"North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work, 1965," *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/486>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report 4-H Club Work 1967," 16, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/434>.

this kind of training remained a part of camp activity as did classes in handicrafts. Agents still incorporated directed leisure activities, such as games and dances, into regular 4-H club meetings as well.<sup>18</sup>

What set 4-H's emphasis on guiding club members' recreational behavior in the late 1960s and 1970s apart from that of earlier decades were agents' fears about the potential consequences of the behaviors in which idle youth might engage without proper guidance. Four-H agents in North Carolina no longer simply worried that the state's youth might become lazy as a result of unstructured free time, nor were they concerned with the outmigration of youth from farms to urban areas. Instead, agents during this period worried about the potential for idle youth, whose families increasingly worked outside of agriculture and were no longer preoccupied with farm chores, to engage in drug and alcohol abuse, as well as juvenile delinquency. Contending that young people increasingly had "more leisure time and an environment that potentially may not be able to meet their needs," 4-H agents in the late 1960s and 1970s repeatedly stressed that adolescents and children did not have enough opportunities at the local level for organized recreation. While some agents simply stated the need for increased activities, others went further, asserting that if youth were better informed on how to more wisely

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<sup>18</sup> North Carolina 4-H Staff, "North Carolina 4-H Youth Progress Report, Fiscal Year 1976," 7, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/472>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report 4-H Club Work 1966," 37, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/487>; Ottis Cowper, "Recreation Session Emphasizes Leadership," *Clover Leaves*, July 26, 1973, 2, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/296>; "Annual Report 4-H and Youth Program 1979-80," Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Annual Reports; Fred H. Wagoner, "Handicraft Supplies Available," *4-H News*, XVI, no. 11 (Nov. 1977): 6, Box 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications, UA 102.200, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina; Mary L. Cranford, "Recreation, Day Camping and International Intrigue," *4-H News*, XI, no. 4 (May 1973): 3, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

spend their free time and if they had more opportunities to participate in directed recreational events, then they would be far less likely to abuse alcohol and drugs or engage in other criminal activities. Carteret County agents went so far as to argue that expanding structured recreational offerings could help curtail the “increase in juvenile court cases, the number of drug users, and cases of social diseases” among young people within the county. These agents asserted that the increased adult supervision and of youth that accompanied such recreational pursuits played an important role in curtailing undesired behavior among adolescents.<sup>19</sup>

As 4-H agents in the 1970s endeavored to use recreational training as a way to keep club members from abusing alcohol and drugs, their stance on the matter did not condemn young people who had engaged in such practices as much as it criticized adults for not providing the support youth needed to avoid such behaviors in the first place. This does not mean that North Carolina 4-H’s agents and leadership simply excused young people’s actions. Four-H staff members recognized that youth were actively making poor choices because “many [were] not inclined to fill [their] leisure hours with meaningful, creative activity.” However, rather than simply condemning young people

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<sup>19</sup> North Carolina 4-H Staff, “North Carolina 4-H Youth Progress Report Fiscal Year 1979,” Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Annual Reports; “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report 4-H Club Work 1966,” 5-6; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Chowan County Grow* (North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 17; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Alexander County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 28; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Beaufort County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 22; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Carteret County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 15; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Halifax County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977); North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Chatham County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 35.

as delinquents as others in American society had chosen to do, 4-H agents instead highlighted some of the areas in which adults had failed to provide them with appropriate guidance and support for making better choices. Part of this criticism related directly to parents' interaction with the 4-H program. Agents contended that parents simply were not doing enough to encourage their children to be part of a youth organization like 4-H, or that parents whose children were members needed to assist more as 4-H volunteers to strengthen the overall program and provide more activities for young people. Some agents also cited social changes as creating problems in youth. They highlighted the state's increased divorce rate, which had been slowly but steadily rising throughout the twentieth century, going from .5 percent in 1930 to 1.3 percent in 1960, then almost doubling to 2.4 percent in 1967, as a potential problem. Additionally, agents noted the postwar expansion of women working outside the home. In North Carolina this trend was more dramatic than that of divorce, with the percentage of women in the workforce going from 27.7 in 1940 to 37.5 in 1960, 46.5 in 1970, and expanding through the decade to a percentage of 54.8 in 1980. These divorce and employment statistics, combined with the decline of family farming, led agents to assert their view that many parents were no longer home to provide the moral guidance that would help their children make good life decisions. In some instances, agents felt, 4-H had to essentially take on that responsibility for working parents.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Chatham County Grow*, 35; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Camden County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 13; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Pamlico County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 16; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Avery County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 24; North



In this way, agents, while perhaps diverging from mainstream views about the delinquent nature of young people, engaged in the prevalent cultural practice of parent-blaming. This tendency, which took hold in the early twentieth century and intensified during and after World War II, began with individuals that society viewed as experts in childhood development, such as psychiatrists and counselors, blaming the parenting styles of mothers for things like perceived moral failings, juvenile delinquency, poor health, drug use, and homosexuality in young people. While women were sometimes accused of being overbearing with their children, complaints were often associated with mothers working outside the home and neglecting their children. Experts sometimes blamed fathers as well, though the bulk of critique was reserved for women. While 4-H agents did contend that a lack of supervision and guidance at home caused many of the

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Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Robeson County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 17, 19; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Wayne County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 20; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Wake County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 21; United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, "100 Years of Marriage and Divorce Statistics: United States, 1867-1967," *Centers for Disease Control*, [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr\\_21/sr21\\_024.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_21/sr21_024.pdf) (accessed July 29, 2012); United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Sixteenth Census of the United States – 1940: Population, Volume II, Part 5," 288, *United States Census Bureau*, [http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/33973538v2p5\\_TOC.pdf](http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/33973538v2p5_TOC.pdf) (accessed July 29, 2012); United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Census of Population – 1960 – Volume I, Part 35," 35-171, *United States Census Bureau*, [http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/06586188v1p35\\_TOC.pdf](http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/06586188v1p35_TOC.pdf) (accessed July 29, 2012); United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "1970 Census of Population: Volume I, Part 35," 35-252, *United States Census Bureau*, [http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1970a\\_nc-01.pdf](http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1970a_nc-01.pdf) (accessed July 29, 2012); United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "1980 Census of Population: Characteristics of the Population: Number of Inhabitants, North Carolina," 35-62, *United States Census Bureau*, [http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1980a\\_ncABC-01.pdf](http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1980a_ncABC-01.pdf) (accessed July 29, 2012).

problems present in the young people they served, the language that they used in reports to do so criticized the actions of “parents” rather than just mothers.<sup>21</sup>

North Carolina agents did not limit their critique of adults to parents exclusively; instead, they also recognized instances where both society as well as 4-H itself had inadequately provided for the needs of youth. Agents contended that the increased use of drugs and the need for greater recreational training and opportunities were tied directly to the declining availability of employment for adolescents in the 1970s. Since many businesses were unwilling to hire adolescents, youth were simply left with excessive free time. Additionally, agents contended that adults in general were both unaware of and unresponsive to young people’s needs, creating a situation in which adolescents were unable to make wise life choices. Four-H workers were also willing to draw attention to the organization’s shortcomings. Besides calling for a general increase in recreational opportunities for club members, agents in Davidson County noted in 1976 that their leisure education program was “the most neglected area of youth development” and suggested that 4-H could better help children and adolescents if it partnered with other organizations within the community. Such critique did not, however, shape the overall direction of 4-H club work within North Carolina. Although the organization did rename its recreation project Leisure Education in 1976, it did not engage in major recreation campaigns in the latter half of the decade. As 4-H endeavored to meet the challenges it faced in remaining relevant and attracting members in an age of agricultural decline,

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<sup>21</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 208; Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930-1965* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 90, 140.

recreation remained one of several areas that the organization wished to someday improve but which was not getting immediate attention.<sup>22</sup>

North Carolina 4-H's character-building efforts were not limited just to recreation; throughout its first five decades the organization strove to influence the spiritual development of 4-H'ers. In spite of the fact that 4-H was established as a secular entity affiliated with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and received its operational funding from federal, state, and county governments, its still deliberately exposed 4-H'ers to Christian principles and teachings. In a variety of settings, agents, state leaders, and guest speakers all promoted Christian views to club members. In doing so, they did not approach 4-H'ers as proselytizers seeking converts, but instead, as fellow believers in a shared faith. Tying spiritual development to the "heart" H, state leadership contended that incorporating Christian principles into club activities fit within 4-H's vision for its work with youth. This was a similar stance to that held by the overall North Carolina Extension Service, which in addition to improved farming practices, wanted to, among other things, cultivate "finer spiritual values" within the state's rural population. As a result, Extension praised 4-H's efforts at promoting a

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<sup>22</sup> North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Davidson County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 16-17, 19; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Gates County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 26; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Granville County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 30; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Graham County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 21; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help North Carolina Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 150; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Catawba County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 21; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Lenoir County Grow* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 18.

Christian message, viewing this achievement as a source of pride in its work with young people. By 2012, national 4-H policy specifically banned clubs from promoting one religion over another, though “neutral or nondenominational prayer” was still permitted. Religious instruction never dominated youth club work within the state, as agents focused primarily on providing instruction and guidance related to 4-H project activity, but religion did factor into 4-H’s larger plans for its efforts in North Carolina.<sup>23</sup>

One of the most widespread ways in which the organization promoted Christian messages to its club members was through the annual observance of 4-H Church Sunday, a practice that began in North Carolina in 1939. The event was fully supported by the national 4-H office, which organized its own national Church Sunday each year and encouraged all state offices to participate as well. The practice evolved from Rural Life Sunday, a day set aside by assorted Christian groups to raise awareness of the importance of religion to rural Americans. To prepare for 4-H Church Sunday, local agents and 4-H’ers in county leadership positions contacted community ministers to request their congregations’ involvement on a predetermined Sunday each May, during which services at participating churches would include at least some reference to 4-H clubs. To assist ministers with this event, the state office developed 4-H Church Sunday programs providing suggestions on how the day might be observed, including ways to link the sermon for that particular Sunday to 4-H’s theme for the year, relevant passages of

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<sup>23</sup> “North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 [4-H Club Work],” 15; “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1953 [Administration],” 1, Box 8, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Annual Reports; United States Department of Agriculture, “4-H National Headquarters Fact Sheet: 4-H and Religion,” *USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture*, [http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/family/res/pdfs/Religion\\_2011.pdf](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/family/res/pdfs/Religion_2011.pdf) (accessed July 31, 2012).

Christian scripture, and even a plan for 4-H'ers to assist with conducting the church service. A North Carolina minister assisted with preparing the program. The USDA also sent out suggestions.<sup>24</sup>

Despite state leadership's emphasis of the fact that clergy were free to adjust and adapt the program to their individual needs, the sample service revealed that 4-H officials wanted club members to play a major participating role in Church Sunday activities. The sample guide distributed proposed that ministers allow 4-H'ers to sit in the pulpit with them, to possibly lead prayers, and read passages of scripture to the congregation. If the minister was willing to completely turn the service over to 4-H'ers, the guide suggested he allow them to give three "brief talks" to the congregation. While attending the service, state leaders encouraged club members to wear their 4-H uniforms in place of traditional church attire and to sit together. Early guides for Church Sunday also proposed that ministers permit members to give a brief demonstration to the congregation on 4-H. Not all proposals required 4-H youth to act in such leadership roles. They might also supply decorative flowers, give choral performances, collect the weekly monetary offering (which went to the church and not 4-H), or serve as ushers.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina [1939 4-H Annual Report]," 73-74, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1000>; "Purpose of National 4-H Sunday," Carton 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work]," 33.

<sup>25</sup> "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina [1939 4-H Annual Report]," 73-74; "4-H Church Sunday, May 26, 1946," Carton 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "4-H Church Sunday, May 18, 1952," 6, Carton 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

County and state agents had several goals they wanted to achieve through Church Sunday. To begin with, they wanted club members more devoted to their individual spiritual growth. Agents never expressed concerns that the souls of 4-H'ers were in danger, but instead, stressed the importance of spirituality to personal development and character building. Leadership contended that pushing club members to focus on spiritual matters was crucially linked to club members becoming well-rounded individuals, and argued that without it, "other [personal] growth is abnormal." Agents also believed that as 4-H'ers gave "more serious attention to the matter of their spiritual development" as a result of Church Sunday, they would more regularly attend church throughout the year. Additionally, leaders hoped that Church Sunday would not simply get club members in the pews more frequently but also make them "realize their own responsibilities to the church of their choice," thereby taking a more active role within their respective congregations. This approach reflected the stance of L.R. Harrill, who asserted that he was "proud to speak of religious convictions" and wanted to encourage club members to take on leadership positions within their churches.<sup>26</sup>

Not all aspects of Church Sunday were related to character building. The event also provided the organization with a way to inform the local community about 4-H club work. Although Harrill denied that Church Sunday was meant to be a promotional activity, the fact that club members were expected to attend wearing 4-H uniforms, that

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<sup>26</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1946 [4-H Club Work]," 13, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1007>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1949 [4-H Club Work]," 22, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1010>; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work]," 33; L.R. Harrill, *Memories of 4-H* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina 4-H Development Fund, 1967), 59.

they were encouraged to display a Four-H flag, and that leadership suggested that they provide the “minister with information about 4-H club work for inclusion in his sermon” all represented means by which this event promoted 4-H to the community. Guides for the service also stated that 4-H’ers might take time to publicly acknowledge people in attendance who were adult 4-H volunteers and other ““Friends of 4-H.”” Such recognition would not only promote the organization but had the potential to encourage other adults to become involved with it. The suggested practice of displaying a bulletin board in the church with details about club work also increased public awareness of the organization. Interestingly, Harrill, who had denied that 4-H utilized Church Sunday for promotional purposes, noted after his retirement that the event provided an avenue for congregations to learn about the ““religious leanings’ of 4-H.”” Such messages were carried even to community members who may not have participated in Church Sunday, as local newspapers and radio stations ran stories on the event. Similarly, in at least one year, North Carolinians learned about the event through an information session from a display erected at the state fair.<sup>27</sup>

While one might contend that the Church Sunday focus on 4-H was more informative than promotional, the event still helped to raise positive public awareness of club work. Annual reports stated that the general public, as well as 4-H agents, members,

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<sup>27</sup> “4-H Church Sunday, April 29, 1951,” Carton 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; “Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina [1939 4-H Annual Report],” 73-74; “4-H Church Sunday, May 18, 1952,” 6; “4-H Church Sunday, North Carolina, May 22, 1960,” 5, Carton 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; “4-H Church Sunday [1975],” Carton 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; Harrill, *Memories of 4-H*, 59; “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work], 34, 51, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1011>.

and parents, all expressed strong approval of Church Sunday, which was ultimately beneficial for 4-H's image. Although agents in North Carolina did not report opposition to 4-H from religious leaders, in some states clergy members criticized it for drawing young people's attention to secular matters and away from religion. North Carolina 4-H's heavy emphasis on Church Sunday ensured that local religious leaders would be aware of the Christian aspects of club work, especially since agents, adult volunteers, and club members all directly involved local clergy in these services.<sup>28</sup>

By its design, 4-H Church Sunday had a Christian focus, although it never emphasized one denomination over another. The national 4-H office's initial goal for the observance was "to emphasize the meaning of Christianity in rural life." At the state level, a 1941 North Carolina 4-H Church Sunday guide contended that "4-H club work links the home and the church in Christian living." Just over two decades later in 1963, the organization still presented the event as exclusively Christian, maintaining that its purpose was to "help broaden the influence of the Christian Church in the Community, State, Nation and World." As late as 2004, the event continued to maintain a Christian focus, with state leaders stressing that Church Sunday allowed 4-H'ers to experience "Christian fellowship." Such an emphasis fit with the event's Rural Life Sunday origins but did not take into consideration or accommodate the religious beliefs and practices of

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<sup>28</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1946 [4-H Club Work]," 13; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report 1947 [4-H Club Work]," 18, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1008>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1948 [4-H Club Work]," 16, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1009>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1949 [4-H Club Work]," 22; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1956 [4-H Club Work]," 44, 52, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1017>; Kett, 251.



4-H'ers who were not Christian. Club members were apparently not penalized for failing to participate in 4-H Church Sunday, but the observance clearly represented an example of the organization promoting Christianity to its members.<sup>29</sup>

While Church Sunday demonstrated perhaps one of the most coordinated efforts to reach all of the state's club members with a Christian message, it was not the only way by which North Carolina 4-H did so. The annual Short Course, later known as the Club Congress and eventually as Club Camp Week, functioned as another opportunity to communicate Christian teachings to club members through its daily format. Although variations took place over the decades, from the 1920s through the 1970s, the young people attending this week-long meeting for high performing 4-H'ers were typically exposed to morning devotional services, evening vesper programs, or both, which were formally incorporated into the daily itineraries for the event. Although the structure of morning devotionals and evening vespers varied, they both presented Christian themes to club members. Morning devotionals were typically conducted by an adult, often a clergy member, who might employ a sermon format when addressing 4-H'ers. For example, in 1961, Albert Edwards, Presbyterian minister from Raleigh, gave a talk on prayer, underscoring the different individuals for whom he believed club members should pray, while referencing passages from the book of Philippians. Evening vespers in many instances were also carried out by adults, although in some cases club members instead

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<sup>29</sup> "Purpose of National 4-H Sunday;" "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Narrative Report and Statistical Summary 4-H Club Work 1941," 58; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report 4-H Club Work 1963," 34, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1024>; North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, "Why We Observe 4-H Church Sunday," *North Carolina State University*, <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fourh/old/extension/marketing/sunday5.php> (accessed July 8, 2011).

led the services. The format for vespers varied both nightly as well as annually. One evening at the 1932 Short Course, 4-H'ers watched a live enactment of a Bible story. During the 1940 meeting, however, Boyce Brooks, a Baptist minister and former 4-H'er, conducted the vesper program much like a traditional sermon, speaking to club members "on the lifting power of Jesus." Seven years later, a vesper service involved a sermon as well as 4-H'ers singing Christian hymns, including "Beneath the Cross" and "In the Cross of Christ I Glory," with an illuminated cross for decoration. In 1958, the Club Congress attendees from Durham County conducted the vesper program, which featured both a religious talk as well as prayer. Although an occasional guest speaker might briefly include religious messages while addressing club members attending the Short Course, the morning devotionals and evening vespers were the primary means through which North Carolina 4-H communicated Christian messages to members at this event.<sup>30</sup>

Leaders and agents utilized similar techniques in attempts to shape the spiritual development of club members attending assorted camping opportunities provided by North Carolina 4-H. As with Church Sunday and the annual Short Course, camp staff equated spirituality with Christianity. Primarily through the use of vesper services and talks given by leaders, the organization ensured that 4-H'ers, both black and white,

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<sup>30</sup> Harrill, "Annual Report of 4-H Club Work, January 1, 1926 to December 1, 1926," 7; Ethel Allen, "Some of Dr. Edwards [sic] Thoughts on 4-H," *Clover Leaves*, July 25, 1972, 2, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/290>; "Morning Thought," *Clover Leaves*, July 25, 1961, 6, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/341>; L.R. Harrill, "Annual Report of 4-H Club Work, December 1, 1931 to December 1, 1932," 9, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1031>; Virginia Powell, [Untitled], *Tar Heel Club News IX*, no 4 (1940): 2, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/414>; Jean Boney, "Vesper Service," *Tar Heel Club News X*, no. 4 (1947): 2, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/416>; Tina Jordan, "Vespers," *Clover Leaves XIX*, (1957): 4, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/336>; "Rickenbacker Warns America to Retain World Leadership," Carton 9, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

received Christian instruction while at the camps. L.R. Harrill viewed evening vesper services as an integral part of the organization's recreational camping program, arguing that they greatly affected club members' "spiritual growth and development." The methods by which 4-H agents and leaders incorporated a Christian ethos in camping varied from year to year. For the most part, campers simply participated in or led vesper services like those held at the Short Course. As early as 1927, the state 4-H office noted the importance of having such a service each evening for campers, and the practice persisted into the 1970s. At other times, however, such as with the 1939 camping program for African Americans, club members attended formal worship services at a local church located near the camp. A 1957 ceremony at the newly-constructed Camp Mitchell involved the dedication of the camp "to the glory of God the Father, to the honor of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to the praise of the Holy Spirit" by Reverend Cleo M. McCoy. Religious instruction never came close to dominating 4-H camping, but it was included for at least five decades.<sup>31</sup>

While agents incorporated vesper services into recreational camping, they also held them at other encampments, including the annual Forestry Camp and the Wildlife

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<sup>31</sup> L.R. Harrill, "4-H Camping in North Carolina," Box 7, L. R. Harrill Papers; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1954," 22; "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual Report 1947 [4-H Club Work]," 11, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1008>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report 4-H Club Work 1963," 50, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1024>; L.R. Harrill, "Four-H Club Camps [Extension Circular No. 164, February, 1927]," 16, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/323>; "Narrative Report Regular State 4-H Club Camp and YMW Conference (June 2-22, 1952)," 1, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/280>; North Carolina 4-H Staff, "North Carolina 4-H Youth Progress Report, Fiscal Year 1976," 9; "Negro 4-H Club Mirror [1939]," 5, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/212>; "Dedication Exercises 4-H Club Camp," *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/205>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report 4-H Club Work 1963," 50, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1024>.

Conservation Conference, a practice which spanned multiple decades and extended into the 1970s. The emphasis on nature at these types of camps provided agents with a way to connect the material studied to religious messages. At the Wildlife Conservation Conference, agents often asserted that the natural resources and wildlife that club members studied during daily sessions were parts of God's creation, and as such, warranted protection and stewardship. When addressing a group of club members at the start of the 1942 conference, for example, L.R. Harrill began by emphasizing the point that the natural environment and the animals within it were gifts from God, which humans had a responsibility to protect. Vesper services at the Wildlife Conservation Conference directly communicated a Christian message, as Christian imagery, such as an illuminated cross, was sometimes utilized as decoration. In 1954, the emphasis on Christian principles was so great that an unidentified club member noted that, in addition to receiving instruction about wildlife and the conservation of natural resources, 4-H'ers had learned "how to be a better Christian." Such messages came through at other types of overnight meetings. At the 1973 Teen and Junior Leader Retreat, agents organizing the event scheduled a session for club members entitled "A Time for God." As with recreational camping, the emphasis on providing some type of religious message to 4-H'ers was constant at these other camping events, a practice agents believed would help with club members' overall spiritual growth, but did not dominate the programming.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> "Forestry Camp [1975]," Box 7, North Carolina State University, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; "Seventh Annual Wildlife Conservation Camp for Negro 4-H Club Members, June 9-14, 1947," *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/225>; "North Carolina 4-H Wildlife Conservation Conference, August 5-9, 1963," *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/237>; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1953," 22; L.R. Harrill, "Conservation," Box 5, L. R. Harrill Papers; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1954," 27,

In addition to guiding recreational choices and spiritual expression, North Carolina 4-H engaged in character building, even from its earliest years, through efforts at cultivating in club members what leaders and agents viewed as appropriate attitudes and behaviors pertaining to citizenship. Although the organization never established a formal definition of the citizenship qualities it wanted to foster in 4-H'ers, over the decades it promoted several themes and actions as crucial to the development of good citizenship. Initially stressing the importance of community service and developing good interpersonal skills, the organization's focus shifted during World War II when citizenship training instead turned to promoting the cultivation of patriotic views and actions in 4-H'ers. In the postwar period, 4-H leadership broadened the scope of citizenship programming, encouraging club members to not only be active within their local communities but to also take an interest in state and federal government, as well as in foreign affairs. Its emphasis on citizenship training only intensified in the 1970s, as the organization attempted to combat what it viewed as a decline in patriotism and civic awareness among young people. It was also during this period that agents were most critical of youth, expressing concerns in line with those of the larger America population.

From 1926 through the end of the 1930s, North Carolina 4-H's efforts at cultivating appropriate citizenship values and practices in its club members were relatively minimal, especially when compared with its efforts in the decades that followed. Perhaps reflecting the isolationist sentiment and apathy toward other countries

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*GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1015>; "Teen & Junior Leader Retreat, Betsy-Jeff Penn 4-H Camp, March 16-18, 1973," Carton 15, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

that characterized American public opinion throughout the interwar years, 4-H did not emphasize the United States' role in foreign affairs or how the country differed from other nations. Instead, citizenship activities during these early years focused primarily on local concerns, encouraging club members to perform community service activities, fostering improved social skills in 4-H'ers, and cultivating a sense of community pride. During this period state leadership believed that citizenship training should be part of the organization's long term-goals for club members. As a result, efforts in the 1920s and 1930s typically did not focus on having 4-H'ers complete a single project in citizenship or including it as a formal part of club work. Instead, agents and leaders incorporated elements of citizenship training within other aspects of 4-H's work.<sup>33</sup>

Just as with recreation and spirituality, 4-H staff in the 1920s and 1930s utilized events and activities like the annual Short Course and camping as venues to provide citizenship training to club members. Instruction at these gatherings took on a variety of formats. Black and white home agents, for example, might offer courses to both boys and girls in "social courtesies" and table manners, as well as present a required session in "Getting Along With Each Other," which was held at the 1939 white Short Course. Although such training might initially appear unrelated to cultivating behaviors linked with good citizenship, Jane McKimmon, who helped establish club work for girls and oversaw all home demonstration work for the North Carolina Extension Service through

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<sup>33</sup> Harrill, "Annual Report of 4-H Club Work, December 1, 1929 to December 1, 1930," 36; "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina [1939 4-H Annual Report]," 2, 28; David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People In Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 386, 387, 393.

the mid-1940s, contended that these exercises were useful in helping club members learn “consideration for others” in addition to social behaviors.<sup>34</sup>

Camp and Short Course activities included elements of citizenship training that extended beyond improving social interactions. Four-H’ers attending the Short Course often began each morning of the weeklong event with a flag-raising exercise. White club members who attended the Short Course in Raleigh might also go on sightseeing tours of state government sites, including the State Capitol and the Governor’s Mansion. The program for a 1938 camp held for white club members from Hoke and Harnett Counties promoted the development of rural pride and community-mindedness through the “Country Girl’s Creed,” which encouraged not loyalty to the United States in general, but instead, to “my country home” and expressed a desire to “unite country people far and near.” State leaders in this era felt that the camping program was useful in cultivating good citizenship in club members. Leaders also believed that the experiences club members had at events like the Short Course, including those focused on citizenship training, could help 4-H’ers “be able to make a worthwhile contribution to the welfare of their community.” As with recreation, agents expected attendees to take the lessons they learned back to their home clubs.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>L.R. Harrill, “Narrative and Statistical Summary of 4-H Club Work December 1, 1937 to November 30, 1937 [sic],” 12, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/998>; “Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina [1939 4-H Annual Report],” 28, 61; McKimmon, 310.

<sup>35</sup> L.R. Harrill, “Annual Report of 4-H Club Work December 1, 1933 to December 1, 1934,” 10-11, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/995>; L.R. Harrill, “Narrative Report and Statistical Summary of 4-H Club Work December 1, 1937 to November 30, 1938,” 65, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/999>; Harrill, “Annual Report of 4-H Club Work, December 1, 1926 to December 1, 1927,” 14.

Opportunities for citizenship training in the early decades of 4-H work were not limited to camp and the Short Course. Although available only for a single year, the organization introduced in 1930 a community project that encouraged participants to engage in activities that served the needs of their local neighborhoods, including the “beautification of school grounds, serving hot school lunches, [and providing] community recreation.” State leadership argued that such activities helped 4-H’ers become better citizens as they “create[d] community pride and cooperation on the part of the club member.” Despite the limited duration of this particular project, community service would resurface in the following decades as an important part of club work. North Carolina 4-H continued to stress the theme of service as a part of citizenship training when it established 4-H Service Clubs in 1936 for older youth. In this particular instance, however, 4-H’ers provided service to agents working with younger club members rather than to their communities. As with the community project, these service clubs only lasted a single year, as they simply became clubs for young adults in 1937. Though short-lived, both the community project and the service clubs represent 4-H’s early development of a sense of citizenship more focused on the local rather than the national level.<sup>36</sup>

World War II marked a major turning point in 4-H citizenship training, with this element of club work taking on far greater importance than in previous decades as leaders and agents, responding to the United States’ role in the conflict, endeavored to foster

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<sup>36</sup> Harrill, “Annual Report of 4-H Club Work, December 1, 1929 to December 1, 1930,” 30; L.R. Harrill, “Annual Report of 4-H Club Work December 1, 1935 to December 1, 1936,” 11, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/997>; Harrill, “Narrative and Statistical Summary of 4-H Club Work December 1, 1937 to November 30, 1937 [sic],” 18-20.



patriotic sentiment and behavior among club members. As during the 1920s and 1930s, 4-H workers were not critical of young people's citizenship practices and patriotism, but they did believe that the crisis of war created a situation in which young people needed greater awareness of these themes. Even before the United States entered World War II, North Carolina 4-H intensified and altered the nature of its citizenship training. At the 1940 white Short Course, agents focused on subjects that they underscored in the past, such as interpersonal skills, but they, along with guest speakers, focused more heavily on what they viewed as positive aspects of American democracy and society, as well as ways in which club members could aid their country. Four-H'ers could do so, for example, by keeping their bodies healthy so that they could "lead a useful life and be an honor to... [their] country." Leadership explained that this change was necessitated because "our troubled world needs clearer minds, loyal courageous hearts, well directed labor and sound strong bodies to preserve our nations [sic] democracy." In response to global developments, 4-H replaced much of the local character of citizenship education with a more national focus.<sup>37</sup>

The desire to include more patriotic elements into the structure of 4-H continued to grow after the entry of the United States into World War II. By the end of 1941, state leaders worked to more fully incorporate patriotic citizenship training into almost all aspects of club work for both black and white youth. Agents accomplished this objective through a variety of measures, many of which were implemented in regular club

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<sup>37</sup> "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual Report 1940 [4-H Club Work]," 64, 66, 67, 73, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1001>.

meetings, including altering the format to make time for recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and playing patriotic music. The topic of citizenship arose more frequently at the Raleigh Short Course that same year, with a variety of speakers, including North Carolina governor J. Melville Broughton, who addressed club members on the subject of being good citizens. Club members “of citizenship age” attending the Short Course took an oath, developed by the Federal Extension Service, in front of an assembly of 4-H’ers, which emphasized voting, community improvement, and resisting tyranny. The summer camping program also changed as, in addition to the continuation of the regular flag-raising ceremony, some campers also received training in marksmanship, perhaps as part of an effort to help prepare them for an anticipated entrance of the nation into the war.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout the duration of the United States’ involvement in World War II, North Carolina 4-H carried on its promotion of patriotism in club members and also worked to provide them with a degree of civic education. The organization continued to incorporate elements like the Pledge of Allegiance and patriotic music at 4-H gatherings. It also carried out citizenship and flag ceremonies at 4-H camps to emphasize loyalty and “proper respect for the flag.” During the 1942 4-H Mobilization Week, a period set aside to increase membership and motivate 4-H’ers to support the war effort, state leadership encouraged agents to “stress Americanism” and “build morale and loyalty” among both old and new club members, although they failed to provide agents with specific guidance on how such an undertaking should be accomplished. While agents

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<sup>38</sup> “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Narrative Report and Statistical Summary 4-H Club Work 1941,” 7-8; “The 4-H Citizenship Oath,” Carton 10, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

likely utilized previously mentioned methods, they might also have relied on formal and informal publications produced by both the North Carolina Extension Service and Extension services in other states that provided brief overviews of American history, along with discussions of what democracy was, how it functioned, and why it was a desirable form of government. Some of these publications additionally stressed the importance of farming in developing the American way of life. In this way, agents using these materials could foster both patriotic sentiment and rural pride.<sup>39</sup>

While promoting patriotism and civic awareness were important components of club work during World War II, North Carolina 4-H viewed food production and conservation as its most important goals during this period. The organization tied such activities to good citizenship, telling club members that by cultivating and conserving extra food during the war, they were contributing to the United States' military success. In 1941 the organization informed club members attending the Short Course that they had responsibilities on the farm in a time of crisis, and in 1942 it took this theme further, equating increased food production with service to one's country. That year 4-H launched an initiative called the Victory Garden Campaign, designed to promote a greater number of garden projects among club members. Leadership encouraged agents to stress

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<sup>39</sup> "Wildlife Conservation Conference for Negro 4-H Club Youth, July 27-30, 1942," *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/223>; I.O. Schaub, "Report of the Committee on Citizenship Training for Rural Youth and Adults," 7, Carton 10; North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual Report 1942 [4-H Club Work]," 7, 13, 34, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1003>; "Major Factors to be Considered in Our Wartime 4-H Club Program," Carton 10, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "Training for Citizenship in a Democracy: Topic III – Government in a Democracy," Carton 10, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; "Discussion Topic Outline for Presenting 'Our American Inheritance,'" Carton 10, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

the importance of gardens at regular club meetings through several methods, including short skits. One such production, entitled “Garden Sass,” featured assorted garden vegetables, discussing both their nutritional benefits as well as how their cultivation would assist with the war effort, since the items could be fed to soldiers. Four-H’ers in Vance County participated in a victory parade in which they carried gardening implements and fresh or canned food to demonstrate their contributions to the war effort.

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The emphasis on wartime food production only intensified in 1943, when North Carolina 4-H introduced the “Feed a Fighter” program, the goal of which was for club members to produce or can enough food to feed a soldier for a year. The program was so successful in generating surplus food that the Maritime Commission and the North Carolina Shipbuilding Company allowed 4-H’ers to christen two new cargo ships, the USS *Tyrell* and the SS *Cassius Hudson*, named for Tyrell County and North Carolina’s first white Extension agent, respectively. In 1944, 4-H continued promoting food production, telling prospective club members that “food is a weapon of war.” Regardless of whether club members were engaged in official initiatives like Feed a Fighter and the

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<sup>40</sup> “Major Factors to be Considered in Our Wartime 4-H Club Program,” 1, Carton 10, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Narrative Report and Statistical Summary 4-H Club Work 1941,” 47; “Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual report 1942 [4-H Club Work],” 7, 13, 34; “Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual report 1943 [4-H Club Work],” 21, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1004>; “North Carolina 4-H Club Members Honor First Farm Agent,” *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/273>; “Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual report 1944 [4-H Club Work],” 31, 56, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1005>; “Join the 4-H Victory Army,” Carton 10, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

Victory Garden Campaign or simply taking on regular agricultural projects, 4-H staff continued to link food production to civic duty throughout World War II.<sup>41</sup>

Agents and state leaders equated other activities related to club work with the kinds of actions undertaken by patriotic American citizens during a time of war. One such way that they did so was through the promotion of improved nutritional practices. With initiatives like “Eat Three Meals a Day the Victory Way,” agents encouraged all club members to consume balanced diets as part of an effort to strengthen their bodies, while connecting such practices to aiding the war effort. Maintaining good physical conditioning was important for several reasons. The emphasis on improved dietary practices could help make older 4-H boys more physically fit and better prepared for potential military service. A balanced diet could also assist in keeping club members strong for performing the physical labor needed to produce the additional food required during the war. North Carolina 4-H encouraged its members to contribute to the overall war effort by collecting scrap resources, including metal, paper, and grease. Four-H’ers living on farms could also participate in the farm scrap drive, which encouraged participants to donate old farm equipment, or “heavy scrap,” for use in wartime construction needs. Additionally, the organization pushed club members to purchase war

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<sup>41</sup> “Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual report 1943 [4-H Club Work],” 21, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1004>; “North Carolina 4-H Club Members Honor First Farm Agent,” *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/273>; “Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual report 1944 [4-H Club Work],” 31, 56, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1005>; “Join the 4-H Victory Army,” Carton 10, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records.

bonds, even suggesting that 4-H'ers use profits made from selling food grown for Feed a Fighter to do so.<sup>42</sup>

The emphasis on cultivating a sense of citizenship and civic duty among club members continued after the end of World War II, though less intensely. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly in the postwar period, North Carolina 4-H did not respond to the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union in its citizenship training with the same degree of urgency that had been present during World War II. In fact much of the training during this period focused more on fostering awareness and behaviors that would make 4-H'ers well-rounded and responsible individuals who could better serve their communities as adults than on vilifying the Soviet Union or promoting anticommunist sentiment. Some 4-H'ers did learn about rural civil defense practices, an initiative launched by both federal and state Extension to help protect food supplies in the event of a nuclear attack, and at the 1969 Club Congress a guest speaker gave a talk to attendees entitled, "How Communists Operate in the United States." Such topics, though, were mentioned far less in reports on citizenship training than those pertaining to community service. Several factors might explain this reserved approach to elements of the Cold War. A large part of what made World War II so prevalent within club work was the federal government's call for increased agricultural production to aid the war effort. During the Cold War, no similar initiatives took place, thereby making it a less pressing issue for Extension agents. Additionally, though fears over nuclear attacks and

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<sup>42</sup> "Eat Three Meals a Day the Victory Way," Box 3, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual report 1942 [4-H Club Work]," 5; "Agricultural Extension Service State of North Carolina Annual report 1943 [4-H Club Work]," 26, 28-31.

communist infiltration were definitely present in the postwar United States, many regular people were less concerned with these threats and more preoccupied with developments that affected their daily lives, such as increased economic inflation. Regardless of the cause, direct acknowledgement of the Cold War occurred rarely in official 4-H reports.<sup>43</sup>

One of the most notable postwar changes to citizenship training in North Carolina 4-H was the introduction of a citizenship project and award, which was first offered to white club members in 1948. This project, which provided dual awards each year to the top performing boy and girl, endeavored to “give emphasis to those attitudes, qualities, and acts which reflect a good citizen’s concern for the welfare of parents, neighbors, [club] members, and for civic activities affecting the 4-H Club, community, and country.” Although leadership did not specifically define what “attitudes, qualities, and acts” it expected club members to hold and pursue, the citizenship project allowed club members to participate in more varied activities to demonstrate their civic engagement than had been possible during World War II, when wartime supply needs kept 4-H’ers focused on food production and resource conservation.<sup>44</sup>

The activities of 4-H’ers who won state-level awards for their work in the citizenship project revealed which traits and behaviors North Carolina 4-H viewed as

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<sup>43</sup> “1966 State 4-H Club Week,” Box 53, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; “1967 State 4-H Club Week,” Box 53, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; “1968 State 4-H Club Week,” Box 53, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; “Dialogue with Youth: North Carolina 4-H Congress [1969],” Carton 9, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; Peter Filene, “‘Cold War Culture’ Doesn’t Say it All,” in *Rethinking Cold War Culture* eds. Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2010), 157, 159, 160, 169.

<sup>44</sup> “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1948 [4-H Club Work],” 35; “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1949 [4-H Club Work],” 42.

representative of good citizenship. Leaders and agents tended to promote increased civic awareness, public service, and assistance to others as desirable characteristics linked to citizenship development. Winning club members sometimes completed the project by learning about government at the local, state, and national levels, or by encouraging people in their communities to vote. At the same time, though, they could assist agents in their local clubs to complete the project, or engage in outreach to inform the public about elements of good citizenship by giving talks or setting up displays at the state fair. Club members might engage in community service or charitable activities, such as reading to the blind, donating second-hand clothes to the poor, or assisting younger children recovering from polio. In spite of the fact that state leadership believed citizenship training to be an important part of overall club work, only white club members could win awards in this category until 4-H clubs integrated in the mid-1960s. Though officially agents linked disparity in awards between the African American and white programs to problems with securing financial sponsorship for prizes, the 1950s were also an era in which southern blacks were treated as inferior to whites, often unable to engage in all elements of American citizenship, such as voting. While the lack of a citizenship award for African American 4-H'ers may not have been part of a targeted effort to reinforce the larger societal trends, it definitely reflected them. The citizenship project remained part of 4-H programming even after the 1970s.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> “North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1949 [4-H Club Work],” 42; “North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work],” 66; “North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 [4-H Club Work],” 40; “North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1955 [4-H Club Work],” 41, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/1016>; “1979-80 4H [sic] Project Selection Sheet,” 2, Box 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.



Although the citizenship project represented one of the most recognizable methods utilized by North Carolina 4-H to foster what it viewed as desirable civic values and behaviors in club members, throughout the 1940s and 1950s the organization strove to cultivate such attributes in other, more subtle ways. State leaders equated general project activity with citizenship development, contending that beyond learning improved farming and homemaking techniques, project work helped 4-H'ers become "citizens who will... [contribute] to the social, economic, physical and spiritual welfare of the community where they live." L.R Harrill believed that project and demonstration work were tied to character building in 4-H'ers as such activities, regardless of the subject, had the potential to foster both sportsmanship as well as "personal improvement" in club members competing in different project categories. Leaders in the African American program echoed this sentiment, arguing that projects that had produced no direct monetary gain, such as wildlife and soil conservation, still had great value as they assisted club members in their development as better citizens.<sup>46</sup>

Citizenship training occurred in areas of club work entirely removed from projects. Four-H staff believed that the structure of the camping program promoted citizenship, since campers elected captains to oversee their activities and duties while at camp. Leaders noted that campers not only engaged in recreation at camp but also had certain responsibilities, including work details to help clean the camp and leading evening programs each night. Organized recreation helped promote sportsmanship as

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<sup>46</sup> "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work]," 12; Harrill, *Memories of 4-H*, 53, 59; "North Carolina State Club Leader (Negro) Annual Report 1945," 11.

well. Agents stressed elements of citizenship, including obeying regulations and preserving natural resources for future generations, at events like the annual Wildlife Conference. Although open to only a very small minority of club members, the International Farm Youth Exchange (IFYE) served as another avenue for citizenship development. Beginning in 1948 for whites and 1954 for African Americans, agents selected one boy and one girl from the state's entire 4-H membership to go abroad and live with a farm family in another country to both learn international farming techniques, and share their own training from 4-H. At the same time, youth from other nations also traveled to the United States for a similar purpose. Leadership contended that IFYE helped foster better international understanding and relations, not just for the 4-H'ers and host families directly participating in the program, but also for the club members and community groups who would hear about the experiences of IFYE delegates at the public talks they gave upon return. Established during the early stages of the Cold War, Extension officials behind IFYE hoped that the "delegates would be ambassadors of goodwill" for the United States. The IFYE program continued in the decades following the 1940s and 1950s, with 4-H'ers participating into the twenty-first century.<sup>47</sup>

While IFYE delegates tended to travel to nations on friendly terms with the United States, an exchange did take place between the United States and the Soviet

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<sup>47</sup> "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1950 [4-H Club Work]," 14, 15; "North Carolina Annual Extension Service Annual Report for 1952 [4-H Club Work]," 16; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1954," 27-28; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1948 [4-H Club Work]," 25; "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report for 1954 [Negro 4-H Club Work]," 35; International 4-H Youth Exchange, "The Adventure of a Lifetime," International 4-H Youth Exchange, <http://www.ifyeusa.org/exchange/index.html> (accessed August 30, 2011); Thomas Wessel and Marilyn Wessel, *4-H: An American Idea, 1900-1980* (Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Council, 1982), 148.

Union in 1975. Technically not a part of IFYE, the 4-H Young Agricultural Specialists Exchange Program, as this initiative was known, differed from IFYE in several ways. To begin with, the fifteen delegates selected to attend were older, either in their junior or senior years of college or recent graduates, who had participated in 4-H during their youth. Those who went not only lived with host families, but also received training at agricultural colleges. The purpose of the exchange also diverged somewhat from IFYE, as Soviet coordinators focused more heavily on sharing technical details related to agricultural science rather than on promoting cultural understanding. One of the fifteen American delegates chosen, Kathy M. Kinton, was from North Carolina.<sup>48</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s, North Carolina 4-H drew on a variety of techniques, both old and new, to shape citizenship in club members. In many instances, the organization relied on elements of citizenship training from earlier decades, including citizenship projects, talks from guest speakers, and participation in IFYE. In this same period, though, citizenship training and education for 4-H'ers underwent several changes, many of which were related to an expansion in projects and activities offered. As a result, the organization continued to promote a broad approach to citizenship, emphasizing not only awareness of state and federal government as part of its curriculum, but also encouraging 4-H'ers to learn more about international affairs, community needs and service opportunities, and interpersonal skills. In the 1970s, North Carolina 4-H added a new citizenship project called International Intrigue to raise 4-H'ers' awareness of global

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<sup>48</sup> Wessel and Wessel, 156-158; "News From U.S. Delegates to the Soviet Union on the 4-H – U.S. –U.S.S.R. Young Agricultural Specialists Exchange Program," Box 1, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

issues. It also introduced the Citizenship in Action program in 1973, in which club members worked as a team to formulate community service projects to both aid their neighborhoods and enhance existing 4-H citizenship training. This program expanded in 1978 when *Reader's Digest* extended financial sponsorship to winning projects in North Carolina. Reflecting North Carolina 4-H's emphasis on education and local community involvement, winners for that year designed projects to increase citizenship training for teenagers in special workshops, as well as start a local radio program and newspaper column devoted to providing residents with information on public affairs and community resources. The organization also implemented other community-focused projects and activities, including a group-based service project. The United States Bicentennial provided agents with further opportunities to emphasize national civic awareness.<sup>49</sup>

Perhaps the most notable change to North Carolina 4-H's approach to citizenship training in this later period came with the shift of agent attitudes toward young people's actions and views. In previous decades, leadership and agents viewed citizenship training and education as an important part of club members' development to help them become better adults, but, at least publicly, 4-H workers did not focus on deficiencies present among young people in this area. Beginning in the second half of the 1960s, however,

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<sup>49</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report, 4-H Club Work 1965," 14-15, 24, 58, *GNG*, <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/resolver/1840.6/486>; North Carolina 4-H Staff, "North Carolina 4-H Youth Progress Report Fiscal Year 1977: A Concise Assessment of Results and Changes in Important 4-H Program Areas," 6-7, Box 6, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Annual Reports; Pauline E. Moore, "Citizenship in Action," *4-H News*, X, no. 8 (1972): 4, Box 1, North Carolina State University, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; "1978 CIA Grants," 3, Carton 15, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Records; Pauline E. Moore, "Citizenship in Action '78," *4-H News*, XVI, no. 7 (1977): 6, Box 1, North Carolina State University, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications.

agents began to tie the need for increased citizenship education for 4-H'ers to a fundamental shift in the behavior and attitudes of youth. In some instances, agents linked this change to larger societal trends. For example, in 1966, state leadership argued that 4-H'ers needed increased opportunities to learn "social skills and graces," as well as become more involved in community improvement projects, two areas that had been a part of 4-H's citizenship education for decades. In this particular instance, leaders contended that 4-H'ers' lack of training and awareness resulted from larger social forces that essentially denied young people the opportunities to learn needed skills or engage in such activities. Over a decade later, Robeson County agents asserted that young people no longer had faith in government, largely due to a lack of "competent leaders and programs that develop trust in the present social system." Similarly, agents from Alamance County contended that youth's attitudes stemmed from, among other things, what they perceived as family breakdown and an overall moral decline in American society. While these agents believed that 4-H'ers needed training to help them become better citizens, they stressed that youth's failings were largely the fault of adults.<sup>50</sup>

In other instances, though, agents and leaders evaluating the attitudes and behaviors of young people with regard to citizenship came down far more critically on the deficiencies of youth. Part of this critique was motivated by youth actions. In 1971, leadership referenced uncited newspaper headlines reporting that young people were burning draft cards, refusing to say the Pledge of Allegiance, pelting the president with

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<sup>50</sup> "North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service Annual Report 4-H Club Work 1966," 9, 12; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Robeson County Grow*, 20; North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Alamance County Grow*, (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 21, 23.

rocks and eggs, and burning the American flag. Although leaders contended that 4-H could combat such behavior with increased citizenship training, they also firmly placed the blame for these events on those engaging in the behavior. Similarly, other 4-H workers in the decade bemoaned youth's actions and attitudes with regard to citizenship. Agents argued that many young people no longer had proper respect for American government, lacked appropriate patriotic sentiment, needed further training in manners and courtesy, were irresponsible, and were not appreciative enough of democracy and free enterprise. In such instances, agents did not place the blame for these deficiencies on adults or larger societal forces, but instead, took the stance that youth simply had "a lack of values and morals." In this one area, 4-H agents came closest to reflecting twentieth-century mainstream views regarding negative traits in adolescents. Even in these instances, however, agents did not view rebellious young people as an entirely lost cause. Instead, they continued to assert the belief that 4-H could reverse such trends in action and attitudes through its citizenship education programs. While citizenship training represents the area of character development where agents were most critical of young people, agents still did not indicate that they were as panicked as the rest of American society about youth rebelliousness and deviance.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Dan Holler, "A Need for Citizenship Training," *4-H News*, IX, no. 1 (1971): 2, Box 1, North Carolina State University, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Publications; *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Cumberland County Grow*, (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 22; *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Graham County Grow*, 21; *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Lenoir County Grow*, 18; *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Union County Grow*, (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 23-25; *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Wayne County Grow*, 22; *4-Sight: A Plan to Help Pitt County Grow*, (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, 1977), 33.

Throughout its first five decades, North Carolina 4-H strove to not only train farm youth in better agricultural practices but to also train them “in the art of living.” As a result, the organization provided instruction, both formally and informally, in a variety of subjects outside of its original focus on farming to shape the values and behaviors of club members regarding their use of leisure time, religious beliefs and practices, and citizenship. To an extent, this effort coincided with that of other organizations aimed at youth, such as the YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts, whose founding objectives were at least partially tied to shaping the character of their members. Four-H stood out from these groups, however, because it targeted youth and was driven initially by the goal of improving agriculture. Character development was a secondary concern for the organization, yet still had a major influence on its work with youth.

On the whole, the agents and leaders working with 4-H’ers in North Carolina never adopted, at least officially, the negative views of young people held by many American adults throughout the twentieth century. When the organization worked to build desired character traits in its members, for the most part it approached this aspect of club work as a way of assisting young people with their overall growth and development. Agents rarely adopted a combative attitude toward 4-H’ers or youth in general. With the exception of citizenship training in the late 1960s and 1970s, 4-H staff either failed to note club members’ character flaws or contended that any deficiencies that might be present were the fault not of morally corrupt, out-of-control delinquents, but instead, of adults who had failed youth in terms of providing guidance, supervision, and in setting a good example for young people. Although agents did express some anger and criticism

toward what they viewed as a lack of good citizenship in youth during the late 1960s and 1970s, not all agents adopted such critical views and even those who were frustrated contended that 4-H club work had the potential to help better educate and reform young people lacking in this area. While North Carolina 4-H fully believed that youth did need guidance in “the art of living,” its overall attitude toward adolescents remained positive and optimistic, even when much of American society saw only cause for concern.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

By 1980, 4-H club work in North Carolina was noticeably different from the early corn and canning clubs of the 1910s. Forced by economic changes to move away from training young people exclusively in farming and farm homemaking, the organization expanded its offerings to incorporate a variety of projects far removed from agriculture. The end of racially-segregated dual programs meant that black and white 4-H'ers were no longer formally separated from one another. Leadership ended the gender-based restrictions on club work, allowing boys and girls to freely pursue whatever project areas were of interest to them. Even the structure of club meetings had undergone major changes over the decades. No longer did 4-H provide young people with a monthly hour break from their schoolwork. Instead, the organization offered instruction through community clubs, special interest groups, and even via television broadcasts. Though many rural youth, including those living on farms, continued to participate in club work, 4-H now drew members from other parts of the state, such as those residing in urban and suburban locations.

Such changes did not mean, however, that 4-H had completely abandoned its original ideals. The organization continued to incorporate several of the same principles that drove early club work in its later endeavors. While the majority of members might

no longer receive agricultural training, leaders and agents still strove to ensure that the available programming did equip young people with skills that could be of use to them when entering the workforce as adults. Providing structured recreational opportunities for the state's youth remained an important part of North Carolina 4-H's mission, as did other efforts at shaping the character of club members. Even some of the new project areas developed in the 1960s had connections to the organization's agricultural past, as 4-H'ers received instruction in subjects related to plants through science and ornamental gardening activities. Some project categories remained popular with club members regardless of the decade, including those relating to sewing and food preparation.

The social and economic developments taking place both within the South and the United States during the twentieth century posed numerous challenges to North Carolina 4-H. In some instances, the organization responded quickly, eschewing its traditional curriculum and methods in favor of those better suited to meet societal changes and the needs of young people. Four-H's work in adapting to the state's economic shift stands out as a primary example of this kind of rapid response. As early as the late 1950s, leaders realized that it was crucial for clubs to offer young people training in areas completely unrelated to farming. In less than a decade, the organization's curriculum incorporated numerous projects focused on expanded career opportunities as well as new, non-rural recreational activities. Recognizing that traditional club meetings were no longer convenient for many youth and their families, the organization promptly implemented alternative methods for reaching participants, including television broadcasts and special interest groups. In spite of mainstream fears about youth culture, 4-H staff remained

largely supportive of young people, refusing to write off club members as out-of-control deviants, even when agents took issue with some of the actions of adolescents. Though early clubs were largely segregated by sex, 4-H allowed a degree of flexibility with regard to gender roles even in its formative years in order to ensure that the organization was effectively serving its clientele.

In other instances, though, North Carolina 4-H's efforts at adapting to the needs of young people either moved slowly or fell short. The process by which the organization integrated its clubs stands out as one of the areas in which it faltered the most in its service to the state's youth. While 4-H did officially end its segregated dual programs in 1965, it did not push community clubs to actively integrate and instead took advantage of technicalities that enabled voluntary segregation to persist. While doing so likely helped the administration avoid dealing with controversy and conflict during the period of desegregation, ultimately failing to promote meaningful integration resulted in the continued prevalence of single-race clubs fifteen years later. After introducing elements of club work targeted directly at low-income youth in the mid-1960s, North Carolina 4-H remained firmly committed to serving this demographic, even when public opinion largely moved away from supporting antipoverty initiatives. Though well-meaning, however, some of the attitudes and actions of staff members revealed firmly-held views that impoverished children and adolescents were culturally and intellectually different than their more-affluent counterparts. Character-building efforts aimed at developing spirituality in 4-H'ers left essentially no room for any club members who might not follow the Christian faith.

While my exploration of 4-H club work in North Carolina does address many of the developments that took place within the state during the much of the twentieth century, the insights it provides are by no means exhaustive. Further research that focuses more directly on the experiences of club members and their perceptions of the organization's work would add depth to the narrative of 4-H's efforts in North Carolina. Additionally, future studies, especially ones that can make in-depth comparisons between different youth organizations operating in the South, will add to the complexity of the narrative of how adults throughout the twentieth century endeavored to prepare young people for adulthood in a region experiencing fundamental social and economic shifts.

This examination of the changes taking place over time within North Carolina 4-H reveals not only alterations to internal policies but also connects to larger developments transpiring within the state, the South, and the nation. Desiring to stay relevant and fearing a decline in memberships, state leaders were compelled to implement new projects and reach out to different demographics in response to the decline of agriculture as a viable career opportunity within North Carolina. The reduction of the total number of farmers, along with the reliance of more families on the income of two earners, helped erode the traditional gender divisions that had existed within 4-H, as girls no longer exclusively trained to one day become homemakers. Though social norms and state laws initially created a segregated 4-H program within North Carolina, federal legislation, enacted largely due to the efforts of civil rights activists, forced the organization to consolidate its black and white segments, as well as open clubs to all members regardless of race. The work of antipoverty campaigners in the

1960s inspired 4-H leaders to design programming aimed exclusively at young people from low-resource backgrounds. As with many youth organizations originating in the early twentieth century, North Carolina 4-H endeavored to also shape the character of its members. The ways in which it did so reveal changes over the decades in societal attitudes pertaining to adolescents, as well as the values agents and leaders held with regard to recreation, religion, and citizenship.

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