



4-H students in college activities
by Weber H Peterson

A THESIS Submitted to the Graduate Committee in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Agricultural Economics
Montana State University
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Abstract:

The 22nd anniversary of 4-H club work in Montana was celebrated by rural Montana youths during 1937. Records show that about 49,000 boys and girls of Montana have been members of this organization. Many lasting values have accrued to the 4-H boys and girls from the training in building citizens who are better able to live useful, happy lives.

Some of the benefits derived from 4-H training as shown by this study are as follows.

- (1) It was found that 4-H students participated in college activities about 50 per cent more, on the average, than did non-4-H students. This was especially true of 4-H boys.
- (2) The effect of 4-H training is more pronounced in the sophomore and junior years of college than in the freshman and senior years.
- (3) This study shows that longer membership in 4-H club means increased participation in college activities and a slightly higher scholastic standing.
- (4) The percentage of 4-H students participating in nine of the ten groups of college activities was higher than the percentage of non-4-H students participating in the same activities. Those nine groups of activities were: (1) athletics, (2) church, (3) clubs, (4) councils and fraternity offices, (5) debate, dramatics and music, (6) honorary societies, (7) judging teams, (8) service organisations, and (9) student senate. The group of activities that the non-4-H students participated in more than the 4-H students was journalism.
- (5) Fraternity affiliation apparently is a means whereby students participate more in activities. It also has some effect toward a higher Scholastic standing. This is more true of 4-H than of non-4-H fraternity students.
- (6) 4-H students have a slightly, though not a significantly higher scholastic standing than non-4-H students while in college.
- (7) A larger percentage of the 4-H students who were enrolled at Montana State College during the winter quarter of 1937 returned to college the winter quarter of 1938 than did the non-4-H students.

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Submitted to the Graduate Committee
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4-H CLUB STUDENTS IN COLLEGE ACTIVITIES

ABSTRACT

The 22nd anniversary of 4-H club work in Montana was celebrated by rural Montana youths during 1937. Records show that about 49,000 boys and girls of Montana have been members of this organization. Many lasting values have accrued to the 4-H boys and girls from the training in building citizens who are better able to live useful, happy lives.

Some of the benefits derived from 4-H training as shown by this study are as follows:

(1) It was found that 4-H students participated in college activities about 30 per cent more, on the average, than did non-4-H students. This was especially true of 4-H boys.

(2) The effect of 4-H training is more pronounced in the sophomore and junior years of college than in the freshman and senior years.

(3) This study shows that longer membership in 4-H club means increased participation in college activities and a slightly higher scholastic standing.

(4) The percentage of 4-H students participating in nine of the ten groups of college activities was higher than the percentage of non-4-H students participating in the same activities. Those nine groups of activities were: (1) athletics, (2) church, (3) clubs, (4) councils and fraternity offices, (5) debate, dramatics and music, (6) honorary societies, (7) judging teams, (8) service organizations, and (9) student senate. The group of activities that the non-4-H students participated in more than the 4-H students was journalism.

(5) Fraternity affiliation apparently is a means whereby students participate more in activities. It also has some effect toward a higher scholastic standing. This is more true of 4-H than of non-4-H fraternity students.

(6) 4-H students have a slightly, though not a significantly higher scholastic standing than non-4-H students while in college.

(7) A larger percentage of the 4-H students who were enrolled at Montana State College during the winter quarter of 1937 returned to college the winter quarter of 1938 than did the non-4-H students.

PART I: INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Investigation

This study is designed to compare the college activities of 4-H club college students with those of non-4-H club college students. It is an attempt to arrive at some method of determining the value of 4-H club activity to rural Montana youths.

More specifically, the purposes of this study are:

1: To determine whether young people who have had 4-H experience are more active in college affairs and have a higher scholastic standing than college students who have never belonged to the 4-H organization.

2: To measure, in a general way, the services 4-H club work renders an individual, or a community.

This was done by observing the activity habits of former 4-H members now in college, and of a comparable group of college students who were never members of 4-H clubs. By activity habits is meant joining and taking active part in officially recognized collegiate activities. This was done on the assumption that one of the useful purposes of 4-H clubs is that of "helping rural boys and girls to improve rural farm and home practices and the social life of themselves and of their communities".

Before proceeding into the analysis of the data of this study, it is necessary to note the extent of the 4-H movement in America and Montana and to know something of the nature of 4-H club work, its

aims, and its development from small corn clubs to the largest organization for rural youths in America.

Importance of the 4-H Movement in the United States and Montana

There were over 1,250,000 boys and girls of America who were members of 4-H clubs in 1937. More Montana boys and girls were regularly enrolled in 4-H clubs in the state in 1937 than in any previous year. The 4-H club membership included about 7300 boys and girls supervised by about 1500 voluntary local leaders (see figure 1). 1/ Should not this large number of members alone challenge the interest of even the casual observer?

According to figures released by R. E. Cameron, State 4-H Club Leader, 14 per cent of the eligible farm youths in Montana are members of 4-H clubs. 2/ This figure compares very favorably with that for the United States as a whole, less than eight per cent of the eligible farm youths of the United States being enrolled in 4-H clubs. These figures are for the year 1937. 3/

Over 40 per cent of the students enrolled in the Agriculture and Home Economics courses at Montana State College (spring quarter of 1937) were former 4-H club members. On the basis of a special study, Mr. R. A.

1/ These figures were obtained from records compiled by the State 4-H Club Leader.

2/ By the term "eligible farm youth" is meant the boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 20, the age limits of the 4-H organization.

3/ "4-H Club Work in Montana for 1937", Mimeographed Summary Report for 23rd Annual Conference of Montana Extension Staff, January, 1938.

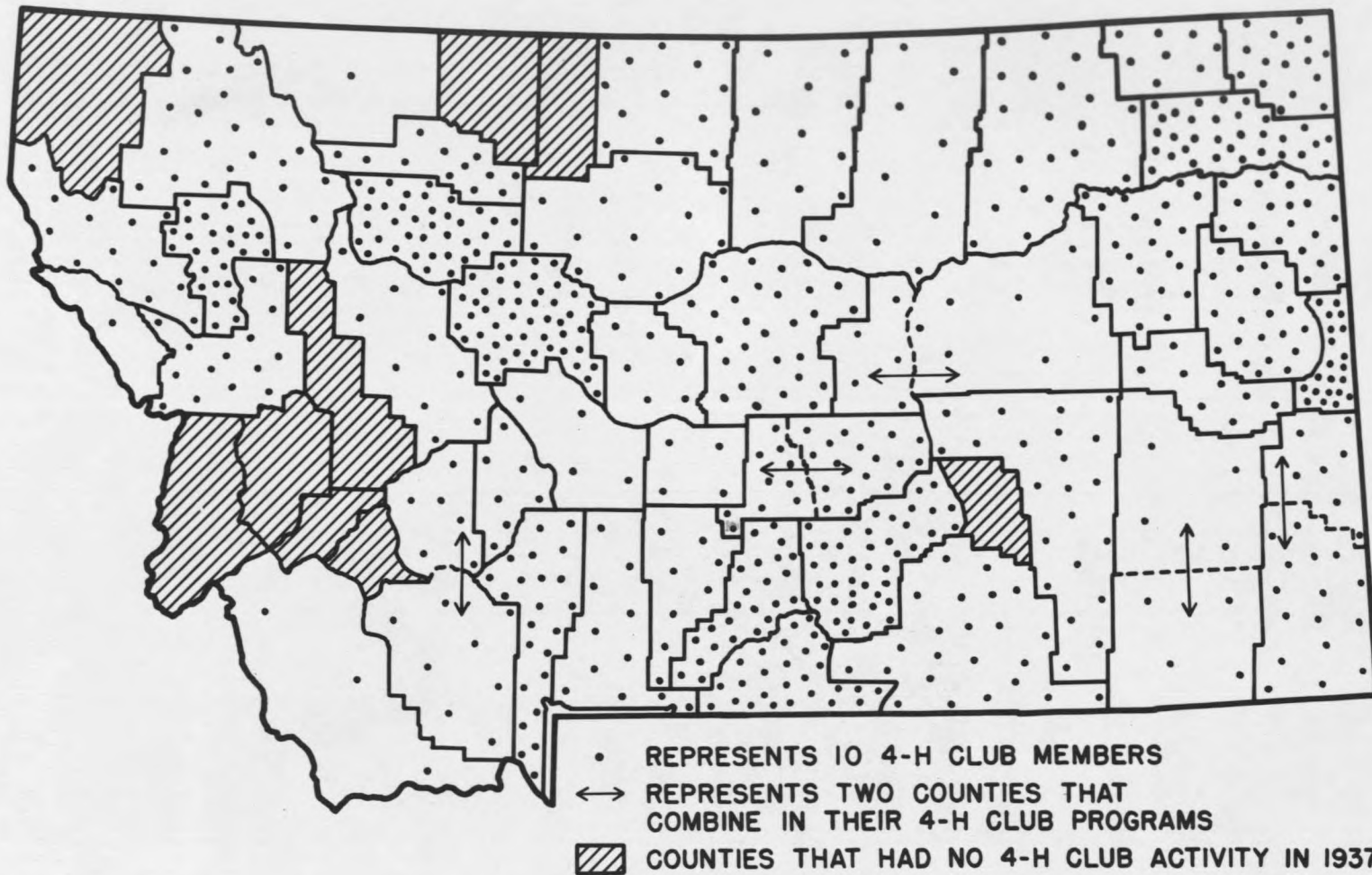


Figure 1.--Distribution of the 7,268 4-H club members in Montana in 1937 by counties. (Source: Table I, Appendix A.)

Turner states "that the 4-H club movement is fostering a desire on the part of the 4-H club members to obtain additional scholastic training and is directing an increasing number toward the State Colleges of Agriculture." ^{4/} He also points out in this study that in the twelve central states reporting for the school year 1936-37, 53.8 per cent of the total student enrollment in Agriculture and Home Economics courses were former 4-H club members. Twenty per cent of all students enrolled at Montana State College in the spring quarter of 1937 were, or had been, a member of a 4-H club. ^{5/} These figures tend to show the importance of the 4-H program in the development of the young people of the nation and of Montana. The importance of the 4-H program is undoubtedly greater in rural communities where there are fewer or no other clubs or agencies to develop and train the youth compared with towns and cities. This organization is the largest rural group of its kind in America.

Definition of 4-H Club Work

The term "4-H club work" as used in this study can be described thus. "Boys' and girls' 4-H club work is a part of the national agricultural extension system carried on by the agricultural extension service of Montana State College, cooperating with the United States Department of Agriculture.

Through 4-H club work rural boys and girls, 10 to 20 years of age, in school

^{4/} Turner, R. A., "4-H Goes to College"—a statistical study of former 4-H club members enrolled in the State Colleges of Agriculture in the Central States, 1936-1937.

^{5/} 1105 college students were enrolled at Montana State College during the spring quarter of 1937 and over 225 of these were former 4-H club members.

and out of school, are organized into groups by county extension agents, under the supervision of volunteer leaders. The latter are assisted and directed by the county agent. The outstanding characteristics of club work are that each member conducts a substantial piece of work, known as a project, designed to show some better practices on the farm, in the home, or in the community; keeps a record of results; explains the work to others; and makes a final report on the work." 6/ Indirectly the student is expected to learn to live and associate with others.

The name, 4-H, stands for head, heart, health and hands. The 4-H pledge, which each member gives when he or she joins a 4-H club is: "I pledge My Head to clearer thinking, My Heart to greater loyalty, My Hands to larger service, and My Health to better living--For My Club, My Community, and My Country." The four leaf clover, the symbol of the organization, signifies the purpose for which the first clubs were formed, namely, soil conservation.

History of 4-H Club Movement in America

The history of the 4-H club organization began in the latter part of the nineteenth century. 7/ During the 1890's and early 1900's there developed a demand for instruction "in the direction of appreciation of rural life and its opportunities, instead of confining teaching to studies that

6/ "4-H Club Guide for Local Leaders--Organization and Project Requirements", Montana Extension Service in Agriculture and Home Economics, February, 1936.

7/ The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 did not officially recognize boys and girls club work although it did establish the extension system. The Capper-Ketchum act of 1928 legally established 4-H Club work.

ignored the country and directed pupils' attention to occupation of towns and cities." 8/

One of the early leaders in the movement, Dr. L. H. Bailey, of Cornell University, recognized the feasibility of such a program. In one of the early leaflets issued by Cornell University he wrote: "Why is the college of Agriculture interesting itself in this work? It is trying to help the farmer and it begins with the most teachable point--the child...The child will teach the parent. The coming generation will see the result."

In 1899, W. B. Otwell of Macoupin County, Illinois, originated the modern idea of the 4-H Club. He offered every boy and girl of Macoupin County one ounce of high-grade seed corn if they would promise to plant the corn and exhibit it at the farmer's institutes. This small project proved such a success that the state of Illinois appointed Otwell to be the director of an exhibit at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. He had 1000 boys exhibit the corn they had grown. Other states soon followed the example of Illinois. According to a monument erected January 15, 1902, by the Graham Agricultural Club, the first boys' and girls' agricultural club in the United States was established on January 15, 1902, when Albert B. Graham, Superintendent of Rural Schools, organized a club of 85 boys and girls of the Springfield Township, Clark County, Ohio. The purpose of this club as set forth by the monument was "to utilize the daily home and farm environment of these young people as a means of developing a more wholesome understanding

8/ Farrell, George E., "Boys and Girls 4-H Club Work Under the Smith-Lever Act of 1914-1924", U. S. D. A., Misc. Circ. 85, December, 1926, p. 10. The historical sketch presented in this study is based mainly upon this circular and records on file at the State 4-H Club Leader's office.

