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Assessing the Prior Intercultural Experiences, Motivating Factors and Deterrents influencing 4-H Members' Intention to Participate an International Experience Program

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Abstract

International experience programs (IEPs), such as International 4-H Youth Exchange (IFYE) and other programs employed by U.S Cooperative Extension Programs and international partners, can forge students' development of a global perspective. The purpose of this study was to determine 4-H members' prior intercultural experience, perceived motivating factors to participation in an IEP, perceived deterrents to participation in an IEP, and 4-H members' intentions to participate in an IEP; and to explain 4-H members' intention to participate in an IEP. Results of this study suggest that 4-H members' intention to participate in an IEP is predicted by prior intercultural experiences. The effect of prior intercultural experiences is mediated by motivating factors, that is as motivating factors increase, intent increases while reducing the effect of prior intercultural experiences. A recommendation for practitioners to use to bridge the gap between 4-H members and other cultures is to provide varied intercultural experiences in or near the youths' own community.

Keywords: Intercultural experiences, motivating factors, deterrents, international experience programs, 4-H

Introduction

As a result of globalization, local and global realities have become intertwined (Baker & LeTendre, 2005; Lechner & Boli, 2015). This is not to say that globalization directly and exclusively determines local circumstance, but rather the world society continues to integrate as individuals become more conscious of their participation in global networks and how those networks are influenced by global forces (Lechner & Boli, 2015). Even if national members do not recognize the larger structures in place, “their everyday life is nevertheless embedded in a global culture that transcends their village, town, or country, and that becomes part of individual and collective identities” (Lechner & Boli, 2015, p. 2).

Reflective of this common knowledge and collective identities across regions, is the emergence of international institutions in all areas of human activity (Lechner & Boli, 2015). While education may be viewed by some as being a national undertaking, Baker and LeTendre (2005) maintained that this image is largely inaccurate as “the demands and expectations for what school can and should do for a society have developed well beyond any particular national context” (in Lechner & Boli, 2015, p. 260). Along with economic, political and social institutions, education is undergoing intensive globalization (Baker & LeTendre, 2005; USDE, 2012). This occurrence has certain implications for land-grant universities; a global dynamic is now pertinent to contemporary agricultural education and Extension services (Akpan & Martin, 1996; Ludwig & McGirr, 2003).

An international component was first introduced into the mission for Cooperative Extension Service Program (CEP) by the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy in 1985. An international component was later included as part of the national goals established by the National

Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) vision statement, in which international awareness was identified as an essential component of outreach and extension activities (NASULGC, 2000). International programming will continue to greatly impact Extension’s financial and human welfare mission (Etling, Reaman, & Sawi, 1993; Ludwig, 2001). As such, the connection between Extension’s mission and international agenda should be a consideration for Extension faculty (Etling et al., 1993; Ludwig, 1995). In order to move Extension’s international program forward, Extension educators should be aware of the organization’s role in the program and should actively incorporate an international perspective into their programming (Bates, 2006; Ludwig, 1995). In light of the reported benefits of international cooperation as a mechanism for developing global perspective (Arnold et al., 2014; Boyd et al., 2001; Odell, Williams, Lawrence, Gartin, & Smith, 2002; USDE, 2012), the U.S. CEP has worked to internationalize programming through partnerships with international organizations, overseas development projects, 4-H youth outbound exchange programs, and programs to host international guests (Ludwig & McGirr, 2003; Major & Miller, 2012).

International experience programs (IEPs), such as International 4-H Youth Exchange (IFYE) and other programs employed by U.S CEP and international partners, can forge students’ development of a global perspective early on (Boyd et al., 2001; Ingram, Smith-Hollins, & Radhakrishna, 2009; Odell et al., 2002). In prior studies, 4-H youth who participated in an IEP (a) demonstrated a developed global perspective and awareness of world issues, (b) reported higher levels of self-confidence and awareness of self and purpose, (c) were

more willing to immerse themselves in another culture, (d) continued to travel abroad following the initial IEP, and (e) were more likely to pursue a career with an international focus (Arnold, Davis, & Corliss, 2014; Boyd et al., 2001; Ingram et al., 2009; Odell et al., 2002). Moreover, enhancing young peoples' global perspective may generate a ripple effect of international awareness and cooperation within an individual's microsystem of interaction (Boyd et al., 2001; Olberding & Olberding, 2010). Boyd et al. (2001) found that 4-H IEP participants believed their participation increased family and friends global awareness. To further validate these findings, Boyd et al. (2001) surveyed family and friends of IE participants, which yielded similar findings; close persons of 4-H IEP participants agreed that the IEP was directly beneficial to the 4-H youth participant, as well as had a positive, indirect affect on them personally.

While a large amount of previous research (Boyd et al., 2001; Ingram et al., 2009; Odell et al., 2002; Olberding & Olberding, 2010) has focused on the positive outcomes of participation in IEPs, examination of the factors influencing whether or not 4-H youth will participate in available programs is lacking. As such, research to examine factors that motivate or deter IEP participation among 4-H youth is needed. Research of this nature can aid Extension personnel in program recruitment and facilitation of the IEP process.

Deterrents and motivating factors.

Considering the limited amount of research specific to the 4-H youth population, the broad scope of the literature review included studies conducted with university students to guide the direction of this study. The major factors reported as deterrents to 4-H youths' participation in IEPs include financial constraints and lack of information (Boyd et

al., 2001). In a study conducted with college students, Relyea, Cocchiara, and Studdard (2008) identified perceptions of high risk as a major deterrent to students' participation in IEPs. Regarding motivations, college students in prior studies identified opportunity to live in and experience another culture as motivation to participate in an IEP (Kim & Goldstein, 2005; Stroud, 2010). Similarly, Briers et al. (2010) found that students were more likely to participate in an IEP if they believed their experience would contribute positively to their overall life experience.

Prior intercultural experiences. 4-H youth members' collective intercultural experiences (e.g. family vacation abroad, international humanitarian aid or church mission, taking an internationally-focused class, interaction with international exchange students) may help predict their intention to participate in an IEP (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2009; Stroud, 2010). In prior studies, the level of intercultural experience acquired by students was positively correlated with their intention to participate in an IEP (Ludwig, 2007; Salisbury et al., 2009). Similarly, Rust, Dhanatya, Furuto, and Kheiltash (2008) found that students who frequently socialized with ethnic or cultural groups different than their own had significantly higher odds of participating in an IEP. Further, Rust et al. (2008) maintained that students' acquired intercultural experiences speak to their inclination to associate with people from different ethnic backgrounds and their interest in learning about other cultures, thus predicting the likelihood they will participate in an IEP. Goldstein and Kim (2006) found that intercultural variables such as prejudice, intercultural communication anxiety, and ethnocentrism played a critical role in determining which students would participate in an IEP.

According to Goldstein and Kim (2006), intercultural experiences diminish misperceptions or nervousness that deter students from participating in an IEP by improving their knowledge and skills of cultural diversity.

Theoretical Framework

Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) served as the theoretical framework for this study. As proposed by TPB, a behavioral action can be regulated by an individual's plan to carry out that behavior. Intention is a formed outcome of an individual's behavioral, normative, and control beliefs and their corresponding attitudes. Thus, modification to any of these three beliefs can alter intent and, ultimately, the resulting behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, 2006). As per TPB, 4-H youths' participation in an IEP can be predicted by way of examining their intention to participate and the various factors that shape their intention.

Behavioral beliefs contribute to the general attitude held toward a particular behavior and refer to a person's judgment of whether the outcomes of performing the behavior will be favorable or unfavorable. Behavior performance is improved if an individual recognizes the associated benefits to outweigh potential costs (Ajzen, 1991). In theory, 4-H youth with strong behavioral beliefs toward participating in an IEP would be those who perceive IEPs as a valuable or worthwhile experience, and they would be more likely to participate in an IEP. Oppositely, 4-H youth who believe intercultural experiences offer little benefit may form unfavorable attitudes toward IEPs and be unlikely to participate (Kim & Goldstein, 2005). Examining 4-H youths' motivation to participate in an IEP by the extent to which they perceive select IEP outcomes as important can provide an assessment of a formed attitude and,

therefore, predict their intention to participate.

Normative beliefs refer to a person's awareness of others' expectations regarding their execution of a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). If an individual identifies a behavior as a desired norm, then he or she is more likely to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). As applied to 4-H youths' participation in an IEP, TPB suggests that 4-H youths' intention should be positively related to their perception of the expectations and degree of support from family, peers, and other people they consider important. Lack of support or expectations from family or peers can deter 4-H youth from participating.

Control beliefs refer to an person's recognition of his or her capacity to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). A 4-H youth member who perceives a high degree of difficulty and limited control associated with an IEP would have lesser intention to participate. Moreover, this 4-H youth member would be expected to have a less than favorable attitude and low motivation toward participating in an IEP. Perceived lack of control in areas such as time and finances can negatively influence 4-H youths' intention to participate in an IEP (Kim & Goldstein, 2005; Presley, Damron-Martinez, Zhang, 2010; Salisbury et al., 2009; Schnusenber, de Jong, & Goel, 2012). Additional factors, such as anxiety toward interacting with other cultures or language barriers, can pose a threat to 4-H youths' perception of control and deter their participation in an IEP (Kim & Goldstein, 2005). Conversely, 4-H youth who have high feelings of control over the IEP would likely have a more favorable attitude and greater intention to participate.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to determine 4-H members' prior intercultural experience, perceived

motivating factors to participation in an IEP, perceived deterrents to participation in an IEP, and 4-H members' intentions to participate in an IEP; (2) to explain 4-H members' intention to participate in an IEP. Study objectives included the following:

1. Describe 4-H members' prior intercultural experience, perceived motivations to participation in an IEP, perceived barriers to participation in an IEP, and 4-H members' intentions to participate in an IEP.
2. Develop a model to explain 4-H members' intention to participate in an IEP.

Methods

Population and Sample

The target population for this study consisted of 4-H members ($N = 789$) who attended a three-day summer conference at Louisiana State University. Instruments were collected from 628 of the 789 4-H members who attended, which yielded a response rate of 80%. The 4-H members were randomly assigned to two groups. The first group's responses ($n = 314$) were used to develop the instrument used (Bunch, Cater, & Danjean, 2016). Data from group two ($n = 314$) were used for the purposes of this study. The majority of the respondents from group two were white ($f = 248$; 79%) females ($f = 195$; 62.1%) with an average age of 17 ($SD = 14.06$). The respondents' grade level ranged from 8 to 12, with the most frequent grade levels of 10 ($f = 65$; 20.7%) and 11 ($f = 64$; 20.4%).

Instrumentation

To measure prior intercultural experience, participants were asked to indicate by checking all that apply concerning intercultural experiences they had participated in the past (Bunch, Lamm, Israel, & Edwards, 2013). A summed score

was computed for this item. The *4-H International Experience Program Questionnaire* was used to capture motivating factors for and deterrents to participation in an IEP (Bunch et al., 2016). The nine items of the Motivating Factors for IEP Participation subscale was used to measure perceived motivating factors of 4-H members' to participate in an IEP. Responses were collected using a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = *not at all important*, 2 = *somewhat unimportant*, 3 = *somewhat important*, and 4 = *very important*). A mean score was created to represent youths' perceptions of motivating factors for IEP participation. The internal consistency reliability for this sub-scale was .92. The 12 items of the Deterrents to IEP Participation subscale were used to measure perceived barriers among 4-H members concerning participation in an IEP. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with 12 items using a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, and 4 = *strongly agree*). A mean score was created for this sub-scale. The internal consistency reliability was .89. One dichotomous item (yes or no) was used to measure the intentions of 4-H members to participate in an IEP (Danjean, Bunch, & Blackburn, 2015). Lastly, six demographic items were used to describe the sample.

Data Collection

The 4-H youth educators were given a data collection packet. The data collection packet included (a) a data collection protocol, (b) hard copy instruments, (c) participants right to refuse protocol, (d) instructions on returning instruments to the researchers, and (e) a distribution checklist. 4-H youth educators distributed instruments to the youth on the final evening of the three-day summer conference and returned the completed instruments to the researchers.

Data Analysis

Objective one was descriptive in nature. Nominal and ordinal data were described using frequencies and percentages, while interval level data were summarized with means and standard deviations. Objective two used structural equation modeling for the analysis. As part of the data screening process, z-scores were computed and scores greater than 3.29 (two-tailed; $p < 0.001$) were deemed univariate outliers. Mahalanobis distance was used to identify multivariate outliers, with values greater than 16.266₍₃₎ considered significant ($p < 0.001$; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The percentage of missing data as well as an independent samples t-test were used to determine the impact of missing data on the overall data set and to establish if those individuals with missing data differed significantly from other 4-H members in the sample. Since the dependent variable, intention to participate in an IEP, was dichotomous, maximum likelihood was used to estimate a logit model. Baron and Kenny's (1986) four guidelines for testing the model were used: (1) prior intercultural experiences and intention to participate in an IEP should be significantly associated; (2) prior intercultural experiences and motivating factors for IEP participation should be significantly associated; (3) motivating factors for IEP participation should be significantly associated with intention to participate in an IEP while

controlling for prior intercultural experiences; and (4) the association between prior intercultural experiences and intention to participate in an IEP in a model that includes motivating factors for IEP participation should be smaller than the association between prior intercultural experiences and intention to participate in an IEP in a model that does not include motivating factors for IEP participation. Additionally, the odds ratio illustrates the effect of one unit change in previous intercultural experiences, motivating factors for an IEP, and deterrents to an IEP on the associated dependent variables.

Findings

The purpose of objective one was to describe 4-H members' prior intercultural experiences, perceived motivating factors to participation in an IEP, perceived deterrents to participation in an IEP, and 4-H members' intentions to participate in an IEP. The most frequent engagements were *going to an international restaurant* ($f = 120$, 38.2%), *meeting with international exchange students* ($f = 108$, 34.4%), and *international guest speaker in class* ($f = 104$, 33.1%; see Table 1). The mean score for motivating factors was 3.14 ($SD = .67$) and the mean score for deterrents was 2.02 ($SD = .71$; see Table 2). As for 4-H members' intentions to participate in an IEP, 67.2 % ($f = 211$) indicated they had intentions to participate in an IEP (see Table 3).

Table 1
4-H Members' Prior Intercultural Experiences

Variable	N	f	%
Going to an international restaurant	314	120	38.2
Meeting with international exchange students	314	108	34.4
International guest speaker in class	314	104	33.1
Attending an international festival	314	88	28.0
Traveling individually or with family/friends to another country	314	80	25.5
Taking a class focused on international issues	314	67	21.3
Participating in a short-term study abroad program (1-6 weeks)	314	43	13.7
International study tour	314	42	13.4
Church mission trip to another country	314	39	12.4
Hosting an international visitor in your house	314	36	11.5
Participating in a semester-long study abroad	314	28	8.9

Note. 4-H members could select multiple responses.

Table 2
4-H Members' Perceived Motivating Factors and Deterrents to Participation in an International Experience Program

Variable	M	SD
Motivating factors	3.14	.67
Deterrents	2.02	.71

Note. Real Limits. Motivating factors – 1.00 to 1.49 = Not at all important, 1.50 to 2.49 = Somewhat unimportant, 2.50 to 3.49 = Somewhat important, 3.50 to 4.00 = Very important. Deterrents – 1.00 to 1.49 = Strongly disagree, 1.50 to 2.49 = Disagree; 2.50 to 3.49 = Agree; 3.50 to 4.00 = Strongly Agree

Table 3
4-H Members' Perceived Intentions to Participate in an International Experience Program

Variable	N	f	%
Intention to participate in an international experience	314	211	67.2

The purpose of objective two was to develop a model to explain 4-H members' intention to participate in an IEP. Data (N = 314) were evaluated for influential outliers, univariate and multivariate. No univariate outliers were identified. One multivariate outlier was discovered, with one student

having a value exceeding the critical chi square value. This student's data was deleted from the succeeding analysis, resulting in 313 participants remaining for analysis. Observations met the assumption of independence. Analysis of missing data revealed that only 2.6% of data were

missing, and additional testing indicated there was no difference between those 4-H members with missing data and those with complete data. Full information maximum likelihood was used to handle missing data.

Maximum likelihood was used to fit a logit model. Inspection of the total model ($\beta = 0.259$; $SE = 0.063$; $z = 4.112$; $p = .000$) and total indirect model ($\beta = 0.109$; $SE = 0.029$; $z = 3.704$; $p = .000$) revealed that both models were significant. Examination of each path in the model revealed that all paths were significant (see Figure 1). These results support Baron and Kenny's (1986) guidelines requiring significant paths from the independent variable to the dependent variable and to the mediating variable and from the mediating variable to the dependent variable while controlling for the independent variable. Examination of a model that included a single path from prior intercultural experiences to intention to

participate in an IEP returned a coefficient of 0.178, while the same path in the current model has a coefficient of 0.150. Thus, Baron and Kenny's requirement for a smaller coefficient in the independent variable/dependent variable chain for the full model was met.

Holding the other independent variables constant, a one unit increase in PIE improves the odds of intending to participate in an IEP by 1.16 (or 16%). A one unit increase in the motivating factors score improves the odds of higher IEP intentions by 5.01 (or 401%). Perceived deterrents to participation in an IEP have a moderating effect on both motivating factors for participation and intention to participate in an IEP by reducing each as perceived deterrents increase. Intention to participate in an IEP is reduced by 6.9% for every one unit increase in perceived deterrents to an IEP ($OR = 0.169$).

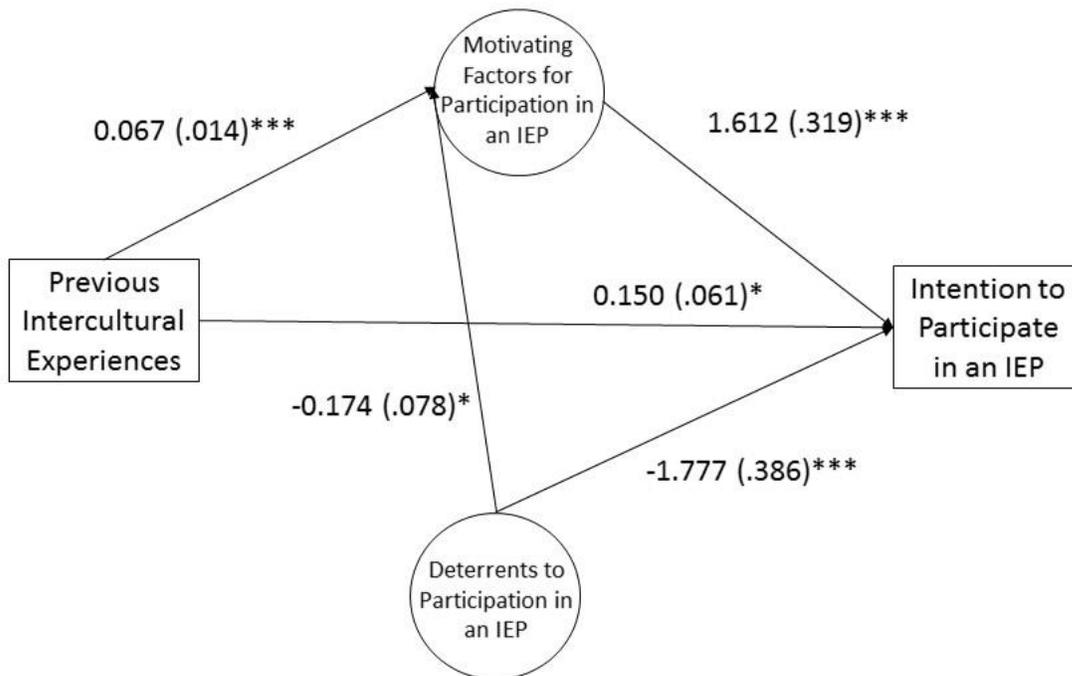


Figure 1. Mediation model for Intention to Participate in an International Experiences Program. * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

Conclusions

No prior intercultural experience had been engaged in by more than 40% of the 4-H participants. Of the experiences, those most frequently engaged in by 4-H youth members were going to an international restaurant, meeting with an international exchange student, and having an international guest speaker in class. Slightly more than two thirds of the 4-H participants expressed personal interest in participating in an IEP as part of their 4-H program. This is consistent with prior studies conducted with college students (Bunch, Blackburn, Danjean, Stair, & Blanchard, 2015; Danjean et al., 2015), indicating that 4-H youth members, likewise, intend to participate in an IEP. Motivating factors were somewhat important to the 4-H participants when determining whether or not they would participate in an IEP. As for deterrents, the

4-H participants did not perceive many deterrents to participating in an IEP.

Four-H members’ intention to participate in an IEP is predicted by prior intercultural experiences. Within the TPB framework, prior intercultural experiences represent intensity of participation that affects behavioral beliefs. The effect of prior intercultural experiences is mediated by motivating factors, that is as motivating factors increase, intent increases while reducing the effect of prior intercultural experiences. Since the effect of prior intercultural experiences is not eliminated, the effect can be described as partial mediation. Prior intercultural experiences still play a role in explaining 4-H members’ intention to participate in an IEP. Additionally, deterrents exhibit a moderating effect by decreasing both motivating factors for and intention to

participate in an IEP as perceived deterrents increase. The effects of motivating factors and deterrents may be connected to Azjen's (1991) theory because recognizing the benefits may compensate for possible constraints thus increasing the likelihood of an individual performing a behavior.

Recommendations

Perhaps the simplest way for practitioners to bridge the gap between 4-H members and other cultures is to provide varied intercultural experiences in or near the youths' own community. When designing interventions, practitioners should choose small, achievable and affordable activities to give 4-H members a sample of the opportunities offered by an IEP. Holding meetings at different international restaurants where youth can sample foods from other cultures is one of the most accessible options. Inviting guest speakers who have international ties or experiences is another manageable option. Additional ideas include field trips to nearby festivals that celebrate an international culture, inviting visiting international students to meet with groups of youth, hosting a short-term exchange that allows international youth to live with 4-H members, or working with a local teacher to weave an international viewpoint into a high school course.

While 4-H members perceived IEPs as somewhat important and do not perceive huge barriers to IEPs, the vast majority of youth have never traveled beyond the borders of the United States. Two strategies that practitioners may use include personally recruiting 4-H youth to participate in an IEP and promoting the benefits of an IEP to youth, guardians, and other significant adult role models. Because prior intercultural experiences do not matter as much when motivating factors are present, focus should be placed on increasing motivating factors and decreasing deterrents. Part of the

success of this strategy is understanding what motivates and deters individual youth. Tools like the *4-H International Experiences Questionnaire* (Bunch et al., 2016) can help identify these factors. Additionally, when educators and administrators work together to develop IEPs, they will be better able to meet 4-H members' perceived needs and to provide opportunities for youth to be a part of an IEP.

While many of the 4-H members in this study perceive an IEP as somewhat important and do not see many deterrents, the trend of the data suggests that as perceived barriers increase the intention to participate in an IEP decreases. Future research should focus on developing a deeper understanding of the deterrents to IEP participation that youth face. Potential areas to explore include how youth perceive IEP participation impacting both their present (e.g., schoolwork) and future (e.g., career plans) circumstances. Another question to consider is whether youth view an IEP as just another activity or as an opportunity for personal growth.

As more 4-H youth become involved in IEPs, the TPB offers a theoretical framework for exploring their behavioral beliefs and attitudes toward IEPs. Additionally the influence of guardians, educators, and other significant adults, in the form of normative beliefs, is another area of needed research. In order to conduct this research, work is needed in the field to develop instruments to validly and reliably measure these constructs. Finally, consideration should be given to research design. While cross-sectional studies provide a point-in-time description of beliefs, attitudes, and intentions, longitudinal studies are needed to more fully understand how all of these factors contribute to behavior, that is actually participating in an IEP.

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