An Examination of Factors Related to Parental Involvement in Youth Extension Programs

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ABSTRACT

Increased parent and guardian involvement in youth Extension programs could help improve youth's academics and enhance Extension programs. This study was designed to help determine the logistical factors and barriers that prevent parents and guardian from attending Extension programs with their youth. A researcher-developed questionnaire asked parents/guardians for their insight on logistical factors, barriers, their preferred modes of communication, and their personal involvement in Extension programs in Idaho.

The population of this study was $N = 1025$ participants who were parents/guardians of youth participating in youth Extension events in the state of Idaho. Results from this study included three of the largest barriers preventing parents and guardians from attending Extension events, the top three included: dates, times, and fees or cost. Preferred modes of communication determined that parents and guardians prefer to be contacted by Extension staff via email, at 4-H club meetings, and face-to-face.

Combining the most preferred modes of communication to reach parents and guardians could help increase attendance and involvement from parents. Reducing barriers of dates and times by scheduling events during parent/guardian most available times, Monday nights and Saturday mornings, could increase involvement from parents and guardians with youth involved in Extension programs. Implications from this study could increase parent and guardian involvement in Extension programs. Follow up research could help determine more barriers and logistical factors of parent/guardian involvement that could further increase parent and guardian involvement in youth Extension programs.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement with their childrens' activities has been shown to increase trust, academic performance, and can assist parents with their parenting and discipline (Garcia & Hasson, 2004; Harris & Wimer, 2004; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). Parent involvement in their youths' activities can also decrease lying and rates of drug and alcohol use (Garcia & Hasson, 2004; Harris & Wimer, 2004; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; Moore & Zaff, 2002).

Many programs desire increased participation of parents (Garcia & Hasson, 2004; Harris & Wimer, 2004; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; Moore & Zaff, 2002). Increasing parental involvement can help increase the positive benefits a youth program has on the participants (Garcia & Hasson, 2004; Harris & Wimer, 2004; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; Moore & Zaff, 2002). In addition, program staff often desire increased volunteer assistance from parents, in order to lighten the load of youth program staff and provide additional insight for program planning, management decisions, and program evaluation (Garcia & Hasson, 2004; Harris & Wimer, 2004; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; Moore & Zaff, 2002).

The youth portion of Extension service provides numerous opportunities for young people to learn skills and develop their leadership potential through livestock, cooking, sewing, and shooting sports programs (Murdock & Paterson, 2002). The 4-H program was designed to help youth develop skills needed to make positive, healthy decisions, now and later in their future (Perkins & Butterfield, 1999). Activities within the 4-H program include:

4-H clubs, day camps, multi-day camps, and afterschool programs (Perkins & Butterfield, 1999). The directors of many youth Extension programs rely on parental involvement in the form of volunteers, and desire increased parental involvement because of the benefits they provide to enrolled youth (Murdock & Paterson, 2002).

Extension helps youth learn valuable skills that they can use in the future (Mitsuoka & Spielmaker, 2018). Extension is a nationally recognized organization that began in 1862 when the Morrill Land Grant Act was passed creating Land Grant colleges in each state (Mitsuoka & Spielmaker, 2018). The University of Idaho is the Land Grand Act college in the state of Idaho. Today, Extension is networking together to learn and obtain information from around the world (Mitsuoka & Spielmaker, 2018). There are 42 Extension offices in the state of Idaho who serve communities across the state.

Extension offices rely heavily on the involvement of volunteers, who are often the parents/guardians of youth involved in the program (Murdock & Paterson, 2002). Little is known about why parents choose to become involved in their children's Extension activities. This lack of information about parent/guardian involvement in their youths' Extension education led to the development of this study. Information regarding parent and guardian involvement could be helpful to Extension educators that seek to increase involvement among parents.

The modes of communication used to contact parents can have an impact on overall parental involvement in youth programs (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014). Youth service providers continue to endure challenges in engaging families in their programs because communication is a barrier (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014). The most common types of communication are email, phone, written communication, and text messaging (Thompson,

Mazer, & Grady, 2015). Using an effective mode of communication could be an important factor for Extension educators to consider when examining parental involvement (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Thompson, et al., 2015).

This research could also provide insight into preferences for logistical factors such as childcare and catering, and their effect on parent/guardian decision to attend Extension programs. The results of this study could prove helpful with parents involved in their child's activities and revealing barriers for those parents who are not currently involved in youth Extension but wish to be. This study was also designed to gather information about the effectiveness of various modes of communication used to share program information with parents and guardians. Knowing parent and guardians preferred modes of communication could help increase parental involvement.

Information gained through this study can help agriculture Extension personnel more clearly communicate knowledge to both children and their parents or guardians. Increased parental involvement could also foster a learning atmosphere where children feel secure enough to attempt new things, reach for more challenging goals, and feel valued. The results of this study could be used as a tool for other youth organizations that desire increased parental involvement, such as 4-H, FFA, after-school organizations, sports programs, and schools. Information pertaining to logistics will be examined to determine if there is an effect on parent and guardian involvement. Knowing logistical preferences could help us determine the benefits and barriers used by parents and guardians in their decision to become involved in youth activities.

Significance of the Study

When parents and guardians are involved in their children's extracurricular activities, they can expect an increase in positive behavior and quality of academic work (Garcia & Hasson, 2004; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). Extension programs help youth to grow and learn (Murdock & Paterson, 2002). Pairing high levels of parent involvement with effective youth Extension programs could amplify the positive benefits of Extension programs for children.

Parents and guardians involved in youth organizations are recognized as important youth role models (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Fan & Chen, 2001; Gettinger & Guetschow, 1998; Hara & Burke, 1998; Jeynes, 2005; Torretta & Bovitz, 2005). Several barriers have been noted that keep parents and guardians from being involved. Among potential barriers are: meeting times, lack of availability, transportation, other younger children, and timing of events (Caspe & Lopez, 2006; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; Norland, 1992). Obtaining a comfort level for parents and guardians to get involved regularly is a high priority (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). Some parents and guardians have an urge to be involved with their youth, but some do not have that drive and are not involved (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007).

Understanding the obstacles preventing increases in parent and guardian involvement could help Extension educators effectively obtain more parent and guardian involvement with youth in their programs. There are few, if any, studies related specifically to the parental involvement factors in youth Extension programs. This study can help fill the gap in literature through examination of the factors related to recruiting, and maintaining

involvement with parents and guardians who have children enrolled in youth Extension programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors related to parental involvement in youth programs through the Extension service. To achieve this purpose, the study was conducted to meet the following objectives:

1. Describe family characteristics (number of parents/guardians who work, number of children, ages of children) for families with children involved in youth Extension programs in Idaho
2. Describe parent/guardian preference for modes of communication to receive information from youth Extension programs in Idaho
3. Describe parent/guardian perceptions of logistical factors (dates, times, availability of childcare) related to youth Extension activities
4. Describe involvement of parents/guardians with their children's extracurricular activities for parents/guardians of children enrolled in youth Extension programs in Idaho
5. Examine the relationship between family characteristics and parental/guardian preferences for communication with youth Extension programs in Idaho

Definitions

- **Parental Involvement:** parental participation or attendance in an extracurricular educational process and experience with their children (Jeynes, 2007)
- **Extension Program:** focuses on the delivery of information to people (Anderson & Feder, 2004)

- **Youth Extension Program:** focuses on the delivery of information to youth (Anderson & Feder, 2004)
- **Modes of Communication:** a medium with the capacity that allows message senders and receivers to achieve shared meaning, mediums include: email, text, conversation, and written communication (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Thompson & Mazer, 2012)
- **Extracurricular:** outside of school activity participation opportunities for advancing adolescent interpersonal competence, inspiring challenging life goals, and promoting educational success (Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003)**.**
- **Logistical Characteristics:** factors related to quality, capacity, scheduling and skill to be important in a decision (Razzaque & Sheng, 1998)
- **Logistical Program Factor:** factor under the control of program managers related to time, duration, location, or experience within a program (Fan & Chen, 2001).
- **Program:** event that focuses on delivering information (Anderson & Feder, 2004)

Summary

Researchers have noted importance of parent involvement in youth programs (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Fan & Chen, 2001; Gettinger & Guetschow, 1998; Hara & Burke, 1998; Jeynes, 2005; Torretta & Bovitz, 2005). Several factors have been previously identified which affect how involved a parent is, including both family and program characteristics. Extension educators want more parental involvement, but to date, a gap in the literature exists related to parental perceptions of involvement in Extension youth programs. This study was designed to fill the gaps in the literature and examine the family characteristics and logistical factors, which could play a role in parental involvement in youth Extension programs.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An examination of parental involvement in youth Extension programs involves a review of several background factors. While extensive information has been gathered on the impact of parental involvement in general education circles, less research has been conducted in the specific area of parental involvement in Extension youth programs. This section will include an examination of the theoretical framework used as the foundation for this study along with a review of literature related to approaches used to increase parental involvement, factors involved in parent involvement, role of communication modes in parental involvement, the barriers in parent involvement, and the effects of parental involvement on youth Extension programs. For the purpose of this study an increase in parent involvement includes; parent participation in planning and preparing for an event and/or attendance to events with their participating youth.

Theoretical Framework

This study was rooted in Epstein's (1997) parental involvement theory. Epstein's theoretical framework highlighted improvement in a child's life when a parent is involved through their child's social life, school, and their community (Ojunta, 2013). This framework revolves around six types of involvement that Epstein (1997) found essential for developing successful interactions between parents and children. The six types of involvement are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community, as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2. 1

Epstein's (1997) Six Types of Parental Involvement

Type of Involvement	Description of Involvement
Parenting	Help all families establish home environments to support children as learners.
Communicating	Effective and cohesive communication between home and programming efforts.
Volunteering	Recruit and organize parent help and support.
Learning at Home	Provide information and ideas to families about how to help youth at home with activities, decisions, and planning.
Decision Making	Include parents in program decision-making, developing parent leaders and volunteers.
Collaborating with Community	Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen programs, and youth learning and development.

Epstein (1997) claimed that having parents involved through the six types of involvement would result in children who were more successful in their social life, school, and their community. The type of involvement classified as "parenting" includes teaching parents how to help their youth at home in learning situations and through teaching them how to set and obtain goals (Epstein, 1997). Communication as a type of parental involvement includes modes of communication between parents, youth, and programs. This communication is key in understanding youth's progress throughout program learning and program projects. The third type of involvement is volunteering. Volunteering helps to improve youth recruitment, programs, and helps to work better with families and their schedules. Learning at home is the next type of involvement in Epstein's (1997) framework. This type of involvement helps parents set goals, and develop program curriculum learning and activities. Learning at home involvement helps improve youth's learning experiences

and helps parents and guardians learn as well. Decision-making parental involvement includes requesting the assistance of parents and guardians in decisions made by the program administrators and staff. Decision making within Epstein's (1997) model includes the parents and guardians assistance within the program, which improves their participation and increases volunteering in the organization. The last of the six types of involvement in Epstein's (1997) framework is collaborating with the community. Collaboration includes providing opportunities for families to collaborate with the community through businesses, colleges or universities, or through other community organizations.

Epstein's (1997) framework is in line with current stated goals for youth Extension programs. 4-H empowers young people with the skills to lead for a lifetime. It's a research-based experience that includes a mentor, a hands-on project, and a meaningful leadership opportunity (4-H Youth Development Policies, 2012). As programs are developed to strive for increased achievement in success for youth, the involvement of parents and guardians cannot be overlooked (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). Extension educators strive to conduct research related to teaching and learning in agriculture education and the agriculture industry (Research & Extension, 2017). Through Epstein's (1997) framework Epstein (1997) examined techniques to increase parent and guardian involvement throughout their youth's Extension programs. Figure 2.1 is an adapted conceptual framework for Extension education from Epstein's six types of involvement.

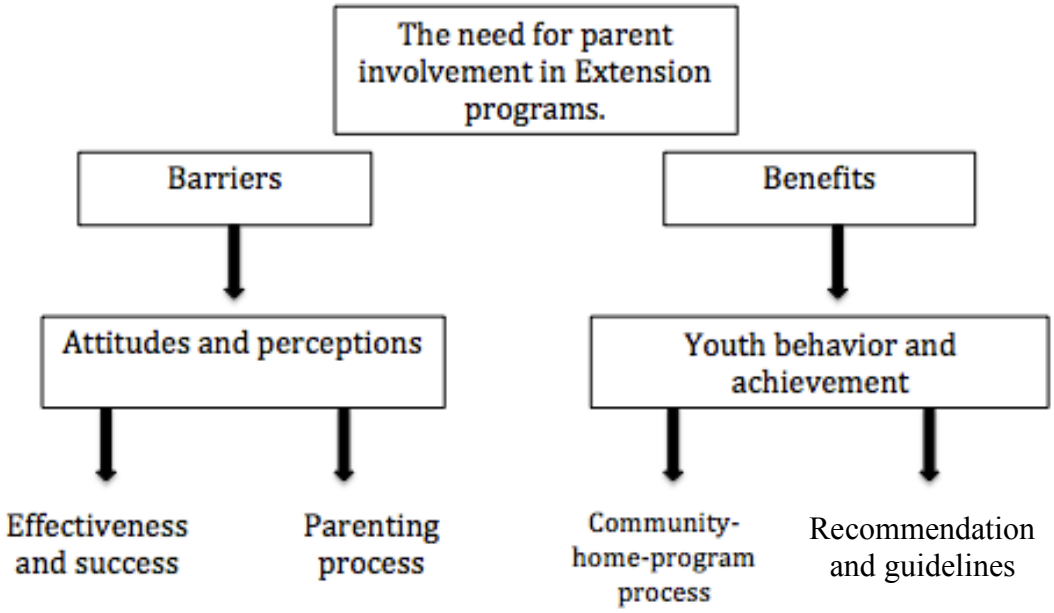

Figure 2. 1 Theoretical Framework for Parent Involvement in Extension Programs.

Note. Adapted from Epstein (1997).

Epstein's work shows youth improvement throughout their social life, school, and within their community when parent involvement in present (Epstein, 1997). This study was developed using Epstein's Six Types of Parent Involvement to measure parent and guardian involvement in Extension programs (Epstein, 1997).

Factors Related to Parental Involvement

Many approaches exist to help promote parents and guardians involvement in their youth's programs. Some of these approaches include point systems, parent and guardian grade books, newsletters, and using a variety of modes of communication (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007).

Parental and/or guardian involvement is very important in youth programs (Fan & Chen, 2001; Murdock & Paterson, 2002). Knowing how to work with parents and guardians to help improve their children's involvement, parent and guardian involvement, and Extension programs is instrumental in program success (Fan & Chen, 2001; Murdock & Paterson, 2002). Parent and guardian involvement must continue beyond getting parents and guardians to come to an event (Caspe & Lopez, 2006; Catchpole & Arnett, 2014; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hara & Burke, 1998; Harris & Wimer, 2004; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; The After-School Corporation, 2006; Toretta, et al., 2005).

Increasing parent and guardian comfort level and engaging them regularly is key (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; Hara & Burke, 1998). Children who's parents are involved in their out of school programs can have better relationships with parents, increased academic performance, and it can reduce risky behaviors (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). Children's relationships with their parents improve when they are involved in their out of school activities because they have more trust and less occurrences of lying (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). In another study teachers reported a 19.4% rate of referrals to the office, before parent involvement was implemented (Hara & Burke, 1998). After parent involvement increased teachers reported more than half of those students (9%) were being sent to the office. Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew's study reported that children had more success in their academic math and reading measures than those of children with parents who did not participate (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). A study reported that on average third graders score below grade level, one reading mastery tested show an 85% gain from a child whose parent was involved in their extracurricular activities (Hara & Burke, 1998). Some parents and guardians may want to jump in and be involved with their children

all the time, where others may be shy and not as outgoing or involved (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). Talking to parents and guardians about their children can make them comfortable with staff at programs, and help involve them in their children's activities, however this can take time and will not change over night (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007).

Various ideas have been explored to determine impact on improving parent and guardian involvement in their children's activities (Caspe & Lopez, 2006; Catchpole & Arnett, 2014; Hara & Burke, 1998). One study examined program activities that led to long-term outcomes for youth (Caspe & Lopez, 2006). Results from the study examined family strengthening program activities and their effects on youth (Caspe & Lopez, 2006). Family strengthening program activities from this study included: parent workshops, parent-child trainings, counseling sessions, parenting skills videos, and home visits (Caspe & Lopez, 2006).

Adventure Central, an Ohio State Extension Education program, developed a study to examine the effectiveness of a tool called the Parent Progress Report (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014). The Parent Progress Report tool is used to keep parents and guardians accountable and involved (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014). This tool provided families with semi-annual feedback in areas of communication, youth attendance, submitting copies of youth report cards, parent/guardian volunteerism, and attendance at family programs (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014). Parent Progress Report is essentially a rubric of involvement for parents, guardians and staff. Parents and guardians are "graded" on how well they do something such as picking their child up on time, attending events, and volunteering. Each score was added up for each family, out of 100. If a family scored below a 60 they are

encouraged to set up a one-on-one meeting with staff and may not be eligible for preferred enrollment in future Adventure Central Programs (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014). Families were given opportunities to earn bonus points by attending Extension-sponsored programs or other educational programs for families in the community (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014). Before the start of the program parent volunteer hours were reported to be less than 50 hours a year (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014). Five years after the program started parent volunteer hours increased to more than 350 hours per year (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014). Family attendance at program events doubled from when the program started to five years later with the program implemented.

Local School Council (LSC), used a local elementary school, to conducted a study that identified programs that were of interest to parents (Hara & Burke, 1998). Following their survey, and interviews the LCS elementary school reported the following as the most popular activities parents were interested in: parenting workshops, training programs, seeking funding for additional program implementation, establishing open houses (in school and throughout the community), hosting family nights, nutrition workshops, parent discussion groups, parent-oriented newsletters and communication activities, and student organized skits (Hara & Burke, 1998). Through findings from this study, they identified strategies for improving communications with parents including: parent/student fundraising, teacher/parent discussions, parent/teacher organizations, newsletters, solicitation of parent volunteers, alumni events, invitational events, good news cards, and parent classes with parenting, homework, and communication subjects.

Role of Communication Modes in Parent Involvement

Modes of communication could have an effect on the level of involvement of parents and guardians in their youth's lives (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014). A study by Thompson, Mazer, and Grady (2015), indicated that changes in technology have changed preferences for modes of communication and that technology tools could be beneficial for parents and guardians (Jacobson, 2003; Seitsinger, Felner, Brand, & Burns, 2008; Thompson, 2008). Their study examined 1,349 participants from a Midwestern United States school district (Thompson, et al., 2015). The modes of communication measured were email, phone, written communication, Skype/FaceTime, and text messaging (Thompson, et al., 2015). The study revealed most parents preferred email (12.6%), compared to their preference of face-to face (5.3%), phone (2.7%), written communication (1.2%), text messaging (0.2%), and Skype/FaceTime (0.0%) (Thompson, et al., 2015). Most researchers agree that using digitial tools for parental communication is effective due to the ease and convenience of texting, social media tools, and easy access to email accounts via smartphones, as it allows for immediate response on the matter (Thompson, et al., 2015; Timmerman & Kruepke, 2006).

The effectiveness of a communication mode in the Thompson, et al., (2015) study, was based on four components (1) capability for immediate feedback, (2) capacity for multiple cues, including auditory and visual cues and physical presence, (3) level of natural language to assist in explaining an idea, and (4) ability to personalize a message (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Thompson, et al., 2015). One parent from the study stated, "when a larger amount of information is to be exchanged, a five minute conversation is more convenient than 20 minutes to write an email" (Thompson, et al., 2015). Face-to-face conversations do

have a value but are not always easy to achieve, as they require time to meet (Thompson, et al., 2015).

Data from the Thompson, et al., (2015) study led researchers to conclude that parents have begun utilizing social media accounts as they enjoy photo updates about their youth and events (Thompson, et al., 2015). Findings from this study also established that parents value a combination of modes and would like to receive one message multiple ways through face-to-face and email; text and email; text, email, and phone; or through text, email, and face-to-face (Thompson, et al., 2015).

Modes of communication, or mediums, must allow message senders and receivers to achieve shared meaning (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Thompson & Mazer, 2012). Several modes of communication examined by researchers working with parents and guardians include conferences/in person, email, documents/newsletters, phone, postal mail, and text (Thompson & Mazer, 2012).

Barriers to Parent Involvement

A consideration related to parent/guardian involvement are the barriers which could cause parent and guardian absences from programs. Barriers are the factors of a program that prevent a parent or guardian from attending a program. Many barriers exist in trying to get parents and guardians involved. The first step to overcoming these barriers is by defining involvement; letting them know what is expected of them and what they will receive in return for their participation (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007).

Several researchers have identified barriers to parental involvement and have explained the importance of overcoming potential barriers that may keep parents/guardians from becoming involved (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). These barriers may include

but are not limited to; meetings, classes, work, unavailable transportation, and childcare for siblings (Caspe & Lopez, 2006; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; Norland, 1992).

One of the barriers found commonly among parents with youth involved in extracurricular activities are meetings (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). Many times parents and guardians have work scheduled or events with other children in the evening and cannot participate in an activity with their child (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). Additionally, parents with children who may be to young to attend an event struggle with finding childcare (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007).

It is important to note that some parents may not have access to programs, time constraints can be a limit as well as transportation (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). Time constraints are important to recognize as many families have other programs they may wish to attend (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). Transportation can also be a barrier for families who may not have access to a car, or public transportation. In one study program administrators were recommended to help parents and guardians overcome barriers by coordinating with parents to determine the best times to hold activities, offering child care or including entire families in programs, and even making food and snacks available (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007).

Effects of Parental Involvement

Getting parents and guardians involved in their child's extracurricular activities has been noted as important (Fan & Chen, 2001; Murdock & Paterson, 2002). Children and teens whose parents or guardians were engaged in out-of-school time programs reported higher levels of trust and lower levels of lying and arguing with parents or guardians (Harris & Wimer, 2004; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). The result of parental involvement

could be a better relationship between a child and their parent or guardian (Harris & Wimer, 2004; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007).

Parents or guardians who attend programs with their child may pay more attention to their child's academic work, and measures of math and reading scores can increase for their children (Garcia & Hasson, 2004; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). Positive parent and guardian engagement with children in activities is associated with lower rates of risky sexual behavior, tobacco use, drug use, alcohol use, delinquency, and violent behavior (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; Moore & Zaff, 2002). Parent or guardian involvement can also help parents or guardians improve their parenting and discipline (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). Getting parents and guardians involved provides opportunities to educate parents and guardians about child and adolescent development and parenting strategies, such as ways to reduce risky behaviors and support positive development (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007).

When parents and guardians get involved with their children's activities, they are more likely to get involved in the programing (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; The After-School Corporation, 2006). Family members who become involved in programs may offer suggestions for improvements that reinforce program involvement (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; The After-School Corporation, 2006). Programs that respond to parental or guardian input have higher attendance, improved activities, higher youth and family satisfaction, and increased child engagement (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; The After-School Corporation, 2006). These programs include afterschool programs, sports, drama club, FFA, and music/band, where parents and guardians learn and can watch their youth compete and perform (Caspe & Lopez, 2006; Catchpole & Arnett, 2014; Fan & Chen,

2001; Hara & Burke, 1998; Harris & Wimer, 2004; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; The After-School Corporation, 2006; Toretta, et al., 2005).

Youth Extension in Idaho

Extension is a popular organization among youth provided by the University of Idaho. There are approximately 65,455 children who are participating in youth Extension programs in Idaho, according to the most recent data on 4honline (personal communication, 2017). Involvement areas of these children are in afterschool programs, day camps, public speaking projects, leadership projects, teen leaders, and some youth volunteers. Not all children are required to be enrolled in 4honline to attend an Extension program. Each county in Idaho holds their own requirements for youth enrollment for Extension activities.

Idaho, a rural state, has 44 counties, 42 of them have an Extension office. There are 127 University of Idaho Extension employees who are involved in Extension programing across the state. Many programs are available though Idaho 4-H including: livestock, cooking, sewing, robotics, and shooting sports projects. There are currently no studies in youth Extension programs that determine the level of importance of involvement of parents and guardians for the benefit of youth.

Many researchers have examined the importance of youth and adults learning together. Results from a study examining youth and adults learning together stated that adults with negative thoughts about youth are often overcome when youth and adults work together (Murdock & Patterson, 2002). A study by Strong, Harder, and Carter helped determine the most effective ways to teach adults (2002). The most effective learning strategies for adults were: hands-on experiences, demonstrations, and field days (Strong, Harder, & Carter, 2002). Adults prefer to learn information that is applicable to them and

skills that they will be able to apply, many times this is difficult to achieve when teaching youth and adults together (Murdock & Patterson, 2002; Strong, et al., 2002).

Parental Involvement in Youth Extension

Youth Extension programs have been helping children grow and learn for many years (Murdock & Paterson, 2002). An important part of these youth Extension programs are parental and guardian involvement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Murdock & Paterson, 2002). Many youth service providers recognize parent and guardian involvement as an important factor in academic achievement and healthy development of youth (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Fan & Chen, 2001; Gettinger & Guetschow, 1998; Hara & Burke, 1998; Jeynes, 2005; Torretta & Bovitz, 2005).

Summary

Epstein's six types of involvement including parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community allow for a qualification of the ways a parent or guardian can become involved with their children's activities. Increased parent and guardian interaction through Epstein's six types of involvement could increase the success of youth, their life, academics, and their communities (Epstein, 1997). The mission of Extension education is to empower young people with the skills to lead for a lifetime. It's a research-based experience that includes a mentor, a hands-on project, and a meaningful leadership opportunity (University of Idaho Extension, 2012); increased parental involvement plays a big role in that mission (Murdock & Paterson, 2002). Many barriers exist in determining how to increase parent and guardian involvement including work schedules, time, transportation, and family characteristics (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). This study was developed to determine those factors,

preferred modes of communication, and barriers that exist for parent/guardian involvement in youth Extension programs.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This chapter includes information about the purpose of this study including objectives, population, selection of participants, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and limitations of this study.

This study was conducted using descriptive survey methods. Descriptive studies are appropriate when the purpose of the research is to obtain data from a selected population to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 1993). Approval for this study was sought from the University of Idaho Institutional Review Board, and approved as exempt under the protocol number 17-160.

Objectives

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors related to parental involvement in youth programs through the Extension service. To achieve this purpose, the study was conducted to meet the following objectives:

- Describe family characteristics (number of parents/guardians who work, number of children, ages of children) for families with children involved in youth Extension programs in Idaho
- Describe the types of communication parents/guardians receive from youth Extension programs in Idaho
- Describe parent/guardian perceptions of logistical factors (dates, times, availability of childcare) related to youth Extension activities

- Describe involvement of parents/guardians with their children's extracurricular activities for parents/guardians of children enrolled in youth Extension programs in Idaho
- Examine the relationship between family characteristics and parental/guardian preferences for communication with youth Extension programs in Idaho

Population

The population for this study were the parents and guardians with children enrolled in youth Extension programs in Idaho. Parents and guardians were identified from all counties and Extension districts in Idaho. Parents and guardians were selected for the population as they were determined to have the most knowledge pertaining to parent and guardian involvement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Murdock & Paterson, 2002). To be considered a parent or guardian in this study they had to have youth enrolled in an Extension program. Enrollment for youth Extension programs occurs through the 4honline system.

Contact information for the study population was obtained through Idaho state 4-H Coordinators. The email addresses of parents/guardians of youth participating in Idaho were available through 4honline. The accessible population for this study was a census of parents and guardians who have youth enrolled in Idaho for the 2018 4-H year in the 4honline system ($N = 1123$). The 4honline system is a database used by the Extension office to find youth, parents, projects of youth, and club youth are involved in. Parents use this system to sign their children up for the 4-H program each year. The 4honline system is used nationally, and administered on both state and county level. In Idaho, the annual subscription fee for all users in the state is paid for by the state Extension Education program through the University of Idaho.

The 4honline system is utilized by Extension educators, 4-H leaders, and others within the Extension education system. A screening of 4honline users in Idaho revealed that users who were parents and/or guardians of active 4-H members accounted for $n = 1025$ of the total $N = 1123$ users on the contact list provided by state 4-H personnel. As the parents and guardians of 4-H members were the target population, our target population number was adjusted to $N = 1025$. A census of parents/guardians with youth involved in youth Extension programs was used to have a more generalized understanding of the population.

Subject Characteristics

Subjects for this study were parents/guardians of youth who were enrolled in 2018 through 4honline. The survey yielded $N = 630$ participants responses. Approximately 87% ($n = 457$) of responders were female. More than 88% ($n = 468$) of participants selected that they were married. The ethnicity of participants was diverse with several ethnic groups represented. Gender demographics results are shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3. 1

Respondent Gender Demographics Information (n = 523)

Demographic Response	*f*	%
Male	52	9.9
Female	457	87.4
Prefer Not to Answer	14	2.7

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Table 3.2 outlines the demographic responses of participant's current marital status. The selection of marital status among respondents was diverse, though the majority selected married.

Table 3. 2

Marital Status (n = 527)

Demographic Response	*f*	%
Married	468	88.8
Widowed	3	0.6
Divorced	29	5.5
Separated	3	0.6
Never married	11	2.1
Prefer not to answer	13	2.5

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Respondents were asked to report their ethnicity through multiple-choice response. Participants were not required to complete this question to move on to the next section of the survey. Results of ethnicity are shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3. 3

Respondent Ethnicity Demographic Information (n = 520)

Demographic Response	*f*	%
White	467	89.8
Black or African American	0	0.0
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	0.8
Asian	1	0.2
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.2
Other	14	2.7
Prefer not to answer	33	6.3

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

From the 44 counties located in Idaho, responses were recorded from 42 counties. There are 42 County Extension offices in the state of Idaho, of the 42 offices; two were not represented in the collected data from this study. Those without an Extension office can register with another county. County distributions are shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3. 4

County Distribution (n = 624)

County	*f*	%
Ada	63	10.1
Adams	6	1.0
Bannock	8	1.3
Bear Lake	10	1.6
Benewah	5	0.8
Bingham	9	1.4
Blaine	7	1.1
Boise	1	0.2
Bonner	30	4.8
Bonneville	16	2.6
Boundary	22	3.5
Butte	2	0.3
Camas	1	0.2
Canyon	72	11.5
Caribou	5	0.8
Cassia	6	1.0
Clark	0	0.0
Clearwater	5	0.8
Custer	2	0.3
Elmore	3	0.5
Franklin	6	1.0
Fremont	4	0.6
Gem	15	2.4
Gooding	12	1.9
Idaho	3	0.5
Jefferson	6	1.0
Jerome	10	1.6
Kootenai	37	5.9
Latah	28	4.5
Lemhi	5	0.8
Lewis	4	0.6

Lincoln	3	0.5
Madison	8	1.3
Minidoka	11	1.8
Nez Perce	11	1.8
Oneida	0	0.0
Owyhee	7	1.1
Payette	22	3.5
Power	1	0.2
Shoshone	0	0.0
Teton	4	0.6
Twin Falls	49	7.9
Valley	9	1.4
Washington	15	2.4
Unknown	81	13.0
Total	624	100

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

The county with the largest number of respondents was Canyon County with 11% (*n* = 72) of the respondents coming from this county. Respondents from Ada County made up 10% (*n* = 63) of the participants, and 8% (*n* = 49) were participants from the Twin Falls County Extension office. Kootenai County Extension office had accounted for 6% (*n* = 37) participants complete the survey. Three of these counties are in the top five largest populated counties in Idaho.

Instrumentation

This study was conducted using a researcher-developed survey related to parent/guardian perceptions of their involvement in youth Extension programs. The survey was developed using the Qualtrics® online software and was self-administered by respondents. Access was provided to participants through an emailed survey link.

The online survey instrument included four sections. Section one included information pertaining to family characteristics, including: county of youth participation, number of children, ages of children, occupational status of participant, occupation description of

participant, and agricultural background information for participant and significant other if applicable. Section two of the instrument allowed respondents to report information about involvement in youth Extension programs including: previous involvement with Extension programs, years involved in youth Extension programs, types of programs their youth were involved in, and personal attendance at Extension programs. Respondents were asked to note preferences for logistical factors in section three including: barriers effecting participants decision to attend an Extension event, preferred modes of communication, personal interest in involvement with Extension events, and participants desire to be involved in Extension events. Section four included demographics questions related to: marital status, gender, participant's year of birth, and ethnicity. The entire print version of the instrument is available in Appendix A- F.

The section one questions related to family characteristics included multiple choice, fill in the blank, select all that apply and likert-type questions. Participants were able to respond to the number of children they had with choices from 1 to 7. Ages were later classified using the 4-H manual age divisions; ages were determined by the age of the child on January 1 of each year. Respondents were asked through multiple-choice questions if they had an occupation, and what their current occupation was. Through likert-type questions participants were able to share their level of involvement with agriculture through their educational and occupational background and their involvement in Extension programs during their youth, college, and in their career.

Section two included questions related to participants' involvement in Extension activities. Question types included multiple choice, fill in the blank, multiple response and likert-type questions. Participants were asked to share their years of involvement in

Extension ranging from 1 to 11 or more years. Respondents also indicated their reasons for involving their youth in Idaho Extension programs. Responses available included: content knowledge, social interactions, required for youth 4-H project, and other. Participants were asked to share the program areas that their youth were involved in through Extension. Those programs were: the afterschool program, day camps, multi-day camps, 4-H and other, multiple choices could be selected by participants if their youth was involved in more than one area. Respondents reported their personal level of gain by attending Extension events.

Logistical factors of programs were the focus of questions in section three. Logistical factors included: fees and cost, childcare, food, transportation, dates, and times. Participants were asked to rate their preferences of modes of communication that included; email, text, flier, Facebook, Club Meetings, 4-H Extension staff, newsletter, face-to-face, and other. Each question showed the influence of a logistical factor on participants attending an event or preference of a mode of communication. A follow up question also asked respondents to include their most available times during the week. These questions allowed for multiple selections of days and times participants were most available. Respondents shared their ability and desire to help with Extension events.

Section four included questions about participants' demographic information. Questions included: marital status, gender, year of birth, and ethnicity. All questions were multiple choice or fill in the blank, respondents were not required to answer any demographic questions, and could select prefer not to answer.

The instrument was examined by a panel of experts to evaluate content and face validity. The panel included Extension educators, agricultural education faculty members, and parents/guardians of youth in Extension education programs.

Data Collection

Instruments were distributed through email to the selected population using principles noted in Dillman's Design Methods (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). Findings were analyzed through quantitative statistical analysis.

Dillman's, et al., (2014) tailored design method was used to guide the distribution of surveys to respondents. In accordance with Dillman's et al., (2014) design methods, six points of contact were made between the research team and the participants. The six points of contact included: (a) a pre-notice email, (b) a request for participation, (c) a reminder via email, (d) a secondary request for participation, (e) a third request for participation, and (f) a final contact email. The pre-notice email was sent on January 1, 2018, the request for participation was sent on January 8, 2018, a reminder email was send on January 19, 2018, a secondary request for participation was sent on January 26, 2018, a third request for participation was sent on February 5, 2018, and a final contact email was made on February 12, 2018. The entire timeline for data collection is shown in Table 3.5.

Table 3. 5

Email Contact Timeline

Dillman's, et al., Point of Contact	Date of Contact
Pre-notice email	January 1, 2018
Request for participation	January 8, 2018
Reminder via email	January 19, 2018
Secondary request for participation	January 26, 2018
Third request for participation	February 5, 2018
Final contact email	February 12, 2018

In addition to six points of contact, additional measures were taken to increase response rate by following social exchange theory, outlined by Dillman et al. (2014). Tailored Design Method features used in this study are shown in Table 3.6.

An average response rate for mailed surveys is 55% (Baruch, 1999; Welch & Barlau, 2013). The average online survey response rate for online surveys is 33% (Nulty, 2008). More surveys are being administered online, but response rate is lower than 55% (Sheehan, 2001; Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004; Welch & Barlau, 2013). Though in a study by Oyler & Giles, (2005) a 70% response rate was collected via web-based survey and only 61% response rate for mailed surveys containing the same questions (Converse, Wolfe, Huang, & Oswald, 2008; Kiernan, Kiernan, Oyler, & Giles, 2005; Welch & Barlau, 2013). The survey instrument for this study was accessed $n = 699$ times, yielding $n = 630$ usable responses. To be considered a usable response, respondents answered at least one question outside of the demographic characteristics. The usable response rate for this study was 61.5%. ($n = 630$).

Table 3. 6

Dillman, et al., (2014) Tailored Design Method Features Present in Data Collection

Dillman Section	Features Included	
Increasing Benefits	Provide information about the survey	• Pre-notice letter • Appealed to respondents as experts and stating that we need their help to gather information (in pre-notice and welcome email)
	Show positive regard	• Provided email for contact
	Support group values	• Stated that responses will help the agricultural Extension education profession (value based group with common goals)
	Make the questionnaire interesting	• Interactive instrument questions

	Provide social validation	• In follow up letters, it stated that "many of your colleagues have already provided their valued input"
	Inform people that opportunities to respond are limited	• Follow up letters addressed the urgency of the survey closing deadline "the survey link will remain active for only a few more days"
Decreasing Costs	Make it convenient to respond	• Survey link included in the welcome letter and in all follow up correspondence
	Avoid subordinating language	• All requests phrased from an appeal for help or advice standpoint
	Making the survey short and easy to complete	• Less than 5 minutes of average time to complete
	Minimize requests to obtain personal of sensitive information	• No sensitive questions asked
Establishing Trust	Obtain Sponsorship of Legitimate Authority	• Including University of Idaho name in all correspondence
	Make the task appear to be important	• Appealed to respondents as experts, stated that they were nominated for the task at hand
	Ensure confidentiality	• Stated that responses are anonymous on welcome, section on confidentiality included in the information sheet

Several strategies were employed to minimize the potential for non-response error. Researchers have suggested that sending professionally appealing, easily understood statements, including researcher contact information, visually appealing questions, and a limited burden on time can help improve response rates (Borg & Gall, 1983; Welch & Barlau, 2013). Survey responses should take no longer than 20 minutes (Borg & Gall, 1983; Welch & Barlau, 2013). To address these factors, this study included short easily read contact emails for respondents that included researcher information, visually pleasing

questions that were easily understood by participants, and the survey was anticipated to take no longer than 5 minutes.

As an additional effort to help control for non-response error, early and late responders were compared in order to estimate the effects of non-response (Lindner, Murphy, & Briers, 2001; Welch & Barlau, 2013). Non-respondents may be similar to those late respondents; so late respondents can be used as a representation of non-respondents (Welch & Barlau, 2013). Educational research has been using this method since 1939 in a study conducted by Pace (Miller & Smith, 1983; Welch & Barlau, 2013; Pace, 1939). Early responders were classified as participants who responded before January 19, 2018 and late responders were those who completed the survey after February 5, 2018.

When comparing early and late responders only scale data was examined (Miller & Smith, 1983; Lindner, et al., 2001). The first wave of participants, who responded before January 19, 2018 and the last wave of respondents who completed the survey after February 5, 2018 were compared as they both exceed more than 30 responses as recommended by Lindner, et al., (2001). No significant differences were found between early and late responders.

Data Analysis

Data were evaluated through quantitative methods. Following data collection, the information from the survey instrument was downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet for coding then imported and analyzed using IBM SPSS v. 24. The descriptive nature of this study resulted in analysis including frequencies and percentages. Data analysis methods are described in Table 3.7.

Table 3. 7

Data Analysis of Objectives

Objective	Type of Analysis
1. Describe family characteristics	Frequencies and percentages were determined for each characteristic (number of children, occupations of adults in household, etc.)
2. Modes of communication	Mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum were reported for each logistical factor
3. Perceptions of logistics	Mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum were reported for each logistical factor
4. Relationship between	Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated between family characteristics and reported parental involvement

Limitations and Assumptions

While all efforts to minimize threats to validity were taken, several inherent limitations exist with this study. Non-response error was the most likely limitation. Methods to control for non-response error were taken, including comparing early and late responders (Lindner, et al., 2001).

This study was conducted with the following assumptions: respondents were parents or guardians of youth enrolled in Extension education programs at the time of the survey completion and respondent's answered instrument items truthfully.

Summary

The population of this study was parents and guardians with youth involved in Extension programs in the state of Idaho. Dillman's, et al., tailored design methods were used to contact participants (Dillman, et al., 2014). Six points of contact were made with participants via email to increase response rate (Dillman, et al., 2014). Survey questions sections included family characteristics, Extension involvement, logistical factors of

participant involvement in Extension programs, and demographics of participants. Non-responses were considered and examined by comparing early and late responders (Lindner, et al., 2001). The purpose of this project was to examine ways to get parents and guardians involved in their children's activities, and their preferred modes of communication of information.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter includes the findings of each research objective from this study. Objectives from this study were to determine family characteristics, parent/guardian preferences for types of communication, parent/guardian perceptions of logistical factors for youth Extension programs, parent/guardian involvement in Extension programs, and the relationship between family characteristics and preferred modes of communication. This section will include the findings for each objective as analyzed through the data analysis procedures outlined in the methods section.

Research Objective 1- Describe family characteristics for families with children involved in youth Extension programs in Idaho

The purpose of this research objective was to describe family characteristics of those families who were involved in Idaho 4-H Extension education and enrolled in 4honline. These characteristics included questions pertaining to the number of parents/guardians who work in the household, the number of children who were in the family, and the ages of those children for the number of children in a family and the age division that those children were included in for 4-H Extension activities. Through the family characteristics portion of the survey we were able to determine the amount of agricultural background in families through past and present educational and occupational agriculture experiences. Respondents reported what Extension activities their youth were involved in and if they were involved in other non-Extension activities.

The first question in the survey instrument asked respondents to report the occupational status for both themselves and the other parent/guardians of youth involved with youth Extension activities. Results of that question are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4. 1

Number of Parents/Guardians Who Work (n = 552)

Demographic Response	*f*	%
One	145	26.3
Two or More	407	73.3

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

More than 70% (*n* = 407) of respondents indicted that both parents/guardians held some type of occupation. Only one parent was reported to work by approximately 26% (*n* = 145) of respondents. The occupational classification, including information related to seeking work, was gathered through question 51 and is reported in Table 4.2. Participants could select what type of occupation they held including: employed for wages, self-employed, out of work and looking for work, out of work but not currently looking for work, a homemaker, a student, military, retired, and unable to work. It is important to note that information about the type of work for the non-responding parent was not collected.

Table 4. 2

Occupational Classification (n = 564)

Demographic Response	*f*	%
Employed for wages	318	56.4
Self-employed	110	19.5
Out of work and looking for work	2	0.4
Our of work but not currently looking for work	0	0.0
A homemaker	107	19.0
A student	4	0.7
Military	5	0.9
Retired	16	2.8
Unable to work	2	0.4
Non-response	66	

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Of the 70% of respondents who answered this question, more than 55% (*n* = 318) were employed for wages. Approximately 19% (*n* = 110) were self-employed and approximately 19% (*n* = 107) were homemakers. This information was gathered only from the parent who responded to the survey, not their spouse. No information was gathered to note if respondents were in a single-parent household.

Respondents were also asked to report the number of children in their household. This question asked for the number of children regardless of age. Responses are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4. 3

Number of Children (n = 575)

Demographic Response	*f*	%
One	105	18.3
Two	204	35.5
Three	129	22.4
Four	76	13.2
Five	33	5.7
Six	21	3.7
Seven or More	7	1.2

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Information from respondent's children's ages was used to determine age divisions of youth based on the 4-H age breaks. Table 12 results were calculated based on age division from the 4-H program. Divisions include cloverbuds, ages 5-8, juniors, ages 9-11, intermediates, ages 12-14, and seniors, ages 15-19. Ages of children younger or aged out of 4-H are also shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4. 4

Ages of Children by Division (n = 630)

Demographic Response	*f*	%
Less than 5	67	10.6
Cloverbud (5-8)	185	29.4
Junior (9-11)	244	38.7
Intermediate (12-14)	261	41.4
Senior (15-19)	242	38.4
More than 19	105	16.7

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Age groups were found in the 2018 Idaho state 4-H manual. Age divisions were determined by the age of the child on January 1 of each year, as they were reported this way through 4honline.

Respondents reported involvement in agriculture through their education or occupation. Participants responded to this question for themselves as well as their significant other, if applicable. Participants were able to answer if they were involved or not in agriculture through their occupation or educational background, results are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4. 5

Educational and Occupational Involvement in Agriculture (n = 630)

	Occupational Background		Educational Background	
Demographic Response	*f*	%	*f*	%
Parent/Guardian 1 Agricultural Background	232	36.8	246	39.0
Parent/Guardian 2 Agricultural Background	167	26.5	164	26.0

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Approximately 39% (*n* = 232) of participants who filled out the survey reported that they were involved in agriculture through their occupational or educational background. Participants who reported for their spouse stated that approximately 26% (*n* = 164) of the non-responding parent/guardian were involved in agriculture through an occupational or educational background. Parent involvement in agriculture as youth, in college, and in their career is shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4. 6

Participant Involvement in Agriculture (n = 545)

Involvement in Agriculture	*f*	%
Involvement as youth	302	55.4
Involvement in College	64	13.8
Involvement in Career	121	25.9

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

When asked to report their involvement in agriculture as youth, in college, and in a career, approximately 55% (*n* = 302) of respondents noted that they were involved in agriculture as a youth. Less than 14% (*n* = 64) participants were involved in agriculture through college, and approximately 26% (*n* = 121) were involved in agriculture through a career.

The following question asked respondents to share their reasons for involving their youth in Extension activities. The question allowed parents to mark all that applied from a list including: content knowledge of the program activity, social interactions for youth, the activity was required to complete a 4-H project, and other, results are shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4. 7

Involvement in Extension Education (n = 630)

Reasons for Involving Youth	*f*	%
Content Knowledge	399	63.3
Social Interactions	354	56.2
Required for 4-H Project	394	62.5
Other	112	17.8

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

More than 63% (*n* = 399) of participants stated that they involved their youth in Extension activities because of the content knowledge. Approximately 62% (*n* = 394) of participants stated that they involved their children in Extension activities because they were a requirement for the youth to complete their 4-H project. More than 50% (*n* = 354) selected social interactions as high importance for the involvement of their youth. Other responses from participants include: child wanted to be involved in the program, community involvement, college applications, life skills, leadership, character building, family activity, homeschool curriculum, and because it is a fun program.

To determine participation of respondents youth in Extension programs, respondents were asked to report their children's' involvement with afterschool programs, day camps, multi-day camps, and the 4-H program, results are shown in Table 4.8. Participants were able to select all that applied. These categories' were selected, as they are the events Extension offices offer. Not all activities listed below have a requirement to be in 4-H to attend.

Table 4. 8

Extension Education Activities (n = 630)

Youth Activity Areas	*f*	%
Afterschool Program	54	8.6
Day Camps	214	34.0
Multi-day Camps	161	25.6
4-H	630	100.0

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Of the four areas provided by Extension 4-H was the most popular at 100% participant selection. This finding is consistent with the study population, as a census of parents/guardians of youth involved in Idaho Extension education. Approximately 34% (*n* = 214) of participants involved their youth in day camps. Note that participants of day camps are not required to be involved or enrolled in the 4-H program and can attend by signing a waiver and proof of insurance form. Afterschool programs had less than 10% (*n* = 54) response. This is likely because some afterschool programs in the state of Idaho are not ran by local County Extension offices, rather by other organizations.

The following question asked participants if their youth were involved in other extracurricular activities outside of Extension. Non-Extension activities could include: sports, church groups, band, and drama. Table 4.9 shows responses of participant's youth involvement in non-Extension activities.

Table 4. 9

Non-Extension Activities (n = 519)

Youth involvement in non-Extension activities	*f*	%
Yes	450	86.7
No	69	13.3

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Of the *n* = 519 participants who responded to this question, approximately 87% (*n* = 450) of them responded that their youth was involved in an activity outside of Extension. Activities could include: sports, church groups, band, and drama.

Research Objective 2- Describe the types of communication parents/guardians receive from youth Extension programs in Idaho

The purpose of this research objective was to describe the types of communication that parents/guardians preferred to receive from Extension offices in Idaho about upcoming events and activities for their youth.

Participants were able to select their preferred mode of communication through the following question that was presented as likert-type questions. Modes of communication for this question included: email, 4-H club meeting, face-to-face, newsletter, 4-H Extension staff, text, flier, Facebook, and other. Results for participants preferred mode of communication are shown in Table 4.10.

Table 4. 10

Preferences for Modes of Communication (n = 630)

Mode of Communication	*n*	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Email	535	3.32	0.817	1	4
4-H Club Meeting	526	3.08	0.872	1	4
Face-to-Face	525	2.84	0.956	1	4
Newsletter	526	2.83	0.957	1	4
4-H Extension Staff	524	2.78	0.915	1	4
Text	527	2.76	1.016	1	4
Flier	515	2.43	0.963	1	4
Facebook	519	2.25	1.084	1	4
Other	172	1.45	0.826	1	4

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Of the nine choices email (*M* = 3.32 and *SD* = 0.817) and 4-H club meetings (M = 3.08 and *SD* = 0.872) were selected as the most preferred way to contact parents/guardians. Fliers were less preferred (*M* = 2.43 and *SD* = 0.963) than most modes of communication offered by Extension offices. Some of the responses from parents/guardians who selected other modes of communication included a preference for phone calls (*n* = 10), and public service announcements such as announcements in the local newspaper, radio or television advertisements (*n* = 5).

Research Objective 3-Describe parent/guardian perceptions of logistical factors related to youth Extension activities

Objective three was to determine parents/guardians perceptions of youth Extension programs logistical factors and barriers including; dates, times, availability of childcare, fees and cost, transportation, and food.

The following question gave respondents the opportunity to select barriers that had the most effect on their decision to attend an event. Barriers included in this question were: dates, times, fees and cost, transportation, childcare and food. Results for this question are shown in Table 4.11.

The largest barrier for parents/guardians was determined as dates and times (*M* = 2.33 and *SD* = 0.637, *M* = 2.32 and *SD* = 0.632), for parents/guardians wanting to go to an activity for youth coordinated through the local Extension office. Fees and cost were also a large (*M* = 1.79 and *SD* = 0.682) barrier that prevented parents/guardians from attending and Extension event.

Table 4. 11

Types of Barriers (n = 630)

Barriers	*f*	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Dates	534	2.33	0.637	1	3
Times	532	2.32	0.632	1	3
Fees and Cost	530	1.79	0.682	1	3
Transportation	527	1.46	0.627	1	3
Child Care	524	1.26	0.516	1	3
Food	525	1.19	0.421	1	3

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Transportation and childcare were also reported as barriers preventing parents/guardians from attending events ($M = 1.46$ and $SD = 0.627$, $M = 1.26$ and $SD = 0.516$). Food was noted as the least problematic barrier ($M = 1.19$ and $SD = 0.421$) for parents/guardians attending events.

Table 4.12 shows the days and times most selected as available for parents to attend and be involved in Extension programs with their youth during the week.

Table 4. 12

Weekly Availability (n = 630)

	Mon. *n*	Tues. *n*	Wed. *n*	Thur. *n*	Fri. *n*	Sat. *n*	Sun. *n*
Morning	33	26	24	30	67	252	123
Afternoon	3	2	4	3	2	44	8
Evening	35	30	34	32	39	30	55
Night	337	196	199	212	184	18	15

Note. Numbers indicate how many times each option was selected. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Figure 4.1 shows the days and times most selected by participants as available for parents/guaridans to attend and be involved in Extension programs with their youth during the week.

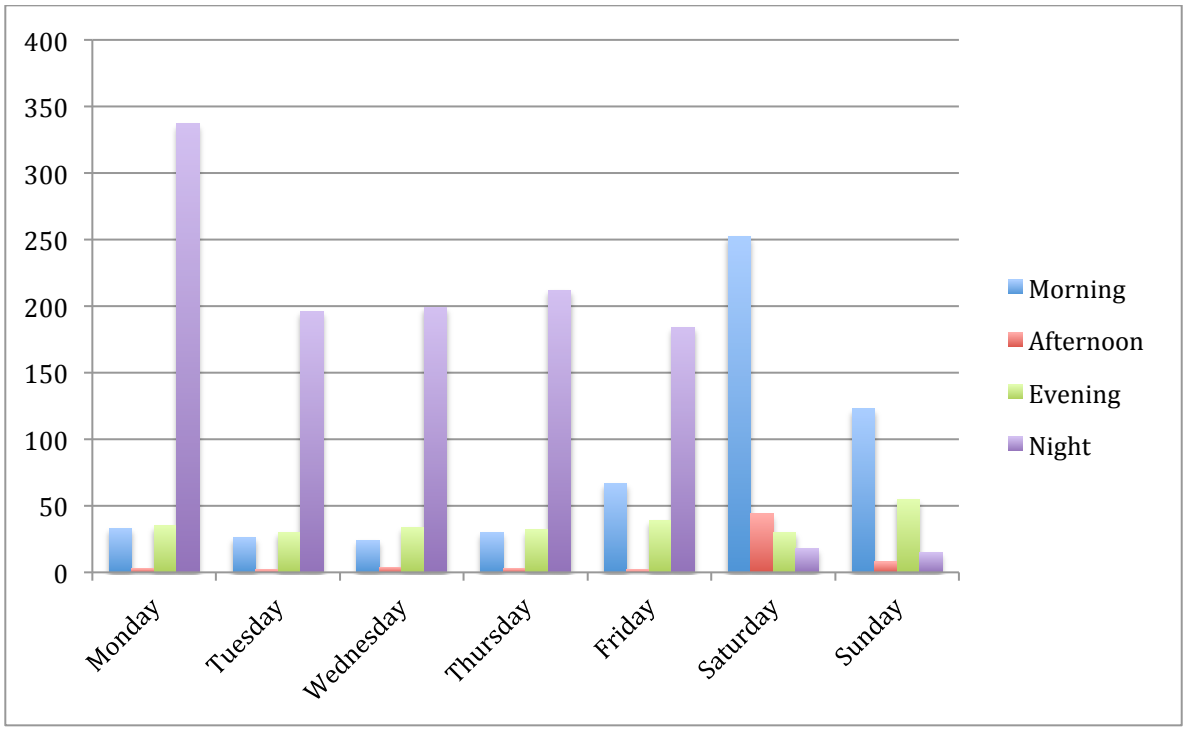

Figure 4. 1 Participant Weekly Availability

Research Objective 4- Describe involvement of parents/guardians with their children's extracurricular activities for parents/guardians of children enrolled in youth Extension programs in Idaho

The purpose of research objective four was to describe the involvement of parents/guardians in their children's extracurricular activities. Table 4.13 depicts parent/guardian attendance with youth Extension activities, Table 4.14 shows how long participants have been involved with their youth, Table 4.15 shows participants perception

on rather they gain from attending and Table 4.18 shows if participants did or would enjoy helping with events.

The following question asked participants if they had attended an Extension activity with their youth. Of the participants who completed the survey *n* = 552 participants completed this question.

Table 4. 13

Parent/Guardian Attendance with Youth to Extension Activities (n = 552)

Attendance to Extension Activity	*f*	%
Yes	519	94.0
No	33	6.0

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Approximately 94% (*n* = 519) of the participants reported attending an Extension activity with their youth. Of the participants 6% (*n* = 33) reported that they had never attended an Extension event with their youth. Parent/guardian involvement in youth Extension programs is shown in Table 4.14.

Approximately 26% (*n* = 143) participants selected that they had been involved in Extension activities with their youth for eleven or more years. Approximately 15% (*n* = 84) of participants reported that they have only been involved with Extension events for one year.

Table 4. 14

Involvement with Youth in Extension (n = 549)

Years Involved with Youth	*f*	%
One	84	15.3
Two	43	7.8
Three	57	10.4
Four	43	7.8
Five	50	9.1
Six	44	8.0
Seven	25	4.6
Eight	24	4.4
Nine	16	2.9
Ten	20	3.6
Eleven or more	143	26.0

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Table 4.15 represents the responses of participants and their perception of personal gain at Extension events.

Table 4. 15

Parent Perception of Personal Gain at Extension Events (n = 508)

Level of Gain	*f*	%
Always	248	48.8
Sometimes	255	50.2
Never	5	1.0

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Of the 94% participants who have attended an Extension event with their youth approximately 49% (*n* = 248) stated that they always felt that they personally gained from attending an Extension event with their child. Approximately 1% (*n* = 5) stated that they never felt they gained from attending an Extension event with their child.

Participants were able to select their perception of the effectiveness of Extension programs. Levels of effectiveness included: very effective, sometimes effective, and never effective. Table 4.16 shows participant responses of their perceptions of the effectiveness of Extension programs.

Table 4. 16

Parent Perception of Effectiveness of Extension Programs (n = 539)

Level of Effectiveness	*f*	%
Very Effective	356	66.0
Sometimes Effective	179	33.2
Never Effective	4	0.7

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Parent perceptions of effectiveness of Extension programs were approximately 66% (*n* = 356) participants believe Extension programs to be very effective. 33% (*n* = 179) of participants believe Extension programs to be sometimes effective.

Participants were able to select their desire to be involved in Extension activities; Table 4.17 shows their responses. Selected desire for involvement included: strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, agree, and strongly agree.

Table 4. 17

Parent/Guardian Desire to be Involved in Extension Activities (n = 531)

Desire for involvement	*f*	%
Strongly disagree	1	0.2
Disagree	10	1.9
Somewhat disagree	12	2.3
Neither agree nor disagree	101	19.0
Somewhat agree	120	22.6
Agree	169	31.8
Strongly agree	118	22.2

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Approximately 4% (*n* = 23) of participants disagree to a degree with the statement of their want to be involved in Extension programs. Of the participants who responded to this question, 76% (*n* = 407) of participants stated that they wanted to be involved in Extension programs by responding either somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree.

Table 4.18 shows results of parents who have helped with Extension programs and those who wish to help with Extension programs.

Table 4. 18

Parent/Guardian Involvement in Extension Activities (n = 524)

Parent/Guardian Program Involvement				
	Yes		No	
	f	%	*f*	%
I have helped with Extension Programs	269	51.3	255	48.7
I want to help with Extension Programs	72	29.3	174	70.7

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Approximately 51% (*n* = 269) of the participants who completed this survey stated that they have helped with an Extension program. From the remainder of participants who have not helped with Extension programs approximately 29% (*n* = 72) stated that they would like to help with Extension programs.

Participant who have helped with Extension events were able to select their level of enjoyment in helping with Extension events. Participants were able to select if they enjoyed helping with events, sometimes enjoy helping with events, or no, they don't enjoy helping with Extension events. Table 4.19 shows parent/guardian level of enjoyment in helping with Extension activities.

Table 4. 19

Parent/Guardian Involvement in Extension Activities (n = 266)

Parents/Guardians level enjoyment in helping with Extension activities	*f*	%
Yes	190	71.4
Sometimes	75	28.2
No	1	0.4

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

From the 269 participants who have helped with an Extension event approximately 71% (*n* = 190) stated that they have a high level of enjoyment when helping with Extension activities.

Research Objective 5- Examine the relationship between family characteristics and parental/guardian involvement in youth Extension programs in Idaho

Objective five examined the relationship between family characteristics and parent/guardian involvement in youth Extension programs. Correlations were found between several variables.

Table 4.20 shows the correlations found between participant's number of kids, age, email, text, flier, Facebook, with Club Meetings, Extension staff, newsletter, and face-to-face preferences.

Table 4. 20

Correlations (n = 630)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Number of Kids	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
2. Age	0.02	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
3. Email	-0.10	0.00	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
4. Text	0.00	-0.19	0.17	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
5. Flier	0.00	0.06	0.05	-0.02	--	--	--	--	--	--
6. Facebook	-0.03	-0.19	0.20	0.36	0.12	--	--	--	--	--
7. Cl. Meeting	-0.10	0.01	0.18	0.17	0.27	0.23	--	--	--	--
8. Ext. Staff	-0.06	0.06	0.19	0.19	0.25	0.10	0.37	--	--	--
9. Newsletter	-0.03	0.13	0.13	0.03	0.43	0.05	0.31	0.47	--	--
10. Face-to-face	0.01	0.07	0.06	0.08	0.16	0.01	0.26	0.44	0.30	--

Note. All participants who completed this question were included, which may account for differences in *n* between questions.

Recommendations from Davis (1971) were used to determine the strength of association between factors. A moderate correlation existed between age of parents and preferences for both text and Facebook communication.

Summary

Based on the results of this study there are several conclusions that can be drawn about parental involvement in Extension youth programs. Among these conclusions are:

- There was a large amount of diversity in the families who have youth involved in Extension programs in the state of Idaho.
- Many families who are involved in 4-H programs through Idaho Extension have been involved for many years, only a small portion of families are new to the program.
- Most respondents reported involving their youth in Extension activities because of content knowledge, social interactions, and it was required for their youth's 4-H project.
- The majority of respondents stated that they believe Extension programs to be very effective. Participants also felt that they personally gained knowledge by attending an Extension event with their youth.
- The largest identified barrier that could prevent parents and guardians attendance at Extension programs were dates, times, and fees and cost.
- The majority of participants selected Monday nights and Saturday mornings as their most available times to attending events put on by Idaho Extension programs.

- There was a correlation between ages and the preference for Facebook and text as their preferred mode of communication.

It is important for Extension educators to note the wide range of diversity in factors, barriers, and effects of families attending Extension programs. Among the wide range of diversity, it is important to note some similarities did exist between families. Many participants had personally been involved in agriculture as youth.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSTIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & DISCUSSION

This study was created to examine family characteristics for families with children involved in Extension programs in Idaho, describe the types of communication parents/guardians prefer from youth Extension programs in Idaho, describe parent/guardian perceptions of logistical factors related to Extension activities, and describe involvement of parents/guardians with their children's extracurricular activities for parents/guardians of children enrolled in youth Extension programs. This study included a census of parents and guardians (n = 1,025) who had youth involved in Extension education in the state of Idaho and had enrolled children through 4honline. The investigation included examining the parent/guardians perceptions of personal involvement, factors, barriers, and benefits of involvement in Extension programs with youth in the state of Idaho. The findings from this study cannot be generalized to all parent and guardians perceptions that have youth involved in youth Extension programs in the state of Idaho or to parents outside of the 4honline system. Thus, Extension offices should consider the results from this study when recruiting and seeking involvement from parents and guardians with youth involved.

Family Characteristics

To address research objective one, family characteristics, participants were asked the number of parents who worked in the household and their type of occupation, number of youth in the household and the ages of those children, their involvement in agriculture through their career and education, reasons for involving their youth in Extension, and what activities their youth were involved in within Extension.

Based on the results from this study, there is much diversity in the make up of families with children involved in youth Extension activities. Families had anywhere from one child to more than 8, and had children with ages ranging from just a few months old to children in their thirties. Several families reported having children in every age category. Many families reported being involved in youth Extension programs for more than 11 years. Several of the respondents reported being new to Extension programs, being involved for less than two years. There were also wide ranges of involvement with agriculture from a parental occupational and educational background. The results highlighted that there was not a 'typical family' in the Idaho 4honline system.

For Extension educators, the wide range of family characteristics means that no single family can be overlooked in the administration of youth Extension programs. Extension educators should be mindful of the barriers that might exist for families with young children (Murdock & Paterson, 2002), and families with working parents (Caspe & Lopez, 2006; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; Norland, 1992). By addressing the needs of a wide variety of families, Extension youth programs may be better suited to meet the needs of current and potential participants. For parents, understanding the wide variety of needs Extension educators are trying to meet may help increase understanding of the requirement to set logistical factors which are common to many different family types.

Although there was diversity in the make up of families who completed this study, it is important to note that similarities existed between respondents. More than half of the parents/guardians (55.0%) noted that they were personally involved in agriculture when they were young. This finding speaks to the tradition built into programs like youth Extension. More than 25% (n = 143) of participants stated that their family had been involved in youth

Extension programs for more than 11 years. Further research could be conducted to examine differences in perceptions of youth Extension between those parents who were involved as youth and those who were not involved as a child.

Parents with an occupation could create a barrier for families with children in programs out of school, as some parents work late shift or have meeting at night (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). By asking if more than one parent or guardian has an occupation researchers were able to examine the number of parents/guardians who may be working an unable to attend events. This study helped researchers conclude that there are many barriers preventing parents/guardians from attending events and scheduling events during parents/guardians most available times can help reduce times and dates as a barrier. Parents with work schedules have less time available (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007). Some may have late work schedules, or meetings as determined in previous studies (Caspe & Lopez, 2006; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; Norland, 1992). It is important to recognize the time parents/guardians are most available to help increase parent/guardian involvement and attendance at programs.

Ages of children were investigated as a potential barrier. In previous having young children was found to be a barrier to parental involvement when a child was to young or not involved in a program with their sibling (Caspe & Lopez, 2006; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; Norland, 1992). There were many new families who in this study recently joined the Extension program. Involving their younger children at events could impact families whose oldest children are just entering Extension programs. These young families also don't have the history or background knowledge about the program. Extension educators may need to help families understand the program and help integrate their families, this could also be an

opportune time to solicit for new family volunteers for the program. Results from this study also helped us conclude that there were many families who had been involved for more than eleven years with their youth. Although these families may not have young children at home many time families have other children who are involved in other extracurricular activities. Extension educators should take into consideration ages of youth who are not attending. Several families reported childcare as a barrier and providing childcare could help reduce this as a barrier for parents/guardians who want to be involved with their youth in Extension programs.

Participant's previous involvement in agriculture was also p. Researchers in previous studies concluded that adults like to learn about the "need to know" and enjoy the experience of learning (Knowles, Swanson, & Holton, 2005; Strong, et al., 2010). Parents who have had previous involvement in agriculture could be more to enroll their children in Extension programs, as many are focused around agriculture. 55% (n = 302) of participants reported previous involvement in agriculture. Based on this finding, it may be possible that parents and guardians who experienced agriculture as youth are more willing to have their children participate in Extension activities.

Family characteristics were investigated to describe their potential to influence involvement of a family. Parents and guardians with young children (cloverbuds or younger) might require childcare to attend an event by the Extension office. As a way to combat this barrier we recommend providing childcare by using other parents, or ask local 4-H teen leaders to volunteer their time to help with the event. Many participants reported being involved in Extension programs for more than 11 years, and several respondents reported being new to the program. Approximately half of respondents stated that they were

previously involved in agriculture. Characteristics of families could be potential barriers for involvement of parents and guardians, it is important for Extension educators to recognize the diversity and similarities of the families in their counties.

Years of Family Involvement

Many respondents reported that their family had been involved in youth Extension programs for many years, and only a small portion of families were new to the program. Studies have suggested that most 4-H children drop out either after the first year or when they turn 14 years old (Murdock & Paterson, 2002; Perkins & Butterfield, 1999). The drop out of children after their first year and when they are 14 years old, could indicate the importance of providing additional support to children and families at critical retention times. Extension educators should be aware of these times in which families drop out of the program so that they can better recruit and retain.

Although there are two large drop out times for youth it is important to note that many families reported being involved with Extension programs for over eleven years. Several of the respondents in this study reported multiple children completing the program during their time with Extension. By focusing on the retention of these first year families, enrollment numbers for second year families could increase. Knowing length of involvement of families could help determine why families are involved for many years. Further research could help determine why families are involved for 11 years or more.

Reason for Youth Involvement in Program

Most parents/guardians in this study involved their youth in Extension programs because of the content knowledge that they provide and because they were a required part of their youth's 4-H project. Several parents selected social interactions as a reason for

involving youth in the Extension program. For Extension educators, the importance of content knowledge cannot be overlooked. As programs teach children life skills it is important to continue teaching quality content to youth because content knowledge is the most important reason for involvement (Murdock & Paterson, 2002). There was also a need stated for Extension programs to provide social interactions. Another reason parents/guardians reported for involving their youth was for the leadership skills they would gain. It is important for Extension educators to note this as it emphasizes the importance of providing leadership experiences to youth through Extension programs. Allowing families to help with decision making for programs could help create leadership experiences for youth and parents/guardians who are involved (Epstein, 1997).

A majority of respondents believed Extension programs to be very effective. Participants also reported they felt like they personally gained knowledge by attending an Extension event with their child. Sharing these knowledge gains of involved parents could help stimulate involvement from the uninvolved. Involving youth parents/guardians in decision-making could help create new ideas for improving the program and the content of programs.

Effectiveness of Youth Extension Programs

This study identified the importance of adult involvement in youth Extension activities (Epstein, 1997). Epstein's (1997) theory was parents who are involved, can better teach at home, communicate with program more effectively, volunteer more, learn more about program content at home, help make program decisions, and are more involved in the community.

Although there were 96% (n = 519) of parents/guardians who were involved and enjoyed being involved 6% (n = 33) of parents were not currently involved in an Extension program with their child. It is important to reach out to those parents and guardians as to create better contacts, help improve programs, and to get more volunteers. By reaching of to all parents you could increase parent/guardian involvement (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; Murdock & Patterson, 2002).

Parent/Guardian Perceptions of Logistical Factors

Based on the results of this study, we can conclude what barriers and benefits were factors in parent and guardian decision making to attend an Extension event or program. Reported barriers included; time conflicts, unavailable transportation, fees or cost of an activity, and lack of childcare for younger siblings (Caspe & Lopez, 2006; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; Norland, 1992). Benefits can be determining factors for parents and guardians deciding to attend an event. Benefits include; times, available transportation, provided childcare or whole family inclusion, little or no fees, and food or snacks (Caspe & Lopez, 2006; Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; Norland, 1992).

The barriers that had the largest effect on a parent or guardian determining to attend an event were transportation and childcare. To overcome these barriers, Extension educators could hold programs at multiple locations, or rotate where events are held throughout the year. Childcare could be reduced as a barrier by providing family events that include younger and older children. This can be hard as they all have different learning levels. Another option could be offering childcare at the event.

Food was the least selected barrier in parent and guardians determining factors to attend an event. Others who did not respond could benefit by providing food. Further research could determine if economic status has an effect food as a barrier for families.

For Extension educators each barrier should be considered when creating an event. By addressing these barriers Extension youth programs may be better suited to increase parent and guardian involvement. Further research could be conducted to examine additional barriers of youth Extension programs.

Preferences in Types of Communication for Parents/Guardians

Parents and guardians responding to this study reported different preferences in their preferred modes of communication. Researchers conducting previous studies suggested that as technology increases, preferences for modes of communication would also change, as their benefits are greater (Thompson, et al., 2015; Jacobson, 2003; Seitsinger, et al., 2008; Thompson, 2008). Modes of communication measured in this study included; email, 4-H club meeting, face-to-face, newsletter, 4-H Extension staff, text, flier, Facebook, and other.

Email and 4-H club meetings were reported as the most preferred modes of communication in Extension programs. We also found a relationship between age of respondent and their preferred the use of text and Facebook. This relationship could be because younger parents may use social media more often than other parents and are more comfortable with technologies as they have grown up with them (Thompson, et al., 2015).

Reaching out to parents/guardians who may not prefer technology as a mode of communication is important. Extension educators may consider reaching out to parents and guardians by contacting them using several modes of communication. This could help reach parents with preferences for modes of communication and can help reach parents where

technology may be a barrier. Participants, who selected other, stated that they would also like Extension program announcements to be communicated through phone calls, and public announcements such as in a local newspaper, or radio advertisement. The most effective way to reach a diverse group of parents/guardians could be by using several different modes of communication.

Scheduling of Extension Events

Results from this study lead us to conclude that parents/guardians were most available Monday nights, and Saturday mornings. Based on the results it is important to recognize the importance of these times in scheduling events for optimum participation and attendance from parents/guardians and youth.

It is important for Extension educators to recognize that many other activities that families are involved in including, sports, church groups, and band occur other times during the week, most commonly Tuesday through Friday afternoons and nights. Research from this study has helped researchers conclude that parents and guardians prefer Extension events to be scheduled during week nights or weekend mornings.

Examine correlations between ages and preferences for Facebook and text as their preferred mode of communication

Results from this study led us to conclude that parents/guardians who are younger prefer Facebook and text than other parents/guardians. Pearson's correlations were used to determine if there was any correlation between family characteristics and preferred modes of communication Davis (1971) correlations strengths were used to determine strength of correlation between factors. Correlation between age and preferred mode of communication were determined to be moderately correlated.

For Extension educators, recommendation based on results, showed that use of text and email is appropriate to all parents who use email and text often. It is important to note that not all young parents prefer the use of email and text. For Extension educators, it is important to know your parents/guardians personal preferred mode of communication to contact them. Extension educators could also use several modes of communication for each program or event to contact more parents/guardians.

Recommendations

Our recommendation to increase parent/guardian involvement requires many areas of improvement. It is important to know your community and the preferred modes of communication, know most available dates and times that other activities are most likely not occurring, and reduce the amount of barriers preventing parent and guardian involvement. Many parents/guardians who are involved tend to stay involved, as this study indicated that many families have been involved in Extension education programs in the state of Idaho eleven years or more. This being said there are still parents/guardians who aren't involved.

When sending out information pertaining to future events or activities by the Extension program to yield the highest results contact parents through multiple modes of communication. Plan program activities around other scheduled events in your community. Parents/guardians indicated the highest levels of availability on Monday evenings and Saturday mornings, program administrators may want to consider planning events for these times for the largest amount of participation. Reduce barriers by providing additional benefits at Extension programing events. Providing childcare could increase parent/guardian involvement as it reduces barriers that Extension programs could help prevent.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations are for future research to further examine findings from this study:

- For the purpose of this study, participants were asked why they chose to involve youth. However, youths desire to participate was not considered and may be a factor in parent and guardians involvement with Extension programs.
- Participants reported their child's involvement in other non-Extension activities, including sports, church groups, band, and drama, but participants were not asked about their own parental involvement in their youth's non-Extension activities.
- Research findings could be examined yearly through follow up surveys helping determine if there are changes in preferences for communication modes, or additional barriers that need to be considered.
- Socio-economics could be considered as they may have additional effect on barriers for some families.
- Another study could also help determine if Extension educators have the same preferences and examine what modes of communication they are currently using and what barriers they are trying to reduce with parents/guardians.

Summary

In any study, there are limitations and obstacles present. To develop higher quality results and recommendations, more resources and data are needed than what we were able to provide through this single study. Future researchers could use this study as a foundation to determine a more accurate representation of the barriers, benefits, and logistical factors that help parents and guardians determine their attendance to an event or not.

To reach a higher level of involvement from parents/guardians in Extension programs, Extension offices should consider the importance of barriers, benefits, and logistical factors of programs they create and facilitate. A majority of participant were involved in their youth's Extension activities. Overall, the participants from this study were not involved due to date and time conflicts, lack of childcare, and not hearing about the event through their preferred mode of communication. Increased parent/guardian involvement could be achieved by following recommendations of this study. Parent/guardian increased involvement could also lead to higher success for youth through academics, and social interactions, and can create more positive benefits of Extension programs.

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APPENDIX A-PRENOTICE EMAIL

January 1

Dear Parents,

Extension education needs parents and guardians to be successful. Throughout the state of Idaho many parents and guardians are involved in their youths Extension education programs. Some of the challenges of getting parents and guardians involved are communication, barriers, and understanding benefits parents want to gain through being involved in Extension programs.

I am writing to ask for your help in understanding how to increase parent and guardian involvement in Extension education program. The best way we know how to do this is by asking people throughout the state of Idaho to share their thoughts and opinions with us. Your address was obtained through 4honline to help in this study.

Next week you will be sent a link to the survey, the survey will close February 5th. The survey should take no more than 5 minutes to complete. By taking a few minutes to complete the survey, you will be adding greatly to out understanding of parent and guardian involvement in Extension programs.

Many Thanks,

Samantha Roberts

APPENDIX B- REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION EMAIL

January 8

Dear Parents,

Extension education needs parents and guardians to be successful. Throughout the state of Idaho many parents and guardians are involved in their youths Extension education programs. Some of the challenges of getting parents and guardians involved are communication, barriers, and understanding benefits parents want to gain through being involved in Extension programs.

Last week you were sent an email stating the reasons for this study. To complete the survey, just click this web address here https://uidaho.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eDOO69lotEV11o9. Para español, haga clic en esta dirección web aquí https://uidaho.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2370xkphQgXihQF. If you have any questions please contact Kasee Smith at klsmith@uidaho.edu or Samantha Roberts at robe5894@vandals.uidaho.edu

By taking a few minutes to complete the survey, you will be adding greatly to out understanding of parent and guardian involvement in Extension programs.

Your responses are voluntary and will be kept confidential. Your names are not on our mailing list, and your answers will never be associated wit your address in any way.

Many Thanks,

Samantha Roberts

APPENDIX C- REMINDER EMAIL 1

January 19

Dear Parents,

Last week, we mailed you a letter asking for your help with a study about parent and guardian involvement in Extension programs.

If you or someone in your household has already completed the questionnaire, please accept our sincere thanks. If not, please complete the survey online as soon as possible. We are especially grateful for your help with this important study.

To complete the survey, just click this web address here https://uidaho.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eDOO69lotEV11o9. Para español, haga clic en esta dirección web aquí https://uidaho.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2370xkphQgXihQF. If you have any questions please contact Kasee Smith at klsmith@uidaho.edu or Samantha Roberts at robe5894@vandals.uidaho.edu

Your responses are voluntary and will be kept confidential. Your names are not on our mailing list, and your answers will never be associated wit your address in any way.

Many Thanks,

Samantha Roberts

APPENDIX D- SECONDARY REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION EMAIL

January 26

Dear Parents,

Three weeks ago, we mailed you a letter asking for your help with a study about parent and guardian involvement in Extension programs.

If you or someone in your household has already completed the questionnaire, please accept our sincere thanks. If not, please complete the survey online as soon as possible. We are especially grateful for your help with this important study.

To complete the survey, just click this web address here https://uidaho.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eDOO69lotEV11o9. Para español, haga clic en esta dirección web aquí https://uidaho.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2370xkphQgXihQF. If you have any questions please contact Kasee Smith at klsmith@uidaho.edu or Samantha Roberts at robe5894@vandals.uidaho.edu

Your responses are voluntary and will be kept confidential. Your names are not on our mailing list, and your answers will never be associated wit your address in any way.

Many Thanks,

Samantha Roberts

APPENDIX E- THIRD REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION EMAIL

Feb 5

Dear Parents,

Four weeks ago, we mailed you a letter asking for your help with a study about parent and guardian involvement in Extension programs.

If you or someone in your household has already completed the questionnaire, please accept our sincere thanks. If not, please complete the survey online as soon as possible. We are especially grateful for your help with this important study.

To complete the survey, just click this web address here https://uidaho.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eDOO69lotEV11o9. Para español, haga clic en esta dirección web aquí https://uidaho.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2370xkphQgXihQF. If you have any questions please contact Kasee Smith at klsmith@uidaho.edu or Samantha Roberts at robe5894@vandals.uidaho.edu

Your responses are voluntary and will be kept confidential. Your names are not on our mailing list, and your answers will never be associated wit your address in any way.

Many Thanks,

Samantha Roberts

APPENDIX F- FINAL CONTACT EMAIL

Feb 12

Dear Parents,

About five weeks ago, we mailed you a letter asking for your opinion about parent and guardian involvement in Extension programs. To the best of our knowledge, we have not yet received your responses. Our hopes are to understand the challenges of increasing parents and guardian's involvement in Extension programs.

We are writing again because of the importance that your responses have for helping to get accurate results. It is only by hearing from nearly everyone in the sample that we can be sure that the results truly represent Idaho parents and guardians.

You can complete the survey online by clicking here https://uidaho.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eDOO69lotEV11o9. Para español, haga clic en esta dirección web aquí https://uidaho.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2370xkphQgXihQF. This address should take you to our survey page.

If you have any questions please contact Kasee Smith at klsmith@uidaho.edu or Samantha Roberts at robe5894@vandals.uidaho.edu

Your responses are voluntary and will be kept confidential. Your names are not on our mailing list, and your answers will never be associated wit your address in any way.

Many Thanks,

Samantha Roberts

APPENDIX G- SURVEY INSTRUMENT

2018 Parent Involvement in Extension Programs

Welcome! Thank you for taking time from your day to complete this survey. We cannot help improve Extension education without the expertise of people like you. The survey should take no more than 5 minutes to complete. The purpose of this study is to examine parent/guardian perceptions of youth Extension programs and their involvement in these programs. For the purpose of this study, an Extension 4-H Program is any activity coordinated or conducted through county Extension programs. These activities may include: 4-H participation, day camps, after school programs, or multi-day camps.
The information that you provide will be kept confidential. By completing the survey, you are consenting to allow researchers to gather your information for the purpose of this study. For additional information regarding the study, click here Information sheet parental involvement.

Q1 What county do your children participate in Extension activities?

_____

Q2 How many children do you have?

- ○ One
- ○ Two
- ○ Three
- ○ Four
- ○ Five
- ○ Six
- ○ Seven or more

Q26 Please share your child's age

_____

Q27 Please share the ages of your children

- ○ Child 1 _____
- ○ Child 2 _____

Q28 Please share the ages of your children

- ○ Child 1 _____
- ○ Child 2 _____
- ○ Child 3 _____

Q29 Please share the ages of your children.

- ○ Child 1 _____
- ○ Child 2 _____
- ○ Child 3 _____
- ○ Child 4 _____

Q30 Please share the ages of your children.

- ○ Child 1 _____
- ○ Child 2 _____
- ○ Child 3 _____
- ○ Child 4 _____
- ○ Child 5 _____

Q31 Please share the ages of your children.

- ○ Child 1 _____
- ○ Child 2 _____
- ○ Child 3 _____
- ○ Child 4 _____
- ○ Child 5 _____
- ○ Child 6 _____

Q32 Please share the ages of your children.

_____

Q4 How many parents/guardians hold occupations in the household?

- ○ One
- ○ Two or More

Q51 What is your occupation

- ○ Employed for wages
- ○ Self-employed
- ○ Out of work and looking for work
- ○ Out of work but not currently looking for work
- ○ A homemaker
- ○ A student
- ○ Military
- ○ Retired
- ○ Unable to work

Q38 Pleases share agricultural background information for parents.

	Parent 1	Parent 2
	Has an agriculture background in their...	Has an agriculture background in their...

Educational Background	○	○
Occupation	○	○

Q37 Have you been involved in Extension?

	Yes	No
As a Youth	○	○
Through College	○	○
In your Career	○	○

Q8 How many years have you been involved with your children in Extension activities?

- ○ One
- ○ Two
- ○ Three
- ○ Four
- ○ Five
- ○ Six
- ○ Seven
- ○ Eight
- ○ Nine
- ○ Ten
- ○ Eleven or more

Q24 What are the reasons for involving your child in Extension events? (choose all that apply)

- ☐ Content Knowledge
- ☐ Social Interactions
- ☐ Required for 4-H Project
- ☐ Other

Q33 What are the other reasons your child attends Extension activities?

_____

Q44 Which activities have your youth participated in through Extension? (choose all that apply)

- ☐ Afterschool programs
- ☐ Day camps
- ☐ Multi-day camps
- ☐ 4-H
- ☐ Other

Q45 What other activities have your youth participated in through Extension?

_____

Q13 Have you attended a 4-H Event with your child?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Q23 How often do you feel like you personally gain knowledge by attending Extension events with your child?

- ○ Always
- ○ Sometimes
- ○ Never

Q36 How effective do you think Extension Programs are?

- ○ Very effective
- ○ Sometimes effective
- ○ Never effective

Q46 How do the following barriers affect your decision to attend an Extension event?

	No influence	May influence	Large influence
Fees and cost	○	○	○
Childcare	○	○	○
Food	○	○	○
Transportation	○	○	○
Dates	○	○	○
Times	○	○	○

Q47 What are other barriers if any that affect your decision to attend an Extension event?

_____

Q5 How much do you prefer the following modes of communication?

	Do not prefer	Prefer slightly	Prefer a lot	Prefer a great deal
Email	○	○	○	○
Text	○	○	○	○
Flier	○	○	○	○
Facebook	○	○	○	○
Club Meeting	○	○	○	○
4-H Extension Staff	○	○	○	○
Newsletter	○	○	○	○
Face-to-face	○	○	○	○

Other	○	○	○	○

Q42 What other types of communication do you like to receive?

_____

Q19 Do you attend your child's non-Extension extracurricular activities?

- ○ Always
- ○ Sometimes
- ○ Never

Q10 Please rate your level of agreement with the statement: I would be interested in seeing more Extension events and activities that involve parents/guardians.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

Q11 What days and times would your children be most available to attend events and activities? (Choose all that apply)

	Anytime	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tuesday	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wednesday	☐	☐	☐	☐
Thursday	☐	☐	☐	☐
Friday	☐	☐	☐	☐
Saturday	☐	☐	☐	☐

Sunday	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q20 Have you been able to help put on events by Extension?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Q21 Would you like to help and/or be more involved in planning and/or conducting 4-H Extension programs?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Q22 Do you appreciate helping or having input into programs conducted by Extension?

- ○ Yes
- ○ Sometimes
- ○ No

Q34 Approximately what percentage of your child's Extension activities do you attend?

_____

Q7 Is your child involved in non-Extension extracurricular activities?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Q41 What is your marital status?

- ○ Married
- ○ Widowed
- ○ Divorced
- ○ Separated
- ○ Never married
- ○ Prefer not to answer

Q40 What is your gender?

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Prefer not to answer

Q49 What year were you born?

_____

Q50 What is your ethnicity?

- ○ White
- ○ Black or African American
- ○ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ○ Asian
- ○ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ○ Other
- ○ Prefer not to answer

APPENDIX H- SURVEY QUESTION REFERENCES

What county do your children participate in through Extension activities?

How many Children do you have? (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014)

What ages are your children? (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014)

How many parents/guardians hold occupations in household?

The activity you are attending occurred at what time of day? (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014)

How did you hear about this activity? Email, text, flier, facebook, club meeting, extension office, newsletter, other. (Ostergren & Riley, 2012)

How many other 4-H events have you attend with your child this year?

How many times did you hear about this event before you decided to attend?

How many activities does your child attend each year?

How long has your family been involved in Extension?

Was food provided at this event?
If yes, was it a deciding factor in attending? (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014)

Were you able to bring younger children to this event?
If no, did you have to find a babysitter? (Catchpole & Arnett, 2014)

Do you feel more involved by attending events with your child? (Horowitz & Bronte-Tinkew, 2007; Xitao & Chen, 2001)

Is your child involved in other extracurricular activities?
If so, do you also attend those activities?

Were you able to help with the event or put input into the event that you are attending? (Fox, 2005)

Would you be interested in seeing more Extension events and activities that involve parents/guardians? (DeBord, et al., 1998)

Do you feel like you learned information by attending the event?

Do you feel like your child will take information away from this event? (Radhakrishna, et al., 2013)

Will you attend another event in the future with your child because you attended today's event? (Hartley, 1983)

Would you be willing to be a volunteer or leader at future Extension events? (Michelle Tate)