

DOES INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL BOOST ONE’S INTEREST IN FOREIGN POLICY? ATTITUDE CHANGE AMONG TOURISTS

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The purpose of this study is to examine the process through which people develop their interest in global issues. More specifically, this study examines how people’s traveling experiences affect their views on the importance of foreign policy. Consistent with the “intergroup contact theory,” we hypothesize that exposure to foreign cultures boosts people’s interest in foreign policy, because traveling involves direct interactions with people from different backgrounds. In order to examine our hypotheses, we conducted an online survey among more than 1,000 adults living in the US. The results of the OLS analyses show that traveling enhances people’s recognition of foreign affairs as an important issue. Dissecting the impact of traveling on people’s interest in foreign policy, this study makes an important contribution to the literature, with implications that are highly relevant in the era of globalization.

Key words: *Tourism; Interest in foreign policy; Intergroup contact theory; Online survey*

Introduction

In recent years, globalization has begun to emerge as one of the most powerful dynamics around the world, drastically changing various aspects of human life. As the impact of globalization deepens at a dramatic speed, traveling is increasingly becoming more common with people visiting different parts of the world with different objectives (World Tourism Organization, 2013). Along with this tendency, traveling has long been a subject of intellectual inquiry, and the issue of tourism has generated

a large number of studies in a variety of fields. One of the most important topics that has received a significant amount of attention is the issue of attitude change among tourists (Fisher & Price, 1991; Pearce, 2010; Richards & Wilson, 2003; Stone & Petrick, 2013). Scholars have widely explored how traveling can transform tourists’ attitudes in different settings (Fisher & Price, 1991; Pearce, 2010; Yoo & Sohn, 2003).

Building upon the insights from previous studies, the goal of the present research is to explore how international traveling affects people’s interest in

foreign policy. While previous studies have widely explored the impact of traveling on different issues, very few studies have systematically examined the link between traveling and individuals' interest in foreign policy. Therefore, this study helps fill the gap in the literature. In theorizing the relationship between these two factors, we rely on the "intergroup contact theory," which suggests that increasing levels of contact among people tend to reduce bias toward others (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011). Because traveling often allows tourists to interact with people of different backgrounds, personal interactions in host countries can deeply influence tourists' worldviews. Is it possible that tourists' interactions with the local residents boost their interest in global issues that impact people of different national and cultural origins? Can traveling enhance tourists' global awareness and their engagement in the policy issues that shape the world beyond their own country's borders? The present research tackles these questions by conducting a web-based survey at a medium-sized public university in the US state of Nebraska. Statistical analyses relying on this survey data verify the effectiveness of the intergroup contact theory in understanding tourists' attitudes toward foreign policy. By advancing our understanding of the process through which tourists develop their interest in foreign policy, the present research generates important implications that are highly relevant in the era of globalization.

In the next section, we review the literature examining the link between the public and foreign policy. We then theorize the impact of traveling on people's interest in foreign policy by relying on the intergroup contact theory. After considering the relationship between these two variables, we explain the data and operationalization of the variables for statistical analyses. Furthermore, we implement the statistical analyses and report the result. The final section summarizes the findings and discusses their implications in the real world.

The Public and Their Interest in Foreign Policy

Studies of public opinion have received a significant amount of attention in the field of political science. Particularly, scholars have long debated over the nature of public opinion about foreign issues.

Many of the studies in this field have focused on public opinion in the context of the US. On the one hand, some argued that US public opinion on world affairs is highly volatile without any consistency. Almond (1950) contended that public opinion could drastically fluctuate without a solid foundation, referring to public opinion as a "mood." As this view represents, scholars have been highly skeptical of the public's ability to accurately understand foreign affairs and make sound political judgments (Converse, 1964). On the other hand, others argue that public opinion can be characterized as "stable" and "rational" (Page & Shapiro, 1992). Knopf (1998) suggests that the public responds to the fluctuation of military spending in a "rational" manner. Different studies verify the picture of the rational public across countries (Isernia, Juhasz, & Rattinger, 2002; Ortiz, 2006). Furthermore, current research by Boudreau and MacKenzie (2013) shows that the American public can judge policy information and subsequently shift its positions under some circumstances (Bullock, 2011). Although these two perspectives above present divergent pictures of the American public, the consensus seems to be emerging in favor of the latter: the public is capable of understanding foreign policy and making rational judgements on foreign affairs (Holsti, 1992).

Along with the debate concerning the nature of public opinion, scholars have engaged in another controversy regarding the impact of public opinion on foreign policy. They have examined whether public opinion in the US really matters in determining the direction of US foreign policy (for a review, see Aldrich, Gelpi, Feaver, Reifler, & Thompson Sharp, 2006). One perspective in this debate does not recognize any impact of public opinion on the policy-making process. One of the pioneering studies conducted by Cohen (1973) suggested that US officials who engage in foreign policy making do not pay much attention to the public. Similarly, Mueller (1973) contended that political elites in the US attempt to shape public opinion rather than vice versa, thus highlighting the passiveness of the public. These studies dismiss the public as an important actor in the process of foreign policy making in the US. However, another perspective argues that the public can significantly affect the direction of foreign policy. Examining the attitudes of foreign policy officials, Powlick (1991) maintained that US

officials who formulate foreign policy are actually responsive to public opinion. Also, scholars indicate that public opinion significantly influences levels of military spending in the US (Gadarian, 2010; Russett, 1990). Although some studies dismiss the importance of public opinion, recent studies tend to verify the importance of the American public as an actor that can influence US foreign policy.

The critical importance of public opinion has also been salient in the European context in which the European Union (EU) has exerted a considerable amount of influence in different issue areas across countries. The EU has gradually expanded its power through multilayered institutions, and people in EU countries find themselves constantly dealing with both the benefits and consequences of European integration in various fields. For instance, McLaren (2002) suggested that people in the EU countries have been deeply concerned about cultural threat from foreign countries. Similarly, evidence shows that people's opposition to immigrants significantly affects their attitudes toward the EU (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005). The public in Europe has played critical roles in determining states' policies toward the EU, especially in situations when EU policy intersects with domestic political issues. Research conducted by Hooghe and Marks (2009) indicated that public preferences significantly shape states' stances toward European integration through the process of electoral competition in the domestic sphere. In the same vein, Lahav (2004) documented that public opinion exerts a considerable amount of influence on states' immigration policies among EU countries. Furthermore, the referendum in the UK in 2016, which resulted in "Brexit" from the EU, vividly demonstrated the importance of public opinion in turning the direction of states' policy in the processes of European integration (Wheeler & Hunt, 2016). These studies conducted in the European context clearly highlight the importance of public opinion in the process of European integration. When foreign affairs have critical bearing on people's lives, the public is more likely to be an integral part of the policy process that can influence foreign relations. Beyond the findings from the American context, European experiences further verify the essential roles of public opinion in determining the content of foreign policy. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that public opinion

exerts a significant amount of influence in shaping states' foreign policy.¹

Whereas scholars have begun to grasp the importance of public opinion as a critical factor in determining foreign policy, scholars have not satisfactorily understood the process through which people develop their interest in foreign policy (Baum & Potter, 2008). So far, scholars have explored a variety of factors that can affect the public's interest in foreign policy. One of the most important actors that powerfully shapes public opinion is the media. Cohen's (1963) classical study documented that the media significantly influences the public's attention to foreign affairs. Echoing this perspective, numerous studies have verified the proposition that the media can establish public agendas (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, 1993; McCombs, 2014; Miller & Krosnick, 2000; Nacos, Bloch-Elkon, & Shapiro, 2011; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). Soroka (2003) indicated the correlation between media coverage and public attention to foreign policy both in the US and the UK. In the analysis of European countries, Peter (2003) showed that the media coverage of the EU significantly boosts the priority of this matter among the public, although the degree of elite polarization in each country moderates this effect. In the context of Canada, Soroka (2002) maintained that the media exerts a considerable amount of influence in setting public agendas in environmental issues.

Closely related to the issue of agenda setting, it is necessary to consider the role of the "issue attention cycle", which refers to the rise and fall of public concerns about some issues (Downs, 1972). Downs suggested that certain issues, such as the environmental ones, go through a series of stages regarding levels of public attention, starting with an "alarmed discovery" to the "gradual decline of intense public interest," thus eventually leading to the disappearance of the issue from the public debate. Consistent with this framework, Henry and Gordon (2001) found that public attention to the problem of air quality followed the issue attention cycle. Similarly, McDonald (2009) contended that public concern about environmental issues is bound to decline over time due to the technical nature of the problems. Furthermore, Petersen (2009) verified the effectiveness of this framework in explaining public concern about international terrorism, predicting declining levels of public support for policy

makers trying to deal with this problem. These studies have repeatedly revealed a close relationship between the media and the public.

In addition to the impacts of the media, it is important to analyze individual attributes that can shape attitudes toward foreign affairs. Studies have examined a variety of factors at the individual level that can significantly influence one's interest in foreign policy. For instance, Sniderman and Citrin (1971) contended that one's self-esteem significantly affects foreign policy attitudes. Another study suggested that religion is a powerful predictor of one's orientations toward US foreign policy in the Middle East (Baumgartner, Francia, & Morris, 2008). Also, research shows that one's belief about human nature significantly affects foreign policy attitudes (Brewer & Steenbergen, 2002). As these studies suggest, it is possible to list numerous variables as possible factors that can powerfully determine one's attitudes toward foreign affairs.

While existing studies are highly useful in examining public interest in foreign policy, they are rather static; they tend to focus on structural and personal factors and fail to consider how people's behavior actually affects their views toward foreign policy. It is possible that people's engagement in a given activity can alter their perspectives on foreign policy. Although one can suggest numerous variables that can influence people's perceptions of foreign policy, we focus on one variable that is critically important in today's world. More specifically, we contend that international traveling can significantly boost people's interest in foreign policy. The next section theorizes how traveling shapes the way people approach foreign policy.

Traveling and People's Interest in Foreign Issues

Scholars have long explored how international traveling affects individual attitudes in different issues (Fisher & Price, 1991; Richards & Wilson, 2003; Stone & Petrick, 2013; Pearce, 2010; Yoo & Sohn, 2003). While there are a large number of studies examining the impacts of international traveling on people's attitudes, very few studies have systematically investigated the relationship between traveling and people's interest in foreign affairs. Therefore, the present research fills this gap

in the literature by considering the process through which traveling can activate people's interest in foreign policy.

Numerous studies have so far examined tourists' perceptions of foreign countries by relying on a variety of frameworks. One of the most important perspectives focuses on the impacts of the media on tourists' "destination images." For instance, Iwashita (2006) found that media, such as movies, television, and literature, significantly shape tourists' perceptions of the UK (see also Mercille, 2005). Furthermore, Hunter (2016) suggested that online websites sharing tourists' experiences can significantly influence destination images among other tourists. In recent years, an increasing number of studies have investigated the impacts of social media, finding that social media serves as one of the main venues through which tourists develop their perceptions of their destinations (Kiral'ova & Pavlicecka, 2015; Stepaniuk, 2015). These studies have consistently verified the essential roles of the media in fostering destination images among tourists.

While the media can significantly construct tourists' perceptions, it is also imperative to examine how tourists' actual experiences in their destinations affect their attitudes toward other countries. Because one of the most valuable experiences for tourists is their interactions with the locals, it is essential to investigate tourists' behavior focusing on this aspect. For this purpose, it is critical to pay attention to the social identity theory developed by Tajfel and Turner (1986; see also Tajfel, 1978). According to social identity theory, individuals in a group setting tend to recognize their membership in a certain group and attempt to achieve positive self-esteem of the "ingroup" while developing negative perceptions of the "outgroups." These intergroup dynamics can result in a devastating outcome in society (Gibson & Gouws, 2000). Consistent with this perspective, those people who never travel abroad are expected to display attitudes that are largely indifferent or even hostile to foreign cultures. Because they assume the superiority of their own country, they tend to have a poorer understanding of foreign cultures and distance themselves from the world outside of their comfort zone.

International traveling has potential to significantly transform people's narrow perceptions toward the world. The most important theory that can

effectively capture the essential dynamics of traveling is the intergroup contact theory originally developed by Allport (1954; for a review, see Pettigrew, 1998). The general proposition of this theory states that increasing levels of direct contact with people from different backgrounds reduce prejudice toward others (Allport, 1954). In order to see the positive outcome of contact, Allport argued the following conditions have to be met: "equal status," "common goals," "intergroup cooperation," and "support of authorities, law, or custom" (see Pettigrew, 1998). Emphasizing the importance of direct interactions among people, a large number of studies have verified the validity of the intergroup contact theory (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew et al., 2011). As international traveling generally entails interactions with the locals, this perspective is highly effective in analyzing how traveling can stimulate people's interest in foreign policy.

Different studies have applied the intergroup contact theory to the issue of traveling (Ap, 2001; Tomljenovic, 2010). By relying on the intergroup contact theory, these studies have examined how traveling transforms people's attitudes toward the host countries and the local residents. Many of them have verified the positive impact of traveling on people's perceptions of their destinations. One study relying on an experimental method indicates that Israelis who traveled to Jordan show more positive perceptions of Jordanian people (Pizam, Fleischer, & Mansfield, 2002). Closely related to these findings, studies show that intercultural interactions can enhance tourists' interest in foreign cultures. Relying on the survey method, Carlson and Widaman (1988) suggested that study abroad programs sending students to European countries deepen their interest in other cultures. Also studying attitudes among Australian tourists, Tomljenovic (2010) indicated that traveling promotes people's understanding of foreign cultures. Finally, scholars show that international traveling tends to make tourists more open to new cultural experiences (Fisher & Price, 1991; Pearce & Foster, 2007).

These studies underline critical elements of international traveling, emphasizing the important roles of intercultural contact between tourists and the local residents. It is possible to expand these findings to account for people's interest in foreign policy. If international traveling renders tourists

more sympathetic toward the local residents and the host societies, they are more likely to be concerned and curious about the situations and people in these countries, even after the tourists return to their home countries. Accordingly, those tourists are likely to be more cautious in considering international affairs since these issues could affect the situations of the host societies. Building on the proposition of the intergroup contact theory, it is possible to hypothesize that international traveling can significantly boost tourists' interest in foreign policy.

In theorizing the above scenario, it is necessary to consider the extent to which traveling influences individuals' mindsets. Some may contend that the nexus between traveling and people's interest in foreign policy only holds in the countries that they actually visited. However, we argue that traveling can enhance individuals' interest in foreign policy in general beyond the narrow scope of the host countries. Recent studies exploring the relationship between traveling and the quality of life (QOL) generated findings that highlight an extensive impact of traveling. For instance, Neal, Uysal, and Sirgy (2007) suggested that people's experiences during a trip can "spill over" to other domains of their lives, influencing the levels of satisfaction with life in general. Indicating that traveling can significantly transform tourists' basic attitudes in their lives, this perspective has a critical implication on the hypothesized scenario above. If people's experiences during a trip can significantly affect the QOL among tourists, one might expect to see the same impact regarding their interest in foreign policy. Those tourists who have direct contact with the locals in foreign cultures are more likely to be interested in the events in the host countries, and it is likely that the effect "spills over" beyond the boundary of the host countries, inducing stronger interest in global affairs in general (Neal et al., 2007). Richards and Wilson (2003) reported that many of the tourists continue to seek for more opportunities to travel to new destinations, anxious to learn more about other cultures. Put differently, tourists who have experienced international traveling one time will remain curious about foreign cultures beyond the scope of the countries they had actually visited (Richards & Wilson, 2003). Accordingly, we can hypothesize that international traveling can significantly enhance people's interest

in foreign policy in general and their recognition of foreign policy as an important issue.

One critical caveat in this hypothesis is that evidence does not always support the proposition of the intergroup contact theory in tourism. Critics suggest that some of the favorable conditions identified by Allport (1954) may not be present in travel destinations. Several studies have reported the absence of attitude change among tourists (Milman, Reichel, & Pizam, 1990; Pizam, Jafari, & Milman, 1991). In accounting for the lack of attitude change, it is critical to examine the quality of contact between tourists and the locals. For instance, studying attitudes of German tourists, Sirakaya-Turk, Nyaupane, and Uysal (2014) found that "all-inclusive" tours tend to exacerbate the prejudice toward the local residents because the nature of the trip does not encourage genuine interactions between tourists and the residents in their destinations. In a similar manner, some have contended that tourists may not be interested in interacting with the locals (Tomljenovic, 2010). Also, there is a possibility that traveling can actually increase bias if the tourists are obsessed with their own identities (Jung, 2012). As these points indicate, it is not always possible for tourists to engage in meaningful contact with the local residents for various reasons.

Despite the fact that evidence regarding the intergroup contact theory in tourism is mixed, one should not dismiss this theory as invalid. One of the possible reasons for the contradictory findings in the literature may be due to the fact that many of the previous studies were conducted in a single case, thus making it difficult to generalize the findings. In order to accurately understand the impact of traveling on people's interest in foreign policy, it is necessary to examine this issue beyond a single case. Therefore, the main goal of this study is to systematically test the intergroup contact theory by relying on a large number of samples. The next section explains the data and the operationalization of the variables that are used in the statistical analyses.

Data and Operationalization

The purpose of this study is to examine how people's traveling experiences affect their interest in foreign policy. In order to investigate this question,

it is imperative to collect appropriate data. In this attempt, one needs to be aware of the fact that traveling may not always induce more open attitudes toward foreign cultures. Some studies failed to detect a significant impact of traveling on tourists' attitudes (Milman et al., 1990; Pizam et al., 1991). One of the critical limitations of the existing studies is that they tend to test the impact of traveling in a single case relying on questionnaires or interviews. Although these studies generated important findings, it is questionable how generalizable these findings are. Traveling inevitably involves both positive and negative experiences, and it is essential to examine traveling experiences in a more comprehensive manner (Salter & Teger, 1975). Another limitation of the existing studies is the lack of appropriate surveys to answer the research question in this study. Although some of the existing surveys looked at people's traveling behavior (Richards & Wilson, 2003; Stone & Petrick, 2013), none of them directly tapped into their perceptions of foreign policy in the same survey, which makes it difficult for us to systematically test our hypotheses suggested above.

In order to overcome these limitations, we conducted an online survey tapping into people's travel behavior and their interest in foreign policy. This survey systematically measured respondents' travel experiences beyond a single case, and it included questions regarding their interest in foreign policy. The survey was implemented among the adult population living in the US in 2012. To qualify for the survey, participants had to be at least 19 years of age. The survey was distributed primarily to contacts of the researchers through email and online social media, and these contacts were asked to forward the survey to their friends and family. Most respondents were students at a medium-sized public university in Nebraska because the survey was primarily distributed through the university's student email database. A total of 1,001 individuals completed the survey.

Dependent Variable: View on the Importance of Foreign Policy

The dependent variable in this study is a measure that gauges people's general view on the importance of foreign policy. Some of the previous studies have

tried to capture people's interest in foreign policy and international events (Aalberg et al., 2013). These studies tended to adopt a single question in measuring how much interest people express in foreign policy. For instance, Aalberg et al. (2013) employed the following question: "Generally speaking, how interested are you in international events and issues?" However, a single question may not be enough to effectively capture people's interest in foreign policy. Because the goal of this study is to examine how traveling influences people's interest in foreign policy in general, it is necessary to capture respondents' attributes in a more comprehensive manner. Also, it is essential that the survey gauges the extent to which respondents recognize the importance of foreign policy because studies show the critical importance of foreign affairs in affecting people's political judgments (Gadarian, 2010). Accordingly, our survey attempts to capture interest in foreign policy by adopting the following questions:

- How important are foreign policy issues to you?
- How likely are you to base your vote in a presidential election on a candidate's foreign policy views?
- How likely are you to base your partisan identification (Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, etc.) on a party's foreign policy views?
- How likely are you to participate in discussions of foreign policy issues with your friends, family, or coworkers?
- How likely are you to donate to or volunteer for organizations that advocate on behalf of foreign policy issues?²

These questions systematically measure respondents' recognition of foreign affairs as important issues. Answers to these questions are based on an ordinal scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all important/likely*) to 7 (*Very important/very likely*) with higher values indicating stronger interest in foreign policy. These questions address the respondent's propensity to act on their foreign policy views as well as their tendency to shape their political loyalties around those views. By relying on the above questions, we chose to construct a summary index by combining respondents' answers for these questions. We used a factor score derived from the factor analysis on the above five questions based

on the principle component factor. The eigenvalue for the first dimension was 2.94, accounting for 59% of the total variance. Because the eigenvalue for the second dimension was 0.73, it was reasonable to maintain only one dimension. Factor loadings for these questions were 0.83, 0.85, 0.68, 0.78, and 0.67, respectively. Cronbach's alpha for these variables exceeded 0.8, and therefore it was possible to justify the use of the factor score as the dependent variable (see Nunnally, 1978). Higher values in the index indicate stronger interest in foreign policy among respondents.

Independent Variables: Travel Experiences

In order to examine the impact of traveling on people's interest in foreign policy, it is critical to measure their traveling behavior. One of the critical points in this task is to accurately gauge the degrees to which tourists were immersed in the host countries. In order to observe attitude change among tourists, previous studies in this field suggest the importance of "intimate" interactions between the tourists and the local residents (Amir, 1969; Fisher & Price, 1991; Sirakaya-Turk et al., 2014). As discussed above, those tourists who have extensive opportunities to interact with the local residents are more likely to develop warm feelings toward the host countries. Therefore, the measures of traveling need to capture how extensively and deeply tourists were immersed in foreign cultures. Accordingly, we employ three independent variables: the number of countries respondents have visited, the number of countries they have lived in, and the total time they have spent living or traveling outside of their home countries. Regarding the first two items, it is important to capture the extent to which respondents are exposed to different countries since the dependent variable is people's interest in foreign policy in general. Also, it is necessary to distinguish "visiting" and "living" in foreign countries because living in foreign countries signifies a more long-term commitment to these countries. In this study, living in a country is defined as staying for a period of 3 or more months. Finally, this study taps into the time respondents spent abroad. Studies indicate that the length of stay can significantly affect the QOL among tourists (Neal et al., 2007). It is likely that those tourists who spend

more time in their destinations have more opportunities to learn about their host societies (Yoo & Sohn, 2003). The amount of time respondents spent traveling abroad was derived from their answers to the following question: "Approximately how much time, in TOTAL, have you spent living or traveling outside of your home country?" Possible responses to this question were measured in days, weeks, months, or years. We converted all these responses into days in order to create a continuous variable. These three measures of traveling in this study can effectively capture people's traveling behavior.³ Although some of the previous studies attempted to measure tourists' experiences in a single or a few cases (Fisher & Price, 1991; Richards & Wilson, 2003), very few studies have systematically measured people's traveling behavior throughout their life time. These indicators allow us to examine the link between traveling and people's interest in foreign policy.

Control Variables

In order to verify the impact of the travel variables, it is important to control for some potentially confounding factors. First, we consider respondents' age. Studies indicated that age significantly affects people's opinions on world affairs (Brewer, Gross, Ada, & Willnat, 2004; Brewer & Steenbergen, 2002). Although it is difficult to predict a direction of the coefficient, it is critical to control for age in the statistical analyses. Second, we control for respondents' gender by coding male respondents as 0 and females as 1. Evidence shows that women tend to be less interested in politics (Verba, Burns, & Lehman Schlozman, 1997). Accordingly, we can predict that females are less likely to be interested in foreign affairs. Third, it is important to take into account education because studies have shown that higher educational attainments are associated with greater interest in politics (Hadjar & Schlapbach, 2009; Hillygus, 2005). Also, studies have indicated that education significantly affects people's foreign policy attitudes (Brewer & Steenbergen, 2002). It is possible to predict that those respondents with higher levels of education tend to consider foreign policy as more important than those with little education. We coded this variable so that higher values indicate higher educational attainments.

Fourth, we consider the number of foreign friends that respondents have. Studies on the intergroup contact theory posit that face-to-face contact with people of different backgrounds makes individuals more open-minded and tolerant of foreign cultures (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew et al., 2011). Consequently, this variable is expected to increase interest in information that directly relates to their friends from foreign countries. Finally, we control for respondents' racial backgrounds. This variable is coded so that respondents who chose "white" are coded as 1 and respondents who chose all other races ("American Indian or Alaska Native," "Asian," "Black or African American," and "Native Hawaiian," or "Other Pacific Islander") or a combination of races are coded as 0. Some studies show that majorities and minorities tend to display different values (Silver & Dowley, 2000), and research shows that ethnic minorities can affect the direction of foreign policy (Moore, 2002). Given the fact that a significant portion of the minority populations is foreign born, we can assume that they tend to travel more to their home countries, and that they are more likely to indicate higher interest in foreign policy. Table 1 shows descriptive statistics and Table 2 exhibits bivariate correlations among these variables.

Empirical Analyses

In order to test the hypotheses, we conducted statistical analyses employing the ordinary least square (OLS) method. Due to high correlations among the travel variables, we chose to consider each of them separately in one model. Table 3 shows the results of the OLS analyses. Because the goal of this study is to examine the relationship between traveling and people's interest in foreign policy, the variables that capture respondents' travel experiences are of our interest. Model 1 is a basic specification without travel variables, and Model 2, Model 3, and Model 4 include one of the travel variables, respectively. In Model 2, the variable that measures the number of countries that respondents visited shows a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable ($p < 0.001$). The positive coefficient of this variable indicates that the more countries people visit, the more interest they tend to show in foreign policy. Model 3 exhibits

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variable	Observation	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Interest in world affairs	963	-2.76e-10	1	-2.622	2.171
Countries visited	1000	3.008	4.314	0	35
Countries lived	1000	1.3	0.853	1	15
Time spent abroad	1001	252.39	761.591	0	5475
Foreign friends	1001	2.185	1.934	0	6
Sex	1001	0.622	0.485	0	1
Age	998	27.091	10.416	19	74
Education	1001	5.466	0.938	0	8
Race	976	0.920	0.271	0	1

a similar result. The variable that taps the number of countries people have lived in before shows a positive impact on their interest in foreign policy ($p < 0.05$), which suggests that those respondents who have lived in a large number of countries tend to recognize foreign policy as an important issue. Finally, the time respondents spent abroad shows a statistically significant result ($p < 0.01$). The positive coefficient suggests that the more time people spend abroad, the more interest they tend to show in foreign policy. The results in Table 3 strongly support our hypotheses: that wider and deeper exposure to foreign cultures tends to enhance people's recognition of foreign affairs as critical issues.

Consequently, people who have traveled more tend to make their political decisions by paying significant attention to foreign affairs.

In order to further establish the importance of the travel variables, it is necessary to examine the adjusted R^2 in each model. When we add the number of countries people visited in Model 2, the adjusted R^2 is increased from 0.1236 to 0.1361, boosting the explanatory power of the model. In a similar manner, the variable that captures the number of countries respondents lived in improves the fit of the model, boosting the adjusted R^2 up to 0.1267. Finally, the variable that taps into the length of time people spent abroad adds explanatory power,

Table 2
Bivariate Correlation Among Variables

	Interest in World Affairs	Countries Visited	Countries Lived	Time Spent Abroad	Foreign Friends	Sex	Age	Education	Race
Interest in world affairs	1								
Countries visited	0.24*** (962)	1							
Countries lived	0.196*** (962)	0.478*** (999)	1						
Time spent abroad	0.226*** (963)	0.407*** (1,000)	0.595*** (1,000)	1					
Foreign friends	0.267*** (963)	0.337*** (1,000)	0.368*** (1,000)	0.372*** (1,001)	1				
Sex	-0.139*** (963)	0.012 (1,000)	-0.039 (1,000)	-0.017 (1,001)	-0.068* (1,001)	1			
Age	0.138*** (960)	0.231*** (997)	0.043 (997)	0.093** (998)	-0.064* (998)	0.036 (998)	1		
Education	0.137*** (963)	0.245*** (1,000)	0.092** (1,000)	0.109*** (1,001)	0.034 (1,001)	0.020 (1,001)	0.409*** (998)	1	
Race	-0.155*** (940)	-0.08* (975)	-0.25*** (975)	-0.410*** (976)	-0.285*** (976)	0.060 (976)	0.027 (973)	-0.036 (976)	1

Note. Parentheses indicate the number of observations.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 3
OLS Analysis of People's Views on the Importance of Foreign Policy

Predictors	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	-0.630 (0.223)**	-0.478 (0.225)*	-0.746 (0.227)**	-0.694 (0.223)**
Age	0.011 (0.003)***	0.009 (0.003)**	0.011 (0.003)**	0.010 (0.003)**
Gender	-0.263 (0.063)***	-0.267 (0.062)***	-0.259 (0.063)***	-0.263 (0.063)***
Education	0.085 (0.035)*	0.063 (0.036)	0.080 (0.035)*	0.079 (0.035)*
Foreign friends	0.132 (0.017)***	0.108 (0.018)***	0.120 (0.017)***	0.116 (0.017)***
Race	-0.287 (0.119)*	-0.293 (0.120)*	-0.229 (0.121)	-0.150 (0.126)
Countries visited		0.031 (0.008)***		
Countries lived in			0.093 (0.039)*	
Time spent abroad				0.0002 (0.00005)**
Adjusted R^2	0.1236	0.1361	0.1267	0.1324
<i>N</i>	937	936	936	937

Note. Parentheses indicate standard errors. Estimated by Stata 10.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

pushing the adjusted R^2 to 0.1324. The improvement in adjusted R^2 in each model verifies the significant impact of the travel variables on people's interest in foreign policy.

As we have seen, the statistical analyses detect a statistically significant impact of the travel variables. Yet, one may question the validity of the hypothesized scenario. While we suggest that traveling activates people's interest in foreign policy, one might argue that the causal arrow runs in an opposite direction; those who are interested in foreign policy are more likely to travel internationally than those who show little interest in foreign policy. Although this criticism is valid, it is still reasonable to argue that traveling can boost people's interest in foreign policy independent of their pretravel attitudes. In order to test this scenario, we conducted a robustness analysis that can help us establish the causal direction that runs from traveling to interest in foreign policy. The survey in this study included a question that allows us to distinguish those who have actually traveled abroad and those who want to travel but have never had a chance to go abroad. Specifically, the following question was adopted: "Have you ever visited, traveled to, or lived in a foreign country?" To this question, respondents were asked to answer using "No," "No, but I plan to travel abroad at some point in the next few years," or "Yes." If the analysis detects higher levels of interest in foreign policy among those who have actually traveled than those respondents who want to travel but never had the chance, it is possible to verify a significant impact of traveling on people's interest in

foreign policy. For this purpose, we have conducted a t test to examine if levels of interest in foreign policy actually vary across these two groups. The mean score among those who have never had a chance to travel abroad is -0.095 , whereas the mean among those who actually traveled abroad is 0.136 , and the difference of the means across these two groups is significant at the level of $p < 0.01$ (one-tailed) and $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed). This result suggests that those who have experienced actual traveling tend to indicate stronger interest in foreign policy than those who have never left their home countries. Accordingly, the result of the t test excludes the possibility that a positive impact of traveling on the dependent variable is derived from their pretravel attitudes. As a result, it is possible to verify the main findings from the OLS analyses above.

Several of the other independent variables also display significant impacts throughout the models. Age has a significant and positive effect on the dependent variable, indicating that older individuals tend to express greater interest in foreign policy ($p < 0.001$ in Model 1 and $p < 0.01$ in other models). As people gain more experience, they are more likely to be interested in foreign policy issues. Gender is highly significant across all of the models ($p < 0.001$), and its negative coefficient shows that women are less likely to be concerned about foreign policy, which is consistent with previous studies (Verba et al., 1997). Education shows a significant effect in three out of the four models ($p < 0.05$, except Model 2), indicating that education tends to boost one's interest in foreign policy (Hadjar & Schlapbach, 2009;

Hillygus, 2005). The variable capturing the number of foreign friends indicates a positive impact ($p < 0.001$), which suggests that a large number of foreign friends tends to foster people's interest in foreign policy. It seems that interpersonal contact with people from foreign countries increases people's interest in foreign policy issues that can have implications beyond their home countries (Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Pizam et al., 2002). Finally, the race variable indicates a significant effect in Model 1 and Model 2 ($p < 0.05$) with its negative sign showing that white respondents are less interested in foreign policy than non-white respondents. This result may have to do with the fact that a significant portion of minorities are foreign born and they tend to show stronger interest in the countries of their origins. In this way, several individual-level attributes have been shown to affect people's interest in foreign policy.

Conclusion and Discussion

So far numerous studies have examined people's interest in foreign policy. One of the major questions that has attracted a significant amount of attention is the issue of how individuals develop their interest in foreign affairs (Aldrich et al., 2006). Previous studies have widely examined this matter by focusing on the agenda-setting power of the media (Cohen, 1963; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; 1993; Nacos et al., 2011; Soroka, 2003), the issue attention cycle (Downs, 1972; Petersen, 2009), and a series of individual attributes as critical factors shaping public opinion (Baumgartner et al., 2008; Brewer & Steenbergen, 2002). The present research has analyzed one factor that has received little attention in the literature. Specifically, the main goal of this study has been to systematically examine the impact of international traveling on people's interest in foreign policy. Relying on the intergroup contact theory, we have hypothesized that increasing degrees of traveling will significantly enhance people's interest in foreign policy, and that they tend to make their political decisions based on their perceptions of foreign policy issues. In addressing the research question, we conducted an online survey capturing people's travel experiences and their interest in foreign policy. The result from the statistical analyses has supported our hypotheses,

showing that traveling significantly boosts people's interest in foreign policy, consequently making them more engaged in foreign affairs.

This result is consistent with the proposition of the intergroup contact theory. As this theory suggests, it is possible to account for the core finding of this study by referring to the direct interactions among people from different backgrounds. As tourists engage in human interactions with the local residents in foreign countries, they are more likely to develop warm feelings toward the local residents. Subsequently, the tourists who come to embrace positive perceptions of the locals become more concerned about foreign policy that could affect the host countries. Furthermore, evidence suggests that those tourists are inclined to show stronger interest in foreign policy in general beyond the scope of their destinations. Once exposed to foreign cultures, tourists seem to find it difficult to stop exploring new cultural experiences in the world (Richards & Wilson, 2003). These findings have important implications for the tourism literature. Although previous studies provided mixed findings regarding the effectiveness of the intergroup contact theory in tourism, the result from the present research clearly supports the proposition of the theory. One of the major innovations of this study is to capture people's travel experiences throughout their lives. Specifically, this study tapped into the number of countries people visited, the number of countries they lived in, and the amount of time they spent abroad. These measures made it possible for us to test the long-term impact of traveling on people's interest in foreign policy. The fact that the analyses have identified a significant effect of these variables suggests the importance of a long-term perspective in analyzing the issue of attitude change among tourists. More analyses adopting a long-term approach may reveal a further applicability of the intergroup contact theory in tourism. As an increasing number of studies in the literature suggest, it is likely that tourists' interactions with the locals can have a lasting impact on their basic outlooks of life (Neal et al., 2007).

Interpreting the result of this study, one should be somewhat cautious about the dataset used in this study. One major limitation of the dataset is concerned about the possible bias in the samples. Due to the recruiting method we adopted, the samples

collected in this survey are not representative of the adult population residing in the US. The majority of the samples in this study are university students, and it is reasonable to assume that they have more opportunities than average Americans to engage in educational tours in different parts of the world. As a result, there is a possibility that the validity of the intergroup contact theory in tourism may only hold among the students in educational settings. Yet, this point does not critically undermine the importance of the findings in this study. Although there is a limitation in generalizing the findings, this study has established the link between traveling and people's interest in foreign policy. In order to further verify the significant impact of traveling, it is imperative that future studies collect samples that are more representative of the American population and of populations outside of the US.

The findings from this study can generate a number of research projects on tourism. For instance, it is important to explore how other forms of intergroup contact with foreigners may affect people's interest in foreign policy. In today's globalizing world, traveling abroad is not the only means by which one can engage in intercultural exchange. Technological innovations have enabled people to interact remotely, virtually erasing the barriers of distance and international borders. This raises the question of whether such interaction can be as effective as face-to-face interaction in fostering people's concern for global issues. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate this question by incorporating measures of different kinds of contact. In addition to this project, one needs to examine the proposition of intergroup contact theory in other settings. Although the findings from this study are based on the samples collected in the US, it is possible that intergroup contact in other parts of the world can affect people differently. Accordingly, comparative studies on this subject are highly beneficial in contributing to our understanding of tourism.

Finally, this study has generated critical implications that are highly relevant in the real world in which globalization continues to gain further momentum. As countries become deeply connected through multiple channels, there have been two competing dynamics as reactions to globalization. On the one hand, some political elites attempt to reject globalization in an explicit manner. The rise

of Donald Trump as President-elect of the US can symbolically represent this tendency. By emphasizing the imperative need to build a wall along the national border between the US and Mexico, Trump has displayed his strong antipathy toward globalization (Woodward & Costa, 2016). His stance of "America First" reflects the defensive posture against globalization, trying to isolate the US from the rest of the world (Graff, 2016). As Trump promised during his campaign, the US is likely to reduce its commitment in world affairs (Seidel & Chandy, 2016). After the election, Trump quickly expressed his intention to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), claiming that the US would not benefit from the TPP ("Trump to Withdraw," 2016). His victory of the presidential election could mark a critical turning point for US foreign policy, potentially derailing the whole globalization process around the world. On the other hand, one can identify a strong push toward globalization in some countries. For instance, leaders in China have recently presented the idea of the "One Belt and One Road" that runs across different states in the region (Winter, 2015, 2016). The major goal of this policy is to boost the volume of international cooperation in the region, with China playing leading roles in this scheme by utilizing its cultural heritages (Winter, 2015, 2016). India has also presented similar ideas such as the "Project Mausam" and "Act East Policy" that seek to connect countries in the region (Daniel, 2015; Kugelman, 2016). These initiatives intend to take advantage of globalization forces, rather than denying them, in enhancing the competitiveness of these countries. As these two competing positions indicate, globalization tends to force people to make difficult choices, which can lead to rather different outcomes in society.

When globalization forces drastically transform various aspects of human life, it becomes imperative for people to make sound judgements. International traveling can potentially play important roles in helping people better understand the process of globalization. Since evidence from the present research indicates that traveling enhances people's interest in foreign policy, one can emphasize the importance of traveling as an opportunity in which individuals can learn about other cultures. Spending time in foreign countries can provide tourists with opportunities to engage in a wide range of human interactions

that provide invaluable lessons that are fundamentally different from what they can learn through the media (Hunter, 2016; Iwashita, 2006; Kiral'ova & Pavlicecka, 2015; Mercille, 2005; Stepaniuk, 2015). It is tourists' actual engagement in foreign cultures, rather than external factors, that induces a real transformation in their worldviews. To borrow Pratt's (1998) words, tourists are in the middle of the "contact zones" which signify "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (p. 173). The perception of the world as a fixed entity may be an illusion because human life and the surrounding environment are constantly changing (Clifford, 1997). As Connor (1972) warns about the vulnerability of nation-states, what people perceive as robust can easily collapse under some circumstances. As uncertainty about the stability of the international political order has increased, particularly with the rise in nationalistic and antiglobalization sentiment in Western countries (Foa, 2016), it becomes imperative for individuals to develop a deeper understanding of global issues and an appreciation for how they impact the lives of people around the world. Traveling can help individuals break out of their routines and realize the essential natures of life and the world from various angles (Clifford, 1997). Immersed in foreign environments, tourists can begin to appreciate cultural differences and develop empathy with the locals in the host countries. As people travel more, they may become more informed and engaged citizens who are capable of handling various situations in the global era. After all, globalization itself is neither good nor bad; it really depends on how people approach this matter. International traveling can serve as an effective means through which individuals can take advantage of the forces of globalization in a more positive manner. Future studies need to further explore the potentials of international traveling.

Notes

¹Evidence from other countries also echoes with this perspective, presenting the public as an essential actor in the democratic process (Kennedy & Dickenson, 2013; Ortiz, 2006).

²Although it is true that traveling enhances interest in particular issue areas that are closely related to tourism, the

main purpose of this study is to analyze respondents' interest in foreign policy in general. Because the impact of traveling tends to "spill over" beyond the narrow framework of the host countries, it is reasonable to assume that tourists come to recognize the importance of foreign policy in general (Neal et al., 2007). Consequently, one can expect that tourists tend to develop their interest in a broad range of policy issues.

³Some of the respondents may have traveled abroad to fulfill their military duties. Including those respondents in the sample may bias the result. In a preliminary analysis, we excluded those respondents whose main reason for traveling was military deployments, and we ran the same analyses. The result still supports the main findings of this study.

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