

Implementation of Experiential Learning in  
4-H Educational Travel Opportunities: A Delphi Study

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*A Thesis  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree of*

Master of Science – Agricultural Education

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2021

## **Abstract**

Experiential learning has become an integral part of 4-H nationwide. All 4-H programming is done with the experiential learning model in mind. A unique educational experience that 4-H offers are the educational travel opportunities. These travel opportunities include but are not limited to National 4-H Congress, National 4-H Conference, Space Camp, and Citizenship Washington Focus. The objectives of this study were to, (a) identify where, and how, experiential learning is implemented in 4-H educational travel opportunities; (b) determine potential drawbacks of using the experiential learning model in 4-H educational travel opportunities and; (c) determine potential ways that experiential learning could be further implemented in 4-H educational travel opportunities.

The Delphi method was used for this study to gain a consensus on opinions of 4-H educators. Sixteen 4-H educators, eight from Minnesota and eight from Wisconsin, were selected that were considered experts in 4-H educational travel opportunities. The first survey included three open-ended questions that related to the objectives. The responses were then analyzed and used to create Likert scale statements that again related back to each of the objectives. The second round Likert scale statements asked study participants to state their agreement level to 13 statements that related to the three objectives of the study. In order for a consensus to be made, two-thirds of study participants needed to either somewhat agree or strongly agree, or somewhat disagree or strongly disagree. The second-round survey clearly showed a consensus among 4-H educators, making the third survey that was planned redundant. The main consensus was that, like all other 4-H programs, there is value in using the experiential learning in

educational travel opportunities. Furthermore, the study showed that there are some potential drawbacks to using experiential learning in this program, however, it was unclear that drawbacks can be mitigated if all objectives and goals are clear. Lastly, results indicate that 4-H educators agree that experiential learning opportunities can be added to the front side of these trips. In summary, results show that the experiential learning model has many benefits in 4-H educational travel opportunities, with few drawbacks.

## **Acknowledgments**

Without the support of so many, I would have never been able to complete this thesis project. First and foremost, I want to thank the Minnesota and Wisconsin 4-H educators and extension staff that were selected for this study. The work that all 4-H staff do in both states allows so many youths to find their passions and grow into amazing people. The responses that were given for this study were greatly appreciated, and without your support and input, this project would not have been possible.

Next, I hold a great amount of appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Buttles. Your help and guidance through this process has allowed me to complete this project even when I had my doubts. Being able to explore experiential education under your guidance and knowledge is something I am very grateful for.

I owe a massive thank you to the friends that have helped me out over the months of work that this project took. Thank you for listening to me when I needed to vent, keeping me sane, and for supporting me through this process.

Last, but not least, thank you to my family. Without their support and guidance, I wouldn't have had the courage to complete this study.

The appreciation and respect I have for everyone that has guided me can't be put into words.

**THANK YOU!**

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## **Chapter I – Introduction**

4-H educational travel opportunities and experiential education have played a major role in all 4-H members, past, present, and future. This study attempts to clarify 4-H/Positive Youth Development Educators' views on the role that experiential education plays in 4-H educational travel opportunities. This first chapter aims at explaining the need for the study, the objectives, the problem, and an overall introduction to the study.

### **Need for the Study**

With a nationwide enrollment of 6 million youth, 4-H has become the largest positive youth development organization in the United States (National 4-H Council, n.d.). Wisconsin and Minnesota account for 73,000 and 66,000 youth, respectively (Division of Extension, 2019; University of Minnesota Extension, n.d.). 4-H youth come from a variety of different backgrounds. Urban and rural youth can take responsibility for their learning and explore various project areas from Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) to citizenship (Enfield, 2001). Additionally, all project areas are taught through experiential learning, with extension staff developing and promoting the model (Enfield et al., 2007).

Experiential learning has been an integral foundation for 4-H educators (Enfield, 2001). In all 4-H project areas youth can explore their interests through doing, reflecting, and applying. Most of these programs are done locally and within county lines (Enfield 2001). Additionally, youth have been allowed to gain travel experiences to learn about citizenship and STEM. These educational travel opportunities include Citizenship Washington Focus, National 4-H Congress, National 4-H Conference, and Space Camp (National 4-H Council, n.d.). Furthermore, various state 4-H programs also offer

interstate youth exchanges and other national trips that are not listed earlier. These trips allow youth to travel to various locations in the United States with others from their county and state. 4-H members are able to gain experiences in anything from citizenship, leadership, and the inner workings of your government to topics in STEM (National 4-H Council, n.d.). Educational travel opportunities are broken down and are available to certain age groups (Division of Extension, 2019). For example, to attend Citizenship Washington Focus youth need to be in grades 10 to 12.

With 4-H being the premier youth development organization in the United States and having deep-seated roots in experiential education, many past studies have explored the relevance and benefits of experiential learning in 4-H programming (Torock, 2009). Many studies have also dug into specific project areas like livestock (Davis et al., 2016). However, there have been virtually zero published studies that have explored the use and benefits of experiential learning in 4-H educational travel opportunities. This lack of studies concerning experiential learning and educational travel opportunities leaves a gap of understanding and consensus of how 4-H implements experiential learning in all of its programming.

Experiential Learning and 4-H go hand in hand. With all 4-H programming done with experiential learning in mind, it is important to understand the benefits and drawbacks that it can have in various settings. Seaman Knapp stated, “What a man hears, he may doubt; what he sees, he may possibly doubt; but what he does himself, he cannot doubt” (Rasmussen, 1989, p. 35). With the backbone of 4-H programming rooted in experiential learning, it is important to understand its role in educational travel opportunities.

## **Statement of Problem**

As 4-H digs deeper into the experiential learning model, and the interest in educational travel opportunities grows, the need to understand the impact of experiential learning has on these experiences will only continue to grow. The lack of published studies leaves a gap for 4-H educators in research-based information around the use of experiential learning in educational travel opportunities.

## **Purpose of Study**

This study aims to determine how experiential learning is used in 4-H educational travel opportunities. While 4-H educational travel opportunities are provided by the National 4-H Council, National 4-H Congress, and other national level organizations, lessons while on the road are created at the local level by county 4-H educators. Understanding how 4-H educators' program long-distance educational activities is vital as educational travel opportunities grow in popularity among 4-H members.

Additionally, with the lack of past studies, a secondary purpose of this study is to serve as a steppingstone for future discussions on the use of experiential learning in 4-H educational travel opportunities. Experiential learning plays a major role in 4-H and gaining the first consensus on 4-H educators' opinions on its use in educational travel opportunities can open the door to further research.

## ***Objectives***

The following three research objectives were created to start a discussion on the use of experiential learning in 4-H educational travel opportunities:

- 1) Identify where, and how, experiential learning is implemented in 4-H educational travel opportunities

- 2) Determine potential drawbacks of using the experiential learning model in 4-H educational travel opportunities
- 3) Determine potential ways that experiential learning could be further implemented in 4-H educational travel opportunities

With little research done on this topic, additional background information was needed to establish 4-H educators' experience level with educational travel opportunities. The overall goal was to compile information about the use of experiential learning in educational travel opportunities. The intent is to have all participants feel comfortable expressing their true opinions on the subject matter, so study results can be used as a stepping-stone for further research.

### **Definitions**

**4-H Educational Travel Opportunities:** For the purpose of this study, 4-H Educational Travel Opportunities are any out of state travel experiences that are offered to 4-H youth. These opportunities include, but not limited to, Citizenship Washington Focus, National 4-H Congress, National 4-H Conference, and Space Camp.

**Experiential Learning:** For the purpose of this study, experiential learning is a five-step process that guides youth to come to a deeper understanding of experiences. This five-step model that 4-H uses in a majority of programming includes the following steps: 1) Experience, 2) Share, 3) Process, 4) Generalize, and 5) Apply (Norman & Jordan, N.D.).

### **Assumptions**

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions were made:

- 1) All participants are knowledgeable in 4-H educational travel opportunities
- 2) Minnesota and Wisconsin have similar educational travel programs

- 3) Participants will have internet access, allowing them to complete the surveys
- 4) All questions are answered honestly and reflect the participant's true opinions on the subject
- 5) All 4-H educators are familiar with the 4-H experiential learning model

### **Limitations**

In the aspect of this study, it is important to take note of the following limitations:

- 1) Survey participants were limited to Minnesota and Wisconsin 4-H/youth development educators that were considered knowledgeable in 4-H educational travel opportunities
- 2) Data was limited to how the respondents interpreted the terms and questions on the survey
- 3) COVID-19 may cause limited responses with 4-H educators working from home
- 4) Data collection was limited to only 4-H/youth development educators that responded to the surveys

## Chapter II – Review of Literature

### What is 4-H

4-H has become a poster organization for positive youth development, and to understand the organization better, it is worth taking a look at the history of 4-H. While there is no one individual or location that pinpoints 4-H programs' beginnings, there are numerous individuals, locations, and stories that help explain the origins of 4-H (Enfield, 2001). Two of these individuals include A. B. Graham from Clark County, Ohio, and O. S. Kern from Winnebago County, Illinois. In January 1902, A. B. Graham started a club in Ohio, followed by O. S. Clark in February 1902 (National 4-H History Preservation Program, n.d.). Locally, Ransom Asa Moore, director of the UW-College of Agriculture Short Course, started holding a county-wide roundup corn show in 1904. This grew and in 1910, corn shows were featured in 45 county fairs (Division of Extension, n.d.). Across the river in Minnesota, T. A. Erickson of Douglas County started the first after school agricultural clubs in 1902 (National 4-H Council, n.d.). These clubs are considered the start of 4-H and valued hands-on learning relevant to rural youth at the time. Similar clubs started popping up around the nation. In 1910, Jesse Field Shambaugh created the first clover-shaped pin, with H's in the middle of each leaf, and by 1912, these boys' and girls' clubs were beginning to be called 4-H (National 4-H History Preservation, n.d.).

During the early years of these clubs, school superintendents and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Demonstration Agents worked on creating these engaging and relevant activities and often worked directly with youth (Enfield, 2001). Many in education in youth development consider these boys' and girls'

clubs as the "building block of extension" (Enfield, 2009, pg. 4). In 1914, with the Smith-Lever Act passage, Cooperative Extension was created on a national scale and effectively nationalized the 4-H movement. 4-H grew enormously during the first World War, and project areas such as dairy, swine, and crop clubs grew in popularity as the nation looked to feed itself and its troops (Wessel & Wessel, 1982). Additionally, some friction was seen after the passage of the Smith-Hughes act in 1917. This act left the relationship between 4-H work and vocational education unclear. As time went on some things began to get more unfriendly between the two, specifically in the south (Wessel & Wessel, 1982). However, in 1928 a joint committee was formed by the secretary of agriculture and the director of the Federal Board of Vocational Education (Wessel & Wessel, 1982). According to Wessel & Wessel (1982), this committee worked to establish that both vocational education and 4-H work were complementary of each other. It was stated that while 4-H is problem-oriented project work, vocational agriculture is a systematic course or courses in basic agriculture (Wessel & Wessel, 1982).

In 1919, a meeting held in Kansas City, Missouri, established the general structure of local 4-H clubs (National 4-H History Preservation Program, n.d.). When the 1930s came around, the early beginnings of 4-H had grown into a national movement with over 800,000 youth in boys' and girls' clubs, and a growth of about 10% each year (National Committee of Land Grant Colleges, 1935, as cited in National 4-H History Preservation Team, n.d.). 4-H continued to grow in popularity and added various other programs and project areas. 4-H started to extend into urban areas in the 1950s, even with urban 4-H programming starting as early as 1908 (National 4-H History

Preservation Program, n.d.). 4-H continued to grow in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, into what we know of it now.

Today, the National impact that 4-H has is widespread and reaches almost every corner of the United States. With 2.6 million rural and 3.4 million urban and suburban youth, 4-H's reach is unmatched (National 4-H Council, n.d.). While 4-H still has strong roots in agriculture, the main focus of 4-H shares similar qualities to the past in that at the heart of the 4-H program is the goal of personal development for all youth involved, as well as the improvement of their families, communities, and beyond (Center for 4-H Youth Development, 1995).

As in the past, 4-H is still running through Land Grant Universities' division of cooperative extension on the local level. These extension programs run in partnership with the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), a division of the USDA (National 4-H Council, n.d.). Additionally, most states have 4-H Foundation offices that, along with the National 4-H Council, help provide curriculum development, marketing resources, professional and volunteer development, and measurement standards (National 4-H Council, n.d.). Creating positive learning experiences, positive relationships for and between youth and adults, positive and safe environments, and opportunities, 4-H acts as a model program for positive youth development (NIFA, n.d.).

In a 2013 article, 19% of 4-H members were from the Northeast, 22% from the West, 24% from the South, and 35% from the North Central (Learner, et al.). The North Central region includes both Wisconsin and Minnesota. The Minnesota 4-H program enrolls 66,000 youth (University of Minnesota Extension, 2019). These members can be found in many clubs around the state and enrolled in project areas from animal science,

environmental, and earth science to healthy living and leadership (University of Minnesota Extension, 2019). Across the Mississippi River, Wisconsin enrolls roughly 73,000 youth members in 1,061 clubs across the state (University of Wisconsin – Madison Division of Extension, 2019). Like Minnesota, Wisconsin offers a wide range of project areas, from dairy and animal sciences to communication arts and educational travel opportunities (University of Wisconsin – Madison Division of Extension, 2020). Both Wisconsin and Minnesota 4-H follow similar patterns in creating engaging, hands-on activities for their members.

For over ten years, Tufts University has been a partner of the National 4-H Council and has provided research on the effectiveness of 4-H and positive youth development on youth (National 4-H Council, N.D.). In 2013, Tufts' research released a report outlining the benefits found on youth involved in 4-H (Learner, et al., 2013). In this study, 4-H members and non-4-H members were asked a series of questions ranging from STEM topics to healthy living and civic engagement. Learner, et al. (2013) found that 4-H members were four times more likely to contribute to their communities (for grades 7-12), two times more likely to be civically active (for grades 8-12), and two times more likely to make healthier choices. It is clear that not only does 4-H provide members with engaging, hands-on activities that are relevant to the member's interest, but it also shows that the positive youth development aspects of 4-H make an impact on its members.

The University of Minnesota Extension also released data from their state 4-H program. They found that 73% of eligible Minnesota 4-H members enrolled in a post-secondary institution (University of Minnesota Extension, 2020). Additionally, it was

found that 93% of young people explore new topics, ideas, and issues, but 84% of them also worked together to solve a problem (University of Minnesota Extension, 2020).

### **Experiential Learning & 4-H**

Similar to 4-H, experiential learning has a deeply rooted story with many contributors to the theory. As early as 1903, Seaman A. Knapp began the road to the theory that we know today. Richardson (1994) (as cited in Enfield, 2001) recognized Knapp, along with John Dewey, of having strong ties to the foundations of learning by doing and experiential learning. At its heart, the basis of experiential learning rest in the fact that experiences matter, and many educators agree that without any experience, there can be no learning or real understanding of concepts (Dewey, 1938; Enfield et al., 2007; Kolb, 1984). However, Dewey (1938) explained further that not all experiences have an educative quality to them. Rather, he argues that without the opportunity to reflect on an experience and apply newly learned knowledge, experiences may have misguided and miseducated learners (Dewey, 1938).

This leads to the argument of the differences between learning by doing and experiential learning. Proudman (1995) (as cited in Enfield, 2001) stated that it is essential to understand that active reflection and applying knowledge make experiential learning different and more effective than learning by doing and hands-on learning models. Kolb (1984) accented this note by clarifying that this learning theory incorporates the word "experiential" to recognize the original works of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget and recognize the central role that experiences play in the learning process.

Digging deeper into experiential learning, Dewey's 1938 theory is based on a developmental nature of learning as a feedback process by describing how learning

transforms the impulses, feelings, and desires of concrete experience into higher-order action (Kolb, 1984). Dewey (1938) stated that this learning model involves three actions: (a) observation of surrounding conditions; (b) knowledge of what has happened in similar situations in the past, a knowledge obtained partly by recollection, and partly from information, advice, and warnings of those who have wider experience; and (c) judgment, which is what is observed and what is recalled to see what they signify. Simplified, Kolb (1984) explained that the impulse of experience gives ideas the moving force, and ideas give direction to impulse. Kolb also stated that postponement of immediate action is essential for observation and judgment to intervene, and action is necessary to achieve purpose.

Furthermore, Kolb (1984) pointed out the emphasis experiential learning has on the process rather than the outcome. This emphasis creates a clear distinction between experiential learning and traditional education's idealist approaches (Kolb, 1984). Kolb went even further, describing learning, in terms of experiential learning, as a process by which concepts are derived from and continuously modified by experiences. Finally, it is essential to remember that ideas are not fixed and can be reformed and that everyone who enters a new learning environment brings in a new and unique perspective on the topic (Kolb, 1984).

Experiential learning is an aspect that 4-H is founded on. The 4-H experiential learning model plays a vital role in the toolbox of extension educators. As time went on, further studies were done, and a model was created that established the cycle of learning. For this study, the model that is used was formed in a four-step process by David Kolb (1984), then later expanded to a five-step process. An example can be seen in the

Norman and Jordan article (n.d.). This model is broken up into three main areas: do, reflect, and apply. It is then broken down further into five categories: experience, share, process, generalize and apply. Through this model, 4-H youth can positively benefit from experiential learning. Dewey stated that all learning is experiential; however not all experiences are educative (1938). This brings up an important aspect of 4-H's use of experiential learning. It allows youth to learn from experiences in a structured way. In this paper, each category will be broken down and analyzed.

In the first step, youth are immediately given a task to complete. Youth should be given enough background information and foundation to complete the task confidentially, but still have the opportunity to complete it in their own way (Janning et al., 2013). The youths' focus should immediately be turned to the activity. Doing this turns the leader's attention to the learner and allows them to experience the task through guidance (Norman and Jordan, N.D.). By establishing this first task, students are immersed in the activity and experiencing the activity for themselves. Besides, as stated before, it is important to give youth guidance where needed, and enough background information to get a positive experience.

In the second phase of the model, youth are promoted to share their experiences of the activity that was just completed. Youth describe their experiences to the group, in “just the facts” (Janning et al., 2013). This can be considered where the learning really starts, in the fact that youth have to start thinking about the activity they just completed. However, 4-H members should only be asked questions about what they did and what was done. Questions that can be asked are:

- What did you do?

- Tell me about your favorite part of the activity.
- What part of the activity was the most challenging?

These questions are meant to get them started thinking about what they just did, and not how they felt. This stage should set up information for the process step (Norman and Jordan, n.d.).

During this step, youth dig deeper into the project that they just completed.

Participants in the activity are asked questions to prompt them to start realizing common themes, skills, and knowledge from the activity. The goal is to have youth start thinking deeper about completing the project (Janning et al., 2013). Also, more emotional-based questions can be brought up. Some example questions are:

- What did you learn about yourself?
- What steps did you take?
- Why does it matter that you did this project?

Norman and Jordan (n.d.) state that this stage should lead youth to think about what problems or issues came up as they did the activity, and how they dealt with them.

The Generalize step allows youth to start looking at the bigger picture. The activity can relate to everyday life and similar experiences they may have had in the past. Norman and Jordan (n.d.) state that this step should focus on what the experiences meant to them, and what was learned from it. This step is important because it helps youth understand the life skills they may have just learned. This also expands on Dewey's theory that learning from experience comes from more than just the experience itself (1938). Some questions and statements that can be included are:

- How this learning relates to other things they have been learning

- Similar experiences they had with the skill or subject matter taught.
- Where have you faced similar challenges in your life?

This part of the experiential learning model can be difficult to take in for youth, so it is pointed out by Janning et al., (2013) that it could be a great time to break out into teams of small groups for discussion.

The final step of the Experiential Learning Model is to have youth apply what they learned to their everyday lives. Youth are prompted to think about how the skills or learning brought up in the activity can be used in their lives, and how they plan to use it. Youth are led to consider how the activity may change their approach to similar tasks (Norman and Jordan, n.d.). This also reflects Dewey's 1938 theory. Youth can take what they learned from the experience and apply it to other similar situations, showing that there is more to experiential learning than just the experience. Potential questions that could be asked are:

- How can you relate this learning experience to other parts of your life?
- What did the project mean to your everyday life?
- How can you use these skills in a different situation?

The experiential learning model plays a vital role in 4-H and positive youth development. Not only does it allow youth to experience different activities first-hand, but it also starts them on a critical thinking path, and how they can use life skills in different situations. The impact that it can have on youth can allow them to transfer skills to different areas more easily.

## **Educational Travel Opportunities**

One of the first travel experiences for 4-H members was to the National 4-H Congress in Chicago over 100 years ago (National 4-H Congress, 2019). This trip allowed youth to travel to the Union Stock Yards in Chicago (National 4-H Congress, 2019). As it grew, it was moved to the International Livestock Exhibition, and at its peak saw over 100,000 delegates, volunteers, extension staff and other 4-H friends (National 4-H Congress). This event began the long history of 4-H educational travel opportunities.

Nineteen forty eight saw 4-H educational travel opportunities expand (National 4-H History Preservation Program, n.d.). During this year, according to the National 4-H History preservation program, a group of young 4-H members traveled to Europe for the first International Farm Youth Exchange. While programs have been added since then, 4-H still offers these amazing travel opportunities. With thousands of 4-Hers traveling out of state and internationally (National 4-H History Preservation Program, n.d.), these programs' importance is clear.

While each state, and even county, in some cases, runs their educational travel opportunities differently, the same aspects are similar throughout. Youth normally have to apply to attend the trip, with some areas interviewing for youth to select delegates to each trip. Additionally, most educational travel opportunities have set age ranges.

Citizenship Washington Focus (CWF) is a 4-H event held in Washington, D.C., over June and July (National 4-H Council, n.d.). This educational travel opportunity focuses on youth in grades 10-12 and allows participants to learn the importance of civic and social responsibilities related to the development of better citizens and leaders

(Division of Extension, 2019). The National 4-H Council (n.d.) recognizes CWF as the premier leadership and citizenship program because of the behind the scenes look at our Nation's capital. Additionally, 4-H members have the opportunity to develop communication, leadership, and citizenship skills through hands-on and group activities (National 4-H Council, n.d.).

Like CWF, National 4-H Conference is held in Washington, D.C, during the spring months (Division of Extension, 2019). Delegates are asked to prepare and present briefings on important societal topics to federal officials (National 4-H Council, n.d.). During this event, youth are engaged in personal development experiences that increase their knowledge, resources, and skills, discussing topics affecting youth and 4-H programming nationwide (National 4-H Council, n.d.). The educational travel opportunity pamphlet by the University of Wisconsin – Madison Division of Extension (2019) also states that youth have the opportunity to collaborate.

In late November, Atlanta Georgia, hosts grades 10-12 4-H members for the National 4-H Congress (National 4-H Congress, 2019). This congress offers workshops for professional development, chances to meet youth from around the country, self-development seminars, tours, and community service projects (Division of Extension, 2019; National 4-H congress, 2019). This event's unique opportunity is that it offers 4-H youth to take part in the design team (National 4-H Congress, n.d.). This design team works with adult volunteers and extension staff to coordinate social media and other congress aspects.

The first educational travel experience that 4-H members can go on is to Space Camp. In Huntsville, Alabama, this camp is open to youth in grades 6-8 (Division of

Extension, 2019). This STEM-based camp allows 4-H youth to gain hands-on experiences in a mock space mission, along with other STEM topics (Division of Extension, 2019). Like National 4-H Congress, this trip is not run by the National 4-H Council.

### **Delphi Method**

Dating back to the 1950s, the Delphi Method of research has become a widely used research method used in health care, defense, education, and engineering (Skulmoski et al., 2007). While there are many different reasons to use the Delphi in research, Adler & Ziglio (1996) (as cited in Skulmoski et al., 2007) stated that the Delphi method is well suited when there is incomplete knowledge about a problem or phenomenon. Skulmoski et al., (2007) define the Delphi process as an "iterative process used to collect and distill the judgments of experts using a series of questionnaires interspersed with feedback" (pg. 2)

While the reasoning and the set-up of a Delphi Method may vary, most studies consist of the same workings. A group of experts in an area is asked to participate in a three-round communication process. These three rounds are typical for using Delphi and can be considered sufficient in most research (Delbecq et al., 1975; Skulmoski et al., 2007). However, some argue that there is no typical Delphi study, and how each one is done is up to the researchers (Skulmoski et al., 2007).

To get a better understanding of this research method, it is important to look at its origins. After World War II, and during the beginnings of the Cold War, Norman Dalkey, who worked for the RAND Corporation, was tasked with soliciting expert opinions from a Soviet Strategic Planners point of view. These opinions were used to

form an optimal industrial target system and estimate the number of A-bombs required to reduce munitions (Skulmoski et al., 2007). Since then, its uses have grown and are now used in various industries and professions.

The Delphi Method can also be defined as structuring a group communication process to facilitate group problem solving and structure models (Linstone & Turloff, 1975). The methodology behind implementing a Delphi study can vary depending on qualitative and quantitative research and the research question. However, many include similar steps, along with four key items. First, Rowe & Wright (1999) (as cited in Skulmoski et al., 2007) pointed out the major points they consider to be key in developing a Delphi study. They are:

- 1) Anonymity of Participants – All study participants should freely express their opinions without outside pressure and social pressures.
- 2) Iteration – Participants should be allowed to refine their views based on the information given as the study progresses.
- 3) Controlled feedback – Inform participants of other study participant's views and perspectives.
- 4) Statistical Aggregation of Group responses – This key point allows for analyzed and interoperated responses.

Rowe & Wright (1999) (as cited in Skulmoski, 2007) argued that the key items listed above are needed for classic Delphi Method studies. However, as stated earlier, the range of Delphi studies ranges and Linstone & Turloff (1975) argued that modifications in some form don't change what a Delphi study is.

As stated earlier, the number of steps in a Delphi study may vary from study to study; however, most of the steps remain similar. Skulmoski et al., (2007) included each of the following in a classic Delphi study:

- 1) Develop the research question
- 2) Design the research – It is noted that, if and when using Delphi, it allows researchers to collect judgments of experts
- 3) Compile research sample and experts
- 4) Develop round one questionnaire
- 5) Release and analyze round one questionnaire
- 6) Develop round two questionnaire – It is noted here that round two questions should be drawn from round one responses
- 7) Release and analyze round two questionnaire
- 8) Verify, generalize, and document results

In the 2007 article by Skulmoski et al., the authors listed out the third round of questions. However, the list was left there to reiterate Delphi's flexibility. The development, release, and analysis of questionnaires can be repeated until the study consensus or the study goal is met. A common recommendation for agricultural education Delphi studies is a consensus of two-thirds or greater; however, it again varies (Roberts et al., 2016).

When it comes to the number of experts used in a Delphi study, it comes down to a few points. First, Adler & Ziglio (1996) (as cited in Skulmoski et al., 2007), stated that each Delphi participant should meet the following four criteria to be considered an expert on the research topic:

- 1) Knowledge and experience with the issue under investigation

- 2) Capacity and willingness to participate
- 3) Sufficient time to participate in the Delphi study
- 4) Effective communication skills.

To gain a deeper grasp of the topic being studied, all participants must be considered experts. With that said, the number of participants can vary greatly. Delbeq et al. (1975) bring up the importance of heterogeneous and homogeneous study groups. The researchers state that in a heterogeneous group or one that involves many groups of different people from around a nation or internationally, that it is more efficient to build a larger study group. Furthermore, Delbeq et al. (1975) state that when all study participants come from a similar background or are a homogeneous group, it is more efficient to use a small group, recommending that ten to fifteen participants are sufficient.

### **Chapter III – Methods**

This study was designed to find a consensus among 4-H educators in Minnesota & Wisconsin, that are experts in educational travel opportunities, on how experiential education is implemented in 4-H educational travel opportunities. The main research objectives were:

- 1) Identify where, and how, experiential learning is implemented in 4-H educational travel opportunities
- 2) Determine potential drawbacks of using the experiential learning model in 4-H educational travel opportunities
- 3) Determine potential ways that experiential learning could be further implemented in 4-H educational travel opportunities

These main research goals were met by working with Extension 4-H educators in Minnesota and Wisconsin. This study was completed using the Delphi Method, similar to Diaz et al., (2018). This study planned for one set of open-ended questions, followed by two sets of Likert-scale statements.

The first three open-ended questions were developed after analysis and evaluation of 4-H educational travel opportunities and past studies. It was found that no studies could provide past data and guidance. It was decided that the first three questions would be used as a starting point to understand where and how experiential education is used, potential drawbacks, and further implementations. The procedures and questions were submitted to the UWRF Institutional Review Board (IRB), and after careful consideration, the study was approved as exempt under the approval number of IRB-FY2020-89.

After the study was approved, a panel of experts needed to be identified. The goal of this study was to have ten extension staff from Minnesota and ten from Wisconsin. To find a panel, state leaders that headed the 4-H programs from their respective states were contacted.

Once all expert 4-H educator recommendations were received from state leaders, the first round of three open-ended questions was sent out using the Qualtrics program. The first-round email was sent on August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020. In this first email, an informed consent letter was also attached to inform the study participants of their rights and convey the importance that the survey was anonymous and could not be linked back to any individuals. This email can be found in Appendix A and survey one questions can be found in Appendix B. Participants were given two weeks to respond to this first set of questions, with a reminder email sent out after one week.

After the two weeks, the answers were reviewed and grouped. Responses were grouped by similar themes relating to each of the three categories. These themes were developed by comparing the wording of each statement and compare similar themes and wording in each statement. After which they were arranged into Likert scale questions. The scale was as follows:

- 1- Strongly Disagree
- 2- Somewhat Disagree
- 3- Neither agree nor disagree.
- 4- Somewhat agree
- 5- Strongly Agree

After the questions were created under the supervision of the study advisor, the second-round survey was sent out. The second invitation email can be found in Appendix C, while the survey two questions can be found in Appendix D. Again, participants had two weeks to respond. At the end of the two weeks, the responses were analyzed, and for a theme to be considered in full agreement, two-thirds of respondents had to either somewhat agree or strongly agree to the statement. The third round of questions was planned; however, a consensus was seen in those who responded, so it was not sent out. The second-round survey was closed on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020.

## Chapter IV – Results

Data collection for both surveys was completed through the Qualtrics program. Additionally, the first survey analysis was done through Microsoft Excel, while analysis for the second-round survey was done entirely through the Qualtrics program. The first-round survey included three open-ended response questions that drew from the objectives of the study. These questions are listed in appendix B. The responses from the first survey were then analyzed to form 13 Likert scale themes that participants ranked. The Likert scale themes were categorized into the three main objectives of the study. The Likert scale statements can be found in appendix D. Survey links for both studies were sent out to 16 extension staff in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Of the 16, seven responded to the first survey, for a response rate of 43.75%, and six responded to the second round for 37.5%.

The first-round survey included three open-ended questions that were drawn for the three objectives of the study. The responses from these open-ended questions were summarized in this section, but full responses are listed in appendixes E, F, and G. The first question asked participants, "Experiential learning and educational travel opportunities have both become essential aspects of 4-H. In your knowledge, where, and how, has experiential learning been implemented in 4-H education travel opportunities, and how do you think this promotes the personal growth of 4-H members?" Full responses to this question can be found in appendix E. Highlighted below are the comments that stood out.

- "Experiential learning is a large component of all Wisconsin 4-H educational travel opportunities."

- “My understanding in planning a 4-H experience the whole idea is to have youth involved in experiential learning during the entire travel. We use the travel time on the bus as a time for youth to teach to peers what they have researched.”
- “Our educational travel experiences by their very nature are experiential learning”
- “Prior to traveling young people go through an orientation and expectations are clear regarding their own personal preparation for the experiences and their engagement while on the experiences.”
- “Educational travel opportunities provide a wide range of personal growth by: developing friendships, trying new things, learning to advocate for their personal beliefs, and utilizing the life skills they have developed throughout their 4-H career.”
- “As young people explore new places and connect with new people, they are engaging in life skill development; learning to problem solve, make decisions for themselves, while teaching and leading others.”

The second open-ended question related to the second objective was "What are some potential drawbacks of using experiential learning in educational travel opportunities." Again, listed below are responses that stood out, and full responses can be found in appendix F.

- “We find that often adults become extra involved in the planning aspects because making big plans without adult guidance could lead to some pricey mistakes.”

- “Experiential learning lessons must be flexible enough to accommodate whatever might happen while traveling. Additionally, travel bears with it additional risks not related to the curriculum--what happens if a flight is canceled, someone gets sick or injured while on the trip, or the accommodations become unsafe?”
- “I think the biggest risk is that youth are all at different levels, some of the things that we ask kids to do and think about are higher level.”
- “The youth/adult partnership aspect of 4-H is so incredibly important. Adults should not be making all of the decisions, but neither should the youth... everyone needs to be at the table.”
- Without valuable and quality processing with participants, some participants will view what they learned as applicable only while on the travel experience.
- “If the goals and objectives are clear for the educational experience and the expectations are clear for the participants and there are supportive adults, there are NO potential drawbacks.”
- “There are no drawbacks. Experiential learning is part of youth development.”

The final open-ended question asked participants, “What are potential ways to add more experiential learning into educational travel opportunities.” One respondent did not answer this question. The highlighted responses are listed below, for full responses, please see appendix G.

- “I think one big step we could take, and I have done it a small scale is to have youth plan an experience and how to make it interactive. What would they

plan? How would they have each other participate actively? Would they plan for themselves or for younger members?”

- “As mentioned, allowing youth to invest as much as possible in the planning, goal setting, and anticipated outcomes is ideal.”
- “Our educational travel opportunities, while at first glance are pretty broad, could tackle some of today’s current and relevant issues and other social justice issues.”
- “We continue to develop ways for youth to engage in experiential learning for all of our educational experiences; providing opportunities while traveling to step into spaces where they can help facilitate and lead experiential learning, which focuses on different life skills.”
- “Personal interviews could be added as an experiential learning opportunity.”

As stated in earlier chapters, the first survey responses were used to create the categories and questions for the second-round survey. There were five Likert scale statements relating to the first objective, four for the second objective, and four relating to the third objective. This survey had a slightly lower response rate than the first one at 37.5%.

For the statements relating to the first objective, participants were asked to read and indicate how they agree or disagree with each statement on how experiential learning is used in educational travel opportunities and how 4-H members can grow from them. The purpose of the first Likert scale statement was to understand the consensus of 4-H educators on whether or not the 4-H members were engaged in experiential learning for the full educational travel experience. The data in table 1 indicated that while four respondents, or 66.67%, somewhat agreed that 4-H members were engaged in

experiential learning, two respondents had different agreement levels. One respondent (16.67%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, while one other (16.67%) strongly agreed with the statement.

**Table 1**

*4-H Members are Engaged in experiential Learning for the Whole Trip*

<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly disagree	0	0
Somewhat disagree	0	0
Neither agree nor disagree	1	16.67
Somewhat agree	4	66.67
Strongly agree	1	16.67

**Note: N = 6**

The second statement relating to the first objective explored 4-H extension educators' view on whether or not youth are allowed to reflect and apply what they learned after the trip. The data in table 2 again show that most respondents, 50%, or three respondents, somewhat agreed with the statement. However, two respondents or 33.33% strongly agreed, while one respondent (16.67%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Similarly, to the first scale, no respondents somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

**Table 2**

*Youth are Allowed to Reflect and apply What They Learned After the Trip*

<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly disagree	0	0
Somewhat disagree	0	0
Neither agree nor disagree	1	16.67
Somewhat agree	3	50.00
Strongly agree	2	33.33

**Note: N = 6**

In table 3, the data from the third Likert scale statement are reported. This statement was used to determine how extension educators view experiential learning being used to help prepare 4-H members for the trip. Similarly, to the first two statements, most respondents somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. In total, three respondents (50%) somewhat agreed with the statement, and two participants strongly agreed (33.33%). However, one respondent (16.67%) strongly disagreed with the statement that youth are involved in experiential learning to prepare for the trip. No respondents somewhat disagreed with the statement, nor did any remain neutral.

**Table 3**

*Youth are Involved in Experiential Learning to Prepare for the Trip*

<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly Disagree	1	16.67
Somewhat Disagree	0	0
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0	0
Somewhat Agree	3	50.00
Strongly Agree	2	33.33

**Note: N = 6**

The fourth Likert scale statement that relates to the objective was to understand 4-H educators' thoughts on if educational travel opportunities provide an opportunity for youth to grow and prepare for college, careers, and life. Table 4 shows the data reported from respondents. All respondents agreed with the statement, with two (33.33%) somewhat agreeing, while the other four (66.67%) strongly agreed. No respondents disagreed with the statement, and none remained neutral.

**Table 4**

*Youth are Able to Grow Through Trips and Prepare for College, Careers and Life*

<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly disagree	0	0
Somewhat disagree	0	0
Neither agree nor disagree	0	0
Somewhat agree	2	33.33
Strongly agree	4	66.67

**Note: N = 6**

The final Likert scale statement related to the first objective asks participants to state their agreeance on whether or not youth can grow with and learn from other 4-H members. As reported in table 5, the data show that five (83.33%) respondents strongly agreed with the statement. Only one (16.67%) somewhat agreed with the statement. Similar to the fourth statement, no respondents disagreed with the statement, and no one remained neutral.

**Table 5**

*Youth can Grow with and Learn from Other 4-H Members*

<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly disagree	0	0
Somewhat disagree	0	0
Neither agree nor disagree	0	0
Somewhat agree	1	16.67
Strongly agree	5	83.33

**Note: N = 6**

Moving to the second objective of the study, four Likert scale statements were given to study participants. The participants were asked to read and then indicate where they agree or disagree with a statement concerning potential drawbacks of using

experiential learning in 4-H educational travel opportunities. The first question asked 4-H educators' opinions on the potential drawback of having youth involved in planning and the potential of increased costs. Data reported in table 6 show that only one respondent (16.67%) strongly disagreed with the statement. The other five respondents (83.33%) somewhat agreed with the statement. No participant somewhat disagreed, remained neutral, or strongly agreed with the statement.

**Table 6**

*Costs: Having Youth Involved in Planning Could Lead to Increased Costs*

<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly disagree	1	16.67
Somewhat disagree	0	0
Neither agree nor disagree	0	0
Somewhat agree	5	83.33
Strongly agree	0	0

**Note: N = 6**

The second Likert scale statement used for the second objective looked into 4-H educators agreeance if the time and effort needed to guide appropriate planning that is flexible for all youth and provide a balance of youth and adult decision making can be a drawback. Table 7 shows that the majority of respondents, five (83.33%), strongly agree with the statement. However, one respondent (16.67%) somewhat disagrees with the statement. Again, no respondents strongly disagreed, remained neutral, or somewhat agreed with the statement.

**Table 7**

*The Time and Effort Needed to Guide Appropriate Planning That is Flexible, appropriate for Youth at different Levels, and Provides a Balance of Youth and adult decision Making*

<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly disagree	0	0
Somewhat disagree	1	16.67
Neither agree nor disagree	0	0
Somewhat agree	0	0
Strongly agree	5	83.33

**Note: N = 6**

For the next Likert scale statement relating to the second objective, the purpose was to understand participants' agreeance on if some youth need quality processing to understand the experiential learning lessons that are taught on the educational travel experience. This third statement, reported in table 8, showed that two, or 33.33%, respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. However, four (66.67%) respondents strongly agreed with the statement. No respondents disagreed with the statement or somewhat agreed with it.

**Table 8**

*Quality Processing: Some Youth Could Need Guidance to Understand How Learning on the Trip can be Applied in Other Settings*

<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly disagree	0	0
Somewhat disagree	0	0
Neither agree nor disagree	2	33.33
Somewhat agree	0	0
Strongly agree	4	66.67

**Note N = 6**

The final question relating to the second study objective asks study participants to indicate their agreeance with the statement that if the goals and objectives are clear, there are no potential drawbacks. The data in table 9 show that while one participant (16.67%) somewhat disagreed with the statement, two (33.33%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Additionally, two more participants (33.33%) somewhat agreed, while one more (16.67%) strongly agreed. No participant indicated that they strongly disagreed with the statement.

**Table 9**

*If Goals and Objectives are Clear, there are No Potential Draw Backs*

<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly disagree	0	0
Somewhat disagree	1	16.67
Neither agree nor disagree	2	33.33
Somewhat agree	2	33.33
Strongly agree	1	16.67

**Note: N = 6**

The final objective was to understand the potential ways that 4-H educators believe that experiential learning could further be implemented in educational travel opportunities. Like the second objective, four Likert scale statements were developed, and study participants were asked to indicate their agreeance with them. The first statement served to find an agreeance on whether or not expanding the experiential process to include more 4-H youth in the trip's planning process. The responses, listed in table 10, show that one respondent (16.67%) indicated that they somewhat disagree, one (16.67%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and one (16.67%) somewhat agreed. However, three respondents (50%) strongly agreed with the statement. No study participants strongly disagreed with the statement.

**Table 10**

*Youth More Involved on the Planning Side*

<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly disagree	0	0
Somewhat disagree	1	16.67
Neither agree nor disagree	1	16.67
Somewhat agree	1	16.67
Strongly agree	3	50.00

**Note: N = 6**

The following Likert scale statement was used to determine the agreeance level that 4-H educators have about tackling more current and relevant issues that 4-H youth face. In table 11, only one respondent (16.67%) somewhat disagreed with the statement that tackling more current and relevant issues could be implemented. Again, no respondents stay neutral, while two (33.33%) somewhat agreed. The majority of respondents, three at 50%, responded that they strongly agreed. No study participants strongly disagreed with the statement.

**Table 11**

*Tackling More Current and Relevant Issues*

<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Somewhat Disagree	1	16.67
Neither Agree nor Disagree	0	0
Somewhat Agree	2	33.33
Strongly Agree	3	50.00

**Note: N = 6**

The third Likert scale statement looked at the agreeance level of 4-H educators in providing opportunities while traveling for 4-H youth to step into spaces to help facilitate and lead experiential learning. Table 12 shows that only one respondent (16.67%)

strongly disagreed with this statement. The other five respondents (83.33%) strongly agreed with the statement. No respondents somewhat disagreed, stayed neutral, or somewhat agreed with the statement.

**Table 12**

*Providing Opportunities While Traveling to Step into Spaces where They can Help Facilitate and Lead Experiential Learning*

<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly disagree	1	16.67
Somewhat disagree	0	0
Neither agree nor disagree	0	0
Somewhat agree	0	0
Strongly agree	5	83.33

**Note: N = 6**

Finally, the fourth Likert scale statement that participants were asked to indicate their agreeance looked at the agreeance level to the statement that personal interviews can be added as an experiential learning opportunity. One respondent (16.67%) somewhat disagreed, while two others (33.33%) somewhat agreed. Three respondents (50%) strongly agreed with the statement. Additionally, no study participants strongly disagreed or indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

**Table 13**

*Personal Interviews Added as an experiential Learning Opportunity*

<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly disagree	0	0
Somewhat disagree	1	16.67
Neither agree nor disagree	0	0
Somewhat agree	2	33.33
Strongly agree	3	50.00

**Note: N = 6**

## **Chapter V – Discussion, Recommendations, & Conclusions**

### **Discussion**

This study focused on gaining a consensus of 4-H educators and extension staff's views on the where and how experiential education is used in 4-H educational travel opportunities, the benefits and drawbacks, and potential ways that 4-H educators could expand experiential learning in educational travel opportunities. The main objectives of the study were to:

- 1) Identify where and how experiential learning is implemented in 4-H educational travel opportunities.
- 2) Determine potential drawbacks of using the experiential learning model in 4-H educational travel opportunities
- 3) Determine potential ways that experiential learning could be further implemented in 4-H educational travel opportunities

Seven of the 16 4-H educators in Minnesota and Wisconsin participated in the first round of the Delphi study, while six of the 16 participated in the second round. The response rates were 43.75% and 37.5%, respectively. Acknowledging these low response rates, a few reasons could explain them. First, with COVID-19 still causing havoc and an intense election cycle, many people have been burnt out. Additionally, with many extension educators still working from home in the fall of 2020, the invitation emails and reminder emails may have been missed. Furthermore, the small number of participants may have hindered the number of responses received. With that said, the given responses allowed for a base to be established in the consensus of 4-H educators.

The first-round responses confirmed the importance of experiential education in 4-H, with one participant responding to the first question that "experiential education is a large component of all Wisconsin 4-H educational travel opportunities". From all responses, and after analysis, clear themes were seen. Most respondents talked about the importance of experiential education, like the quote listed above. However, analyzing question by question, response by response, a base for the second-round Likert scale statements were established.

The first question, drawing from the first objective of the study, asked participants where and how experiential learning has been implemented in 4-H educational travel opportunities and how they promote the personal growth of 4-H members. The answers varied; however, themes could be seen. The highlights clearly show that 4-H educators plan for experiential learning in educational travel situations. Additionally, these initial statements show that most educators include experiential learning through the whole experience, from preparing for the trip while on the bus and traveling to wrap up activities after the trip. Furthermore, the responses also show that 4-H members have an opportunity for personal development while also learning from their peers. These themes that were viewed in responses were analyzed and used to create the following five Likert scale statements that were used to gain a consensus of participants opinions:

- 1) 4-H members are engaged in experiential learning for the whole trip
- 2) Youth are allowed to reflect and apply what they learned after the trip
- 3) Youth are involved in experiential learning to prepare for the trip
- 4) Youth can grow through trips and prepare for college, careers, and life
- 5) Youth can grow with and learn from other 4-H members

For the second open-ended question, participants were asked, "what are some potential drawbacks of using experiential learning in educational travel opportunities." This question was designed to answer the second study objective. These answers were more varied than the first question responses and drew from many different educational travel opportunities. Some study participants noted that the flexibility of experiential learning might become a drawback under additional circumstances. Another 4-H educator pointed out potential drawbacks in youth coming from different backgrounds and knowledge levels. Additionally, 4-H educators pointed out the need for balanced youth-adult partnerships in planning the trip, along with the costs of the trips in general. Two others stated that if goals and objectives are clear, there are no potential drawbacks to using experiential learning in 4-H educational travel opportunities. After analysis of these answers, four themes were apparent and were used to create the following statements that helped gain a consensus of opinions among 4-H educators:

- 1) Costs: Having youth involved in planning could lead to increased costs
- 2) The time and effort needed to guide appropriate planning that is flexible, appropriate for youth at different levels, and provides a balance of youth and adult decision making
- 3) Quality processing: some youth could need guidance to understand how learning on the trip can be applied in other settings
- 4) If goals and objectives are clear, there are no potential drawbacks

The last open-ended question, aimed at answering the third and final objective of the study, asked 4-H educators, "what are potential ways to add more experiential

learning into educational travel opportunities." Six of the seven respondents answered this question. A clear theme was seen in that most 4-H educators stated that adding more experiential learning to the front side of the trip could be beneficial, with one suggesting personal interviews. Further, another participant suggests that creating spaces while traveling for youth to facilitate and lead the learning process could be beneficial. One answer suggested that 4-H educational travel opportunities could also address current and relevant issues that youth and society face. Through analysis, four themes were found and used to create the final Likert scale statements that were given to study participants to understand the consensus of 4-H educators:

- 1) Youth more involved in the planning side
- 2) Tackling more current and relevant issues
- 3) Providing opportunities while traveling to step into spaces where they can help facilitate and lead experiential learning
- 4) Personal interviews added as an experiential learning opportunity

As stated before, the second-round survey was used to understand the consensus of opinions on the study objectives. As stated earlier, this survey was based on the responses of the first survey. The survey was sent out to all 16 4-H educators selected, and six responded in the two-week time frame given. The first five statements were designed to understand the consensus of opinions on the first objective.

Table 1 in the result section showed that a majority of 4-H educators either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that 4-H members are engaged in experiential learning for the whole trip. Sixty-six-point six seven percent somewhat agreed with the statement, which in itself met the two-thirds majority that was established

to gain an agreement on a statement. Similarly, statement 2, youth are allowed to reflect and apply what they learned after the trip. Statement 3, youth are involved in experiential learning, saw 50% of respondents somewhat agree with the statement, and 33.33% strongly agreed with the statement. This again handily met the two-thirds consensus level to an agreement. However, in statement three, one participant strongly disagreed that youth are involved in experiential learning to prepare for the trip. This could suggest that the participant that strongly disagreed with the statement may have different planning and orientations for youth at the beginning of the trip. Additionally, it brings up an interesting point that most states and even counties may program and coordinate educational travel opportunities. Finally, both the fourth statement of youth can grow through trips and prepare for college, careers, and life, and the fifth statement of youth can grow with and learn from other 4-H members hit a strong agreement consensus. Sixty-six-point six seven percent, or the two-thirds needed, strongly agreed with the statement, while 33.33% somewhat agreed with the statement. This clearly shows that 4-H educators believe that the benefits that 4-H members experience in educational travel opportunities have a significant effect on 4-H youth. Additionally, 83.33% of respondents strongly agreed with the fifth statement, while only 16.67% somewhat agreed. This again not only hits the two-thirds needed for agreement but shows that 4-H educators also firmly believe that youth have many opportunities to grow with and learn from their peers in 4-H travel situations.

Designed to find a consensus agreement related to the second objective, the next four statements aim to understand the agreement levels of 4-H educators view potential drawbacks in using experiential education in educational travel opportunities. Starting in

table 6 in results, an agreement consensus was seen with 83.33% of respondents somewhat agreeing to the statement that having youth involved in planning could lead to increased costs. This consensus shows that 4-H educators see a potential drawback in having experiential learning at the planning stages of educational travel opportunities. However, one respondent strongly disagreed with the statement, suggesting again that some counties may already have 4-H members involved in planning trips.

The second statement, concerning the second objective, aimed at finding agreement on the statement that time and effort needed to guide appropriate planning that is flexible, appropriate for youth at different levels, and provides a balance of youth and adult decision making. A healthy agreement level is seen, with 83.33% of 4-H educators agreeing with the statement. Again, showing that 4-H educators see time and effort as a potential drawback in experiential learning in 4-H travel experiences. Additionally, one respondent somewhat disagreed with the statement. Moving to the third Likert scale statement, 4-H educators were asked to indicate their agreeance to the statement that some youth could need guidance to understand how learning on the trip can be applied in other settings. The statement was designed to find an agreement consensus among participants on the second objective of the study. Sixty-six-point six seven percent, or exactly two-thirds, of respondents, strongly agreed with the statement, while the other third neither agreed nor disagreed with it. While it is slightly smaller than other statements, this does show an agreement consensus among 4-H educators that some youth may need additional guidance to understand how lessons can be applied to other areas of their lives. Finally, the fourth statement aimed at understanding the agreement among 4-H educators on the statement that if goals and objectives are clear, there are no

potential drawbacks. This statement was the only statement in the full study that did not end in a consensus. While only one respondent somewhat disagreed with the statement, 33.33% neither agreed nor disagreed, 33.33% somewhat agreed, and one strongly agreed. This shows that while some 4-H educators may believe that clear objectives limit potential drawbacks, others may still view disadvantages.

In the final objective, the goal was to understand an agreement of 4-H educators on how experiential learning can be expanded in 4-H educational travel opportunities. Four statements were used to find this consensus. The first of the four, reported in table 10 of the results, asked participants to state their agreement that youth could be more involved on the planning side. Fifty percent of the respondents strongly agreed, while 16.67% somewhat agreed. From this, it was seen that the two-thirds consensus was met, and study participants believe that youth could be involved more on the planning side to increase their exposure to experiential learning. In the second statement of objective three, 4-H educators were asked if tackling more current and relevant issues could be used to expand experiential learning in 4-H travel experiences. Fifty percent of respondents strongly agreed, while 33.33% somewhat agreed. This again met the two-thirds consensus level and shows that 4-H educators believe it could be beneficial for 4-H youth to tackle more current issues in an experiential learning setting. The third statement for this objective was designed to gain a consensus of how 4-H educators agree with providing opportunities for youth while traveling to step into spaces where they can lead and facilitate experiential learning. This statement had 83.33% of respondents strongly agree, meeting the two-thirds level for consensus. This shows that 4-H educators believe that having them take on leadership roles while traveling could prove a

great experiential learning opportunity. However, one respondent strongly disagreed with the statement. This brings up another unique aspect that some 4-H educators may already be doing this, or they believe it could cause further drawbacks. The last statement for objective three asked study participants to indicate their agreeance that personal interviews can be added as an experiential learning opportunity in 4-H educational travel opportunities. Fifty percent of 4-H educators strongly agreed with the statement, while 33.33% somewhat agreed with it. Again, meeting the two-thirds agreement. This further shows that 4-H educators believe that adding experiential learning opportunities to the front end of educational travel opportunities is possible and could be beneficial.

## **Conclusions**

Twelve of the 13 statements presented to study participants met or exceeded the two-thirds level of agreement to reach a consensus. All 4-H educators agree that youth are involved in experiential learning to prepare for the trip and that youth can grow through these experiences while learning from their peers. It was shown that, from a 4-H educator perspective, 4-H members are engaged in experiential learning for the full trip. However, the agreeance level on whether or not drawbacks are mitigated through clear goals and objectives does not meet that two-thirds level and could be explored further. Additionally, it should be noted that with a larger number of participants that cover a broader region of the U.S, these agreeance levels may change.

Overall, this study has shown that, from a 4-H educator's view, the experiential learning model is used for the entirety of the trip (83.33% agreeance) from beginning to end. This compares with other studies that show that all 4-H programs use this model

(Enfield et al., 2007; Torock, 2009). Additionally, all 4-H educators agreed that 4-H youth who participate in educational travel opportunities could learn from other 4-H members and develop skills that prepare them for college, careers, and life. While not as clear as the first, the second object showed agreeance that there could be various drawbacks to using the experiential learning model in 4-H educational opportunities. However, most 4-H educators agree (83.33% strong agreeance) that the time and effort needed to plan these activities is a potential drawback. Finally, the third objective was shown to prove that most 4-H educators agree that experiential learning opportunities can be added to the front side of the trip (83.33% agreeance on both adding interviews and including youth in the planning stages) and that another possible way to add more experiential learning opportunities is to add spaces where they can lead in these lessons (83.33% agreeance).

### **Recommendations**

While a recommendation for using experiential learning in 4-H educational travel opportunities is not needed, it can be recommended to expand the ways it is already being used in these experiences. Noting the high agreeance level of potential drawbacks in time and effort needed, it can be recommended that 4-H educators could look at including youth on the planning side, along with the proper adult guidance. Additionally, adding interviews before the trip can allow 4-H educators to provide another experiential learning opportunity for 4-H youth that accounts for more personal growth and prepares them for future experiences. As stated earlier, a certain amount of caution should be noted so that the time and effort need to plan or hinder the flexibility of plans while on the trip needs to be taken.

The significant impact that this study can have is that it opens the door to a discussion about how and where more experiential learning can be implemented in 4-H educational travel opportunities. It also starts a basis of consensus on how 4-H educators view experiential learning in a different setting than most other 4-H settings. However, it still leaves some questions unanswered. A more significant study participant base could affect the agreeance levels and could even add more topics under each objective. Additionally, this study focused on the 4-H educator perspective, and future studies could include how 4-H youth themselves feel about experiential learning in educational travel opportunities. Finally, given the current state of society, it would be interesting to see how opinions change as we move out of the COVID-19 era and return to normalcy.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A - Informed Consent and Invitation Email

Hello,

My name is Samuel Minch. I am currently a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin, River Falls working towards a master's degree in Agricultural Education. As a graduation requirement, I have chosen to complete a thesis project. The topic I have selected is "Implementation of experiential learning in 4-H educational travel opportunities". Through recommendations from state leaders, I am reaching out to see if you are interested in participating in this study.

A panel of extension staff has been selected through nominations from state leaders. A combination of staff includes 10 agents from Wisconsin, and 10 from Minnesota. This panel will take part in a Delphi study, where three rounds of questions will be asked. The first round of questions, which are attached to this email, will include three open ended questions. A week will be available for responses. After which, the next week will be taken to review responses and develop an agree/disagree scale. It will then be sent out the following week, with another week open for responses. This will be repeated for a third and final time. The objective of using this method is to come to a group consensus on how experiential learning is used in educational travel opportunities. The main educational trips that will be focused on are Citizenship Washington Focus, National 4-H Congress, National 4-H Conference, and Space Camp.

All data from this study, including identifiable data such as emails, names, IP addresses, etc., will be kept as secure as possible in an encrypted file. Your participation in this study is voluntary and is not required. Additionally, you will not be required to answer all questions or participate in all rounds of questions.

If you have any questions you can contact me at this email, or at 715-213-3595. Additionally, you can reach my advisor, Dr. Timothy Buttles, at [timothy.j.buttles@uwrf.edu](mailto:timothy.j.buttles@uwrf.edu) or 715-425-4085. You can also contact the UWRF Institutional Review Board Chair at [irb@uwrf.edu](mailto:irb@uwrf.edu) or 715-425-0629. If you feel like your rights as a study participant have been broken, or if you feel you have not been treated correctly, please reach out to the Institutional Review Board Chair.

I look forward to working with you. Again, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Thank you,  
Samuel Minch

## **Appendix B – Survey one questions**

- 1) Experiential learning and educational travel opportunities have become both become an essential aspect of 4-H. In your knowledge, where, and how, has experiential learning been implemented in 4-H educational travel opportunities? How do you think this promotes personal growth of 4-H members?
- 2) What are some of the potential drawbacks of using experiential learning in educational travel opportunities?
- 3) Are there any other ways that experiential learning could be implemented in 4-H educational travel opportunities?

## **Appendix C – Second Survey Initiation Email**

Hello,

I again want to thank all of those who filled out the first survey. I understand that things are very busy currently, so if you were unable to fill out the first survey, I completely understand. For the second round, the responses from the open-ended questions were analyzed and categorized. These categories were then made into agree/disagree statements. In this round, I am asking state which level you agree or disagree with each statement. The responses will be analyzed, and statements that have fifty percent of respondents that agree or strongly agree will be considered at a consensus. Additionally, there is a portion at the end of the survey to add any other comments or suggestions for new statements.

Again, your participation is voluntary, and you will not be required to answer every question. Any and all responses are greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions you can contact me at this email, or at 715-213-

3595. Additionally, you can reach my advisor, Dr. Timothy Buttles,

at [timothy.j.buttles@uwrf.edu](mailto:timothy.j.buttles@uwrf.edu) or 715-425-4085. You can also contact the UWRf

Institutional Review Board Chair at [irb@uwrf.edu](mailto:irb@uwrf.edu) or 715-425-0629. If you feel like your rights as a study participant have been broken, or if you feel you have not been treated correctly, please reach out to the Institutional Review Board Chair.

If you wish to participate, please selected the first option to be taken to the survey. If you do not wish to participate, please select the no option to be taken to the end of the survey.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts. Again, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Thank you,  
Samuel Minch

**Appendix D – Survey two questions**

Question	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly Agree
<p><b>Categories from question 1:</b> Listed below are five categories of how experiential learning is used in educational travel opportunities, and how 4-H members can grow from them. Please read each one and indicate to what level you agree or disagree with each statement.</p>					
1) 4-H members are engaged in experiential learning for the whole trip					
2) Youth are given the opportunity to reflect and apply what they learned after the trip					
3) Youth are involved in experiential learning to prepare for the travel experience					
4) Youth are able to grow through trips and prepare for college, careers, and life					
5) Youth are able to grow with and learn from other 4-H members					
<p><b>Categories from question 2:</b> Listed below are potential drawbacks of using experiential learning in educational travel opportunities. Please read each one and indicate to what level you agree or disagree with each statement.</p>					
1) Costs: having youth involved in planning could lead to increased costs					
2) Time and effort needed to guide					

appropriate planning that is flexible, appropriate for youth at different levels, and provides a balance of youth and adult decision making					
3) Quality processing: some participants may view lessons as only applicable while traveling					
4) If goals and objectives are clear, there are no potential drawbacks					
<b>Categories from question 3:</b> Listed below are potential ways to add more experiential learning into educational travel opportunities. Please read each one and indicate to what level you agree or disagree with each statement.					
1) Youth more involved on the planning side					
2) Tackling more current and relevant issues					
3) Providing opportunities while traveling to step into spaces where they can help facilitate and lead experiential learning					
4) Personal interviews added as an experiential learning opportunity					

**Appendix E – Responses to first question of first survey**

**Experiential learning and educational travel opportunities have become both become an essential aspect of 4-H. In your knowledge, where, and how, has experiential learning been implemented in 4-H educational travel opportunities? How do you think this promotes personal growth of 4-H members?**

Experiential learning is a large component of all Wisconsin 4-H educational travel opportunities. Educators have taken a large amount of time and effort to make sure all of these experiences are hands on, relevant, career focused, and inclusive. 4-H Educational travel opportunities provide a wide range of personal growth by: developing friendships, trying new things, learning to advocate for their personal beliefs, and utilizing the life skills they have developed throughout their 4-H career.

Paraphrasing Mark Twain, travel is the best antidote to ignorance. 4-H trips are a great way to learn. Minnesota 4-H has invested time in developing and delivering training for participants who go on trips like Citizenship Washington Focus and the Presidential Inauguration. To the best of my knowledge, this additional curriculum is a vital part of the experiential learning process for these trips both in the "do" (the lessons that happen before the trip) and the "reflect" and "apply" (after participants return). The youth who go on these trips are frequently called upon to share about their experience, what they learned, and to promote it to others.

My understanding in planning a 4-H Experience the whole idea is to have youth involved in experiential learning during the entire travel. We use the travel time on the bus as a time for youth to teach to peers what they have researched. We use the itinerary as experience for youth to build their understanding of the world. They are not passive observers on many 4-H experiences there are hands on stops and activities where youth build, make or do anything from community service to science experiments. I believe our experiences that we offer have many opportunities to grow. They are learning how to be away from their family, how to interact in a group, how to build their own understanding of the world and their part in it.

Experiential education is embedded in all new learning experiences, and travel has the potential to provide a variety of intense, valuable life-lessons as you navigate its complexities. In Minnesota, opportunities like Interstate Exchange and cross-county exchanges teach young people the ins and outs of logistical planning, budgeting, and building relationships with peers across the country. Youth also gain identify learning goals and expected outcomes they'd like to see from the experience. All of these skills promote self- and social-awareness, responsible decision making, and opportunities to strength relationships.

The entire travel experience is experiential. From preparing for the travel and the educational opportunities on the experience to the actual travel and even implementation of what was learned when returning home.

Our educational travel experiences by their very nature are experiential learning. As young people explore new places and connect with new people, they are engaging in life skill development; learning to problem solve, make decisions for themselves, while teaching and leading others. Prior to traveling young people go through an orientation and expectations are clear regarding their own personal preparation for the experiences and their engagement while on the experiences. At developmentally appropriate stages, youth are given opportunities throughout educational experiences to do, reflect and then think about how they will apply in the future. From our first educational travel

experience to Space Camp to National 4-H Congress, each of the experiences focus on young people having opportunities to learn in new environments, reflect on what they have learned and how they have learned and then think about how that will impact them in the future and/or how they can use the information in the future. Because of the unique environment, young people are more open to these experiences and are in spaces that foster personal growth and development with supportive adults guiding them along the way. Participants are able to make their own decisions and choices safely under the guidance and support of caring adults.

Experiential learning bases itself on do, reflect, apply. As a 4-H educator, I have attended many of the experiences as both a youth and as adult. I have seen first-hand experiential learning happen as youth experience the travel, reflect on the travel and apply it to life. Nothing is more humbling when you see a youth grow on one of these experiences. They learn how to build relationships and resiliency, both of which are skills they need in 4-H, college and life.

## Appendix F – Responses to second question of first survey

### **What are some of the potential drawbacks of using experiential learning in educational travel opportunities?**

I see two drawbacks: 1.) Cost...educational travel opportunities are expensive. Many youth and families cannot afford them. 2.) Time...during an educational travel opportunity we only have so much time. Therefore, we may not be able to experience as many learning opportunities as we would like.

Experiential learning lessons take time to be developed, but the circumstances of travel can change by the day, hour, or minute. Experiential learning lessons must be flexible enough to accommodate whatever might happen while traveling. Additionally, travel bears with it additional risks not related to the curriculum--what happens if a flight is canceled, someone gets sick or injured while on the trip, or the accommodations become unsafe?

I think the biggest risk is that youth are all at different levels, some of the things that we ask kids to do and think about are higher level, I have had a youth on Advanced Space Academy that was way out of his league. The program required a level of maturity I did not realize he lacked until we were on program. I also know that personalities can clash sometimes, like anytime you gather youth, but now you are hundreds of miles from home. The other chance you take is how seriously the youth take the preparation. If they do not do the research or the planning then they are unable to successfully participate in the full program, whether the lack of preparation is an expectation of a fun vacation or a choice to not participate both can mess with the dynamics of the travel.

We find that often adults become extra involved in the planning aspects because making big plans without adult guidance could lead to some pricey mistakes. So while the experiment aspect of experiential learning is important, there is little room for making mistakes while making large financial investments in travel. This is why the youth/adult partnership aspect of 4-H is so incredibly important. Adults should not be making all of the decisions, but neither should the youth... everyone needs to be at the

table. Youth need to understand the implications of their decisions, and adults need to help youth participants recognize those implications and plan accordingly.
Without valuable and quality processing with participants, some participants will view what they learned as applicable only while on the travel experience. Good processing allows individuals to take what they experienced and apply it in their everyday lives.
If the goals and objectives are clear for the educational experience and the expectations are clear for the participants and there are supportive adults, there are NO potential drawbacks. However, if any of those components are missing, it could lead to an unsafe or unhealthy situation for a young person.
There are no drawbacks. Experiential learning is part of youth development.

### Appendix G – Responses to third question of first survey

<b>Are there any other ways that experiential learning could be implemented in 4-H educational travel opportunities?</b>
Personal interviews could be added as an experiential learning opportunity.
I believe ensuring a rich and interactive experience is what's necessary. I haven't been on any of these trips myself, but I would hope that the organizers provide for plenty of opportunities for youth to be involved and for youth to have voice in what they experience.
I think there are many opportunities to include Experiential learning with travel. We have implemented many already. I think one big step we could take, and I have done it a small scale is to have youth plan an experience and how to make it interactive. What would they plan? How would they have each other participate actively? Would they plan for themselves or for younger members?
Our educational travel opportunities, while at first glance are pretty broad, could tackle some of today's current and relevant issues and other social justice issues.
As mentioned, allowing youth to invest as much as possible in the planning, goal setting, and anticipated outcomes is ideal. Letting he participate in the purchasing of supplies and checking itineraries provides a feeling of responsibility. Having the youth initiate conversations with potential partners, vendors, on-site locations, etc... provides the most real-life experiences imaginable.
We continue to develop ways for youth to engage in experiential learning for all of our educational experiences; providing opportunities while traveling to step into spaces where they can help facilitate and lead experiential learning, which focuses on different life skills. We are constantly evaluating the experiences and working with youth and staff to improve the experiences around the essential elements and experiential learning.