Illinois State University

ISU ReD: Research and eData

Theses and Dissertations

10-5-2021

Creating a Society of Active Citizens: A Study of the Civic Engagement of Alternative Breaks Alumni

Annjanette Maire Weaver

Illinois State University, annjanette.weaver@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/etd>

Recommended Citation

Weaver, Annjanette Maire, "Creating a Society of Active Citizens: A Study of the Civic Engagement of Alternative Breaks Alumni" (2021). *Theses and Dissertations*. 1508.

<https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/etd/1508>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by ISU ReD: Research and eData. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ISU ReD: Research and eData. For more information, please contact ISUREd@ilstu.edu.

CREATING A SOCIETY OF ACTIVE CITIZENS: A STUDY OF THE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF ALTERNATIVE BREAKS ALUMNI

ANNJANETTE M. WEAVER

169 Pages

Alternative Breaks are service trips that occur at colleges and universities all around the United States, but little is known of their long-term impact on the participants. This study explored how alumni of Alternative Break programs were civically engaged in their communities post-graduation. The survey instrument, modeled on the Life After College survey, was distributed nationally to Break Away member Alternative Break program alumni. The survey asked respondents to share information about their Alternative Break experience, such as if they served as a leader or went on international experiences. Respondents were also asked to share their post-college civic engagement experiences such as voting, volunteering, and philanthropic work. 520 responses were recorded from 68 different colleges and universities. Statistical tests from the responses included descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and analysis of variance. Significance was found for those who participated in leadership in the areas of philanthropy and volunteering. Students who attended international experiences had significance in community engagement, philanthropy, and political engagement. Finally, the number of trips attended had significance in the areas of philanthropy, community engagement, and volunteering. Several recommendations for future research and implications for practice are also shared.

KEYWORDS: alternative breaks; service-learning; service; volunteer; student affairs; higher education

CREATING A SOCIETY OF ACTIVE CITIZENS: A STUDY OF THE CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT OF ALTERNATIVE BREAKS ALUMNI

ANNJANETTE M. WEAVER

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Administration and Foundations

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

2021

Copyright 2021 Annjanette M. Weaver

CREATING A SOCIETY OF ACTIVE CITIZENS: A STUDY OF THE CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT OF ALTERNATIVE BREAKS ALUMNI

ANNJANETTE M. WEAVER

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Phyllis McCluskey-Titus, Chair

Ryan Smith

Mohamed Nur-Awaleh

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I must thank my husband Jeff. I have been in this doctoral program for our entire relationship—I can finally relax and enjoy the life we are building! Thank you for always being my rock and my cheerleader. I love you.

I want to thank my parents, Jim and Ellen, for instilling in me a love for education and for teaching me to never give up. I'd like to thank my sister, Dr. Courtney Weaver, for paving the way as the first Dr. Weaver and for always encouraging me.

A huge thanks to Dr. Peter McGhee. Your help with all things statistics most definitely saved me. I absolutely could not have finished this without you. Thank you for answering my desperate plea on Facebook!

To all my friends and family who I have neglected for the last several years, I appreciate your understanding as I turned down plans for weddings, parties, holidays, and happy hours so that I could go to class or take time to write. I appreciate your support more than you'll know!

Thank you to the staff at the Center for Civic Engagement at Illinois State University. The work we do inspired this study. Thanks for cheering me on. Thank you to all the Redbirds who have come before me and inspired me to not only apply to the program but to keep going.

To my fellow students in Cohort III. You all are my rocks. I am so proud of all we accomplished. A special thank you to Angell Howard for never giving up on me, even when I was ready to give up on myself.

Thank you to the amazing members of the Break Away family. You all supported this study from its inception. Thank you for sharing my survey and for all the love and support you continue to give to me and to our AB-ers.

Thank you to the Alpha Gamma Delta Foundation for their funding for my survey. Your support in my academic life has been incredible. Thank you for letting me live our Purpose.

Thank you to my committee chair, Dr. Phyllis McCluskey-Titus. You have been such an integral part of my success and have supported me even before you joined my committee. Thank you for your unending support. To the other members of my committee, Dr. Mohamed Nur-Awalah and Dr. Ryan Smith, thank you for the guidance, laughs, and feedback as I navigated this journey.

Finally, to all my AB-ers. You inspired this study. Never stop telling me the impact that Alternative Breaks had on your life. I will never tire of hearing about it! Thank you for always bringing the AB Magic.

A.M.W.

CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	i
TABLES	vii
FIGURES	ix
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Review of Studies	4
Outcomes of participation in service-learning	4
Purpose and Scope of the Study	6
Research Questions	8
Conceptual Framework	9
Significance of the Study	11
Study Terms	13
The Active Citizen Continuum positions	14
Positionality of the Researcher	14
Summary	15
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	16
High-Impact Practices	16
Service-Learning	20
International service-learning	24
Critical Service-Learning	27
Alternative Breaks	28

Benchmarking Alternative Break programs	31
Reflection activities	32
Critical reflection	34
Community interaction	38
Active citizenship	39
Chapter Summary	42
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	44
Overview of Research Design	44
Research Hypothesis and Questions	45
Sample Selection	45
Instrument	46
Validity	49
Study Variables	50
Independent variables	51
Dependent variables	51
Data Collection	52
Steps for collecting data	52
Data analysis	53
Descriptive statistics	55
Reliability analysis	55
Analysis of variance	55
Summary	55
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS	57

Summary of Survey Sample	58
Solicitation of Participants	58
Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Instrument Items	59
Social Issue Frequency	59
Location of trips taken	60
Time of year for trips	61
Roles held in the program	62
Number of Alternative Break trips taken during their college experience	63
Years out of college	63
Majors Represented	64
Reason for Participation in an Alternative Break	65
Post-College Volunteering	67
Post-College Volunteer Activities	68
Summary of Results of Factor Analysis	73
Alternative Break Leadership Levels	79
Alternative Break Location	86
Number of Alternative Breaks Taken	91
Time of Trips	97
Results of the Analysis for Research Questions	103
Research Question 1: How does participation in Alternative Breaks contribute to the development of the outcomes of citizenship and community engagement?	103
Research Question 2: What civic engagement outcomes do students report that they take away, gain, or learn through their experience on an Alternative Break?	109

Research Question 3: How should Alternative Break programs be designed to best facilitate achievement of these outcomes?	113
Chapter Summary	115
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION	117
Summary of Findings	118
Conclusions and Implications for Practice	119
Civic engagement outcomes	120
Implications for Practice	123
Number of trips offered by a program	123
Leadership roles	124
Program marketing	127
Reflection	128
Location	129
Limitations	131
Recommendations for Future Research	133
Chapter Summary	137
REFERENCES	138
APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT	148
APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM	151
APPENDIX C: SURVEY QUESTIONS	153
APPENDIX D: SURVEY CODE BOOK	161

TABLES

Table	Page
1. Social Issue Frequency	59
2. Location of Trips Taken	61
3. Time of Year of Trips	61
4. Roles Held in Program	62
5. Number of Trips Taken	63
6. Years out of College as of Fall 2020	63
7. Majors Represented	64
8. Reason for Participation in an Alternative Break	65
9. Post-College Volunteering Organizations	67
10. Post-College Volunteer Activities	68
11. Community Engagement, Political Engagement, and Philanthropic Activities	
Performed Post-College	70
12. Impact on Post-College Life	72
13. Political Engagement Principle Component Analysis	75
14. Volunteering Principle Component Analysis	76
15. Community Engagement Principle Component Analysis	77
16. Philanthropy Principle Component Analysis	78
17. ANOVA—Community Engagement and Leadership Level SQRT(x)	80
18. ANOVA—Philanthropy and Leadership Level SQRT(x)	82
19. ANOVA—Political Engagement and Leadership Level SQRT(x)	83
20. ANOVA – Volunteering and Leadership Level SQRT(x)	84
21. ANOVA—Volunteering and Location SQRT(x)	86

22. ANOVA—Community Engagement and Location SQRT(x)	87
23. ANOVA—Philanthropy and Location SQRT(x)	89
24. ANOVA—Political Engagement and Location SQRT(x)	90
25. ANOVA—Community Engagement and Number of Trips SQRT(x)	92
26. ANOVA—Philanthropy and Number of Trips SQRT(x)	93
27. ANOVA—Political Engagement and Number of Trips SQRT(x)	95
28. ANOVA—Volunteering and Number of Trips SQRT(x)	96
29. ANOVA—Community Engagement and Time of Trips SQRT(x)	98
30. ANOVA—Philanthropy and Time of Trips SQRT(x)	99
31. ANOVA—Political Engagement and Time of Trips SQRT(x)	100
32. ANOVA—Volunteering and Time of Trips SQRT(x)	102

FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Descriptive Plots for Table 17	81
2. Descriptive Plots for Table 18	83
3. Descriptive Plots for Table 19	84
4. Descriptive Plots for Table 20	85
5. Descriptive Plots for Table 21	87
6. Descriptive Plots for Table 22	88
7. Descriptive Plots for Table 23	90
8. Descriptive Plots for Table 24	91
9. Descriptive Plots for Table 25	93
10. Descriptive Plots for Table 26	94
11. Descriptive Plots for Table 27	96
12. Descriptive Plots for Table 28	97
13. Descriptive Plots for Table 29	99
14. Descriptive Plots for Table 30	100
15. Descriptive Plots for Table 31	101
16. Descriptive Plots for Table 32	102

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Alternative Breaks (AB) are service-based trips that universities all over the United States offer during spring, summer, fall, and winter breaks. These service trips can be either international or domestic and can range from a one-day experience to three weeks in length. They are considered the “alternative” to a typical college break because they are alcohol- and drug-free, community service-focused trips. These trips fall under the umbrella of service-learning¹ and are considered a high-impact practice on a college campus (Kuh, 2008).

Alternative Breaks are a relatively new concept in terms of the history of higher education and even student life and activities. AB formally began at Vanderbilt University in 1991, in part as a reaction to the MTV Spring Break phenomenon that was portraying what college students “should” be doing on their spring breaks (Sumka, et al., 2015). It all began with the creation of Break Away, a non-profit organization dedicated to the success of the Alternative Breaks movement across many universities (Break Away, n.d.). According to Break Away, “an alternative break is a trip where a group of college students engage in direct service, typically for a week. Each trip has a focus on a particular social issue, and immersion in that issue begins long before the trip itself. Students educate themselves and each other, then do hands-on work with relevant organizations” (Break Away, n.d.). The goal of the foundation of Break Away was to

¹ Author’s note: In the literature, this term is written as both “service learning” and “service-learning.” When including a quote from another source, I use whatever version the original author uses. When using my own voice, I will always use “service-learning.” Both are widely accepted but for me, I think of the hyphen as the idea of reflection—that one must reflect on their service for the learning to occur.

support any university interested in this kind of student experience and to create a movement of Alternative Breakers across the U.S.

Currently, 183 schools are members of Break Away (National Alternative Break Survey, 2018) and the median age of programs that are members is 13 years (National Alternative Break Survey, 2018). There are varying levels of membership, including Advantage and Associate members. Associate memberships are \$400/year and Advantage memberships are \$750/year, and Advantage membership includes a free registration for a student or staff member to attend the Alternative Break Citizenship School, a summer conference hosted by Break Away (Break Away, n.d.). Both memberships include access to Break Away resources such as a site bank, housing bank, national conference calls, and access to the listserv. Either membership level also comes with discounts if a university decides to host Break Away staff on campus to do training or retreats for their student or staff leaders, but the Advantage membership has greater discounts (Break Away, n.d.).

What separates Alternative Breaks from other service-oriented immersion trips, or other “alternative breaks,” is the Active Citizen Continuum (ACC). The ACC is a model created by Break Away that will help students articulate their awareness of social issues and increase their commitment to being active in their communities (Break Away, n.d.). The goal of an Alternative Break is for participants to become Active Citizens after the AB experience. Break Away (n.d.) defines Active Citizens as “individuals who prioritize the community in their values and life choices. They do not have to act on every social issue, but rather, see the world through that lens (of social action). They take action on issues that matter to them and their communities” (Break Away, n.d.). An active citizen invests in their community in a variety of ways, be it direct service, choices made, conversations they choose to participate in, or plans they make for the

future (Sumka, et al., 2015). What differentiates Alternative Breaks from other “alternative breaks” is the use of the ACC, as well as a focus on strong, direct community service and immersion and reflection.

Statement of the Problem

The long-term implications of a student’s participation in an Alternative Break are unknown. Students often articulate a desire or intention to volunteer after experiencing a service trip or change their careers or majors as a result of their AB experience (Niehaus, 2012). Some may return from their trip proclaiming “AB changed my life!”, but how do those students follow through on those intentions? Are alumni of Alternative Break programs fully developed, active citizens, as the goal of the ACC states? How are they active in their communities? It is important to learn what activities or experiences most contributed to the participants’ learning while on their trips, thus contributing to their movement along the ACC to become active citizens. Students engage in a variety of activities while on Alternative Breaks. Some of these activities include group and personal reflection, hands-on service, interaction with community members and community partners, and socialization with peers through games and mealtimes. Though specific activities can vary from trip to trip, universities that are members of Break Away follow this general plan. A typical day on an AB trip includes breakfast, morning service work, lunch break, afternoon service work, dinner break, and nightly activities including team building, reflection, and personal time. To what extent does participation in these activities during an Alternative Break contribute to a student’s desire to change their career choices or volunteer as an alum? How do alumni of AB programs consider themselves active citizens in their communities? How does participation in an Alternative Break contribute to students becoming active citizens?

Review of Studies

Most research on Alternative Breaks that includes participants is conducted immediately following a trip, and the learning and growth that takes place months and years after the experience is not considered (Niehaus, 2017). One such immediate study conducted by Niehaus (2012) examined a student's intention to change careers and volunteer post-graduation after their experience on an Alternative Break because of what they had learned and experienced while on the trip. While Niehaus (2012) focused on current Alternative Breaks participants, Astin et al. (2000) studied a broad sample of college students' intentions to volunteer post-college or change their career. This study did not indicate if they had participated in an Alternative Break specifically, just if the student had participated in a service-learning experience while in college. The results indicated that service-learning experiences had an impact on the participants' career choice. "The differences among the 2,635 freshman 'undecided' students are particularly remarkable: 41.3% of those who engaged in service learning during college planned to pursue a service-related career, compared to only 18.5 of undecided students who didn't participate in service" (Astin et al., 2000, p. 21–22). Participation in a service-learning experience, such as Alternative Breaks, again leads to students' intentions to be involved civically after graduation; but are they actually following through to be "active citizens"?

Outcomes of participation in service-learning

Defining what makes a student an active citizen in a community has also been studied. Being active in a community could look like volunteering with social issues that are important to you or being involved in social justice movements. "Some of the most frequently touted benefits of service-learning programs like ABs include increasing students' understanding of diversity, ability to identify the root causes of social issues, and commitment to social justice" (Niehaus,

2017, p. 54). Astin, Sax, & Avalos (1999) suggested the following qualities of citizenship gained from engagement of service during the undergraduate years: students committing to their communities; helping others in difficulty; promoting racial understanding; influencing social values; developing life skills; and building social self-confidence, critical thinking skills, and conflict resolution skills. Students will also seek to understand social problems and show a commitment to civic values (Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999). Newell (2014) suggested that voting, volunteering, participating in artistic expression (art, music, dance, poetry), providing financial assistance for family survival, or helping a neighbor or family member are all ways that associate and bachelor's degree holders are active in their communities. Newell (2014) argued that "civic engagement, however, does not begin in college; it occurs throughout life as a cumulative process in which the college years play an important role and which results in individuals expressing varying levels of civic engagement over time" (p. 71). Newell's (2014) study argued that many life experiences leading up to college could affect a person's community involvement post-graduation.

Keen and Hall (2008) studied the post-graduation community engagement of alumni of the Bonner Scholars Program. The Bonner Scholars Program was designed to support students who may not be able to afford college because of their financial need and gives a scholarship in exchange for meaningful service (The Bonner Program, n.d.). The Bonner Scholars Program requires students to engage in four years of co-curricular service and reflection experiences during their college career. The Scholars are expected to engage in 10 hours of community service a week (140 hours per semester) and 280 hours during the summer (The Bonner Program, n.d.). Each program is unique, and currently, 21 colleges have a program (The Bonner Program, n.d.). The program is designed so that Scholars leave their college experience with a

greater understanding of the social issues that exist in their communities and a commitment to solve social problems (The Bonner Program, n.d.). This commitment to understanding social issues mirrors the goals of an Alternative Break program.

Keen and Hall (2008) found that 100% of Bonner graduates were still doing community service six years after graduating from their institutions. The Bonner Scholars Program differs quite a bit from an Alternative Break experience, as it is focused on individuals serving in their local communities. In addition, reflection is not always guided by student leaders. However, the two programs are similar in their focus on community service and reflection. Other differences include that Bonner Scholars are compensated for their service through a scholarship, while Alternative Break participants are generally paying for their experiences. Finally, the Keen and Hall (2008) study focused on Bonner programs from 10 participating institutions and a total of 41 individuals, so the sample size was small. There are significantly more colleges that offer Alternative Break programs than the Bonner Scholar Program as there are over 175 institutions that are members of Break Away (Break Away, n.d.).

Purpose and Scope of the Study

Once students graduate from universities and Alternative Break programs, are they then active citizens? Are they volunteering in the community, voting, working in social services, attending community events and rallies, seeking to understand social problems, or helping a neighbor or family member, as suggested by Astin, Sax, and Avalos (1999) and Newell (2014)? The purpose of this study is twofold: first, to examine whether participation in an Alternative Break contributes to active citizenship following graduation; second, to explore in which ways their Alternative Break experience affected their civic life choices (career, community engagement).

The scope of this particular study is focused on alumni of institutions that are members of Break Away. When universities are members of Break Away, they follow the same guidelines to provide a quality alternative break experience. Therefore, the outcomes of these AB alumni, although from different institutions, should be somewhat similar as their trip experiences will be similar. This distinction is important so that the study outcomes can be applied across all Alternative Break programs, regardless of institution attended.

Alternative Breaks are a way for students to learn about and explore social problems. Many universities have in their mission statements for students to be civically engaged, to engage in service learning, and/or to have international experiences. For example, Illinois State University lists in its core values Civic Engagement, Collaboration, Diversity and Inclusion, and Respect (Educate, Connect, Elevate, n.d.). Grand Valley State University's mission statement is "Grand Valley State University educates students to shape their lives, their professions, and their societies. The University contributes to the enrichment of society through excellent teaching, active scholarship, and public service" (Grand Valley State University, n.d.). Saginaw Valley State University in Saginaw, Michigan lists community engagement as a core value, with their mission statement stated as "we transform lives through educational excellence and dynamic partnerships, unleashing possibilities for impact in our community and worldwide" (SVSU Guiding Principles, n.d.). Alternative Breaks can provide all of those high-impact experiences for students to learn about community, diversity, and social issues.

Other programs exist that appear to be similar to Alternative Breaks, such as study abroad, religious mission trips, and private for-profit volunteer-tourism (voluntourism) companies. Many bulletin boards located in college academic buildings include advertisements for students to volunteer in foreign countries or in under-resourced communities in the United

States. The Active Citizen Continuum, the focus on strong-direct service, and a commitment to social justice is what sets Alternative Breaks apart from the rest of these programs. An Alternative Break contributes to a student's life-long commitment to community engagement and citizenship (Sumka, et al., 2015).

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How does participation in Alternative Breaks contribute to the development of the outcomes of citizenship and community engagement?
2. What civic engagement outcomes do students report that they take away, gain, or learn through their experience on an Alternative Break?
3. How should Alternative Break programs be designed to best facilitate achievement of these outcomes?

Though a non-credit experience (at a majority of institutions), Alternative Break programs are designed so that students learn about a particular social issue during their trip (Break Away, n.d.). During nightly reflection periods, student leaders ask questions to participants about their increased awareness around a social issue and what impact that has on them. For example, a leader might ask "how have you seen this social issue present itself in a different community you've been a part of?" or "what did you learn today about this community or this social issue?" Practicing reflection about a student's community service experience is a proven pedagogy in service-learning (Jacoby, 1996; 2015): "Service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning" (Jacoby, p. 5,

1996). It is through reflection that students often learn the most during their Alternative Break experience (Sumka, et al., 2015).

Alternative Break programs across the nation use the Active Citizen Continuum to demonstrate the growth and development that students experience while on an AB trip.

Active Citizen Continuum, Break Away (n.d.)

While the ACC is useful in practice, there is no theoretical base for this model. It was created at Vanderbilt University to demonstrate the impact that Alternative Breaks can have on an individual (Break Away, n.d.). According to Sumka, Porter, and Piacitelli (2015), each component of an Alternative Break is designed to help participants progress along the continuum. For example, a *Member* describes a student who has not yet gone on an AB; a *Volunteer* is when that *Member* has begun to engage in service; a *Conscientious Citizen* begins to investigate root causes of the social issues they were exposed to during the trips; and finally, an *Active Citizen* describes a participant who has participated in continued service, activism, advocacy, and ongoing reflection (Sumka, et al., 2015).

Conceptual Framework

This study will utilize Alexander Astin's (1993) Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) model. Astin (1993) challenged scholars to consider the impact college has on students. Astin (1993) stated that people in general are in a constant state of change, but what about college makes that change different? In Astin's (1993) model, "Input" refers to the characteristics of a

student when they begin their college experience; “Environment” includes the various programs and experiences a student has while in college; and “output” refers to the students’ characteristics after the exposure to the environment.

Previous studies have utilized Astin’s I-E-O model because “taken together, student input and student outcome data are meant to represent student development—changes in the student’s abilities, competence, knowledge, values, aspiration, and self-concept that occur over time” (Astin & Antonio, 2012, p. 23). Niehaus and Kurotsuchi Inkelas (2015) used the I-E-O model to define proximal (immediate) environments in their study on exploring the role of Alternative Breaks in career development. They researched the quality of direct service opportunities; opportunities to work with community members; inclusion of community members in planning and execution; interactions with host community, staff, or other students; and interpersonal interactions while students were on their AB trips (Niehaus & Kurotsuchi Inkelas, 2015). Niehaus and Kurotsuchi Inkelas (2015) used hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to identify the features of Alternative Breaks that contribute to reports of the influence of students’ ABs on their career plans.

Astin and Antonio (2012) wrote that the outcome is the dependent variable, environment and inputs are independent variables, and inputs can also be control variables or pretests: “Outcomes refers to the ‘talents’ we are trying to develop in our educational program; inputs refers to those personal qualities the student brings initially to the educational program (including the student’s initial level of developed talent at the time of entry); and the environment refers to the student’s actual experiences during the educational program” (Astin & Antonio, 2012, p. 19). This study will examine the Alternative Break experiences that students had while in college, such as domestic or international travel, reflection activities, social issues

(inputs), and the environment that the student had while in college, such as major field of study, volunteering experiences during college, other extracurricular activities, and current career field. The I-E-O model allows you to study many different environmental variables at the same time, and students have many factors to consider during their collegiate experience that could have an influence on their life choices post-graduation.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because many AB programs claim that students will be active citizens after their AB experiences, but we need evidence to show that this claim is reality. Higher education is being called to address “society’s increasing problems in meeting human needs” (Jacoby, p. 3, 1996). This study is significant because many professionals in student affairs who also work with Alternative Breaks believe that movement happens along the Active Citizen Continuum (Break Away, n.d.; Sumka, et al., 2015) and that AB participants become active citizens after their trip experiences. However, research needs to demonstrate that these claims are reality so that these experiences will continue to be offered as a high-impact practice in service learning. Niehaus (2017) stated that long-term research on AB participation is not currently considered. This study will collect a participant’s graduation year and ascertain how many years they have been out of their college experience.

There are other programs, aimed at college students and young adults, that are like Alternative Breaks, such as volunteer-tourism (or “voluntourism”) companies. Gabriel Popham (2015) wrote that “voluntourism, which allows socially-conscious holiday-makers [vacationers] to pay thousands of dollars to work in poor communities across South America, Asia and Africa, has become a boom sector of the global travel industry” (p. 1). Voluntourism has become an increasing threat to Alternative Breaks; from an outsider’s perspective, these experiences look

very similar—participants travel somewhere, do some volunteer work, and interact with community members. Voluntourism experiences can be detrimental to communities, though, because, as Popham (2015) stated, “with no industry regulator, campaigners within the sector are concerned about the rising numbers of companies involved, with no mechanism to hold them to account for the work that they do” (p. 1). There may be very little conversation around community impact during these voluntourism experiences. The focus is often on the participant and their vacation experience, as opposed to the community in which the service is being done (Guttentag, 2009). When the community takes a back seat to the experience of the participant, the service work is no longer the focus and therefore, can be unnecessary. Guttentag (2009) shared that if the focus is not on the community, projects can go unfinished for years and the community receives little benefit from the work of the volunteers. Every year, college campuses are littered with flyers advertising volunteer trips in third-world countries and to the untrained eye, a student may think they are helping others when really, they are hurting the community because of shoddy work or a lack of cultural competency.

The Active Citizen Continuum is what sets Alternative Breaks apart from the rest of these programs. Being an Active Citizen is about getting to the root causes of social issues within a community (Break Away, n.d.). It is about addressing those root causes with the support of the community and working alongside the community members. It is this commitment to ensuring that participants understand social issues that affect communities that can make a big difference in the lives of those being served (Sumka, et al, 2015).

Evidence needs to be gathered to understand the outcomes students gain from their AB experience, especially the long-term outcomes. By giving students examples of how they can grow and change over time from an Alternative Break trip, they may see the benefits and want to

continue their involvement. Demonstrating how students can improve and learn during an AB experience and emphasizing the ways to do so will only make the AB program better. If we learn that students are not making progress towards active citizenship post-graduation, then we must reevaluate our programs to make sure that our students are learning as much as they can from participating in Alternative Breaks and making positive impacts on communities.

Study Terms

Alternative Break (AB): A substance-free trip focused on a social issue where strong, direct service is completed by a group of college students. The focus is on the service and the community, not on tourism. Daily reflection activities and education on the social issue before, during, and after the experience is critical.

Service Trip: Involves traveling to do service in a community that is not your own. May not include reflection or meaningful engagement with the community members being served. Focus is more on the physical labor than the social problem. Could be considered an “alternative break” as students are engaging in activities outside of the norm of vacationing for leisure.

Service-Learning: “Service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning” (Jacoby, p. 5, 1996).

Social issue: The focus of the service, or the root cause of a problem. This could include affordable housing, food insecurity, disaster relief, youth development, etc. AB trips are focused on education about social issues, and service.

Citizenship: This is defined by a person’s involvement in their community, not their immigration or legal status. This is a person’s engagement with their communities through

volunteering, their career, voting, group memberships, etc. Another description is, “Citizenship might be measured by voting behavior or by the amount and quality of participation in community activities, or the earning of special awards for service to the community” (Astin & Antonio, 2012, p. 49).

The Active Citizen Continuum positions

Member: Not concerned with their role in creating or resolving social problems.

Volunteer: Well-intentioned to help others, but not well-educated about social issues.

Conscientious Citizen: Concerned with discovering root causes of social problems; asks, “why?”

Active Citizen: Community becomes a priority in values and life choices.

Reflection: The process through which students discuss how the service and other experiences that they are having are impacting them as a whole person. This is done through a variety of activities such as discussions, writing/journaling, tableaux, or games.

Positionality of the Researcher

The researcher has potential bias in this study. I am the direct staff advisor for the Alternative Breaks program at Illinois State University. I directly advise the AB Executive Board and have attended several alternative breaks with the university in my time here (nine years). Many of the alumni who would respond to this survey will have worked with me directly. However, the survey is anonymous. Because I am the staff member in charge of the Alternative Breaks program, alumni may feel pressure to answer in a certain way. However, this survey goes beyond my circle of influence at Illinois State University, and responses will be solicited from all 183 Break Away member institutions.

Summary

An Alternative Break is a trip where a group of college students engage in direct service, typically for a week. Each trip has a focus on a particular social issue, and immersion in that issue begins long before the trip itself. Students educate themselves and each other, then do hands-on work with relevant organizations (Break Away, n.d.). Alternative Break programs are very popular on today's college campuses. However, little research exists around the topic of the long-term implications and results of Alternative Break experiences. The Active Citizen Continuum is a common metric used when discussing Alternative Break programs but needs more research into validating this as a measure for success. This study will explore which experiences on an Alternative Break trip most contribute to a student's post-graduation community involvement and active citizenship.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education has a history of service to the community. Today's institutions are being called upon to address "society's increasing problems in meeting human needs" (Jacoby, p. 3, 1996). John Dewey's 1922 work, *Democracy and Education*, challenged American higher education institutions to focus on the communities in which they exist. Dewey (1922) stated that "persons do not become a society by living in close proximity" (p. 5). Communities must have a common understanding: shared aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge, and communication are key (Dewey, 1922). Dewey's ideas are mentioned often in literature on service-learning and experiential education as the foundation of community partnerships, as well as on the importance of reflection. Jacoby (2015) stated that learning does not come from the service itself. It comes from the reflection on the service designed to meet learning outcomes. Alternative Breaks are an immersive service-learning experience that over 170 colleges and universities offer on their campuses (National Alternative Break Survey, 2018) and are considered by several scholars (Kuh, 2008; Niehaus, 2012, 2017; Niehaus & Kurotsuchi Inkelas, 2015; Jacoby, 2015) to be a high-impact practice. In the following section, high-impact practices, the history and definition of service-learning, the history of Alternative Breaks, and the definition of an active citizen will be discussed.

High-Impact Practices

George Kuh introduced the concept of high-impact practices (HIP), which involve activities on campus both inside and outside of the classroom. Kuh (2008) stated that "student development is a cumulative process shaped by many events and experiences, inside and outside of the classroom" (p. 13). High-impact practices are activities that students invest substantial time and energy into, such as engaging in educationally purposeful tasks, frequently interacting

with their faculty and peers, getting feedback often, and applying what they are learning to real-world situations (Quaye & Harper, 2015). According to Kuh (2008) and Quaye and Harper (2015), some high-impact practice activities include first-year seminars and experiences, learning communities (usually within the residence halls), diversity/global learning, capstone courses and projects, service-learning, study abroad, conducting research with faculty, and internships. All of these activities have substantial positive effects on student learning, such as intellectual development, skills in inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, communication, teamwork, and problem solving (Kuh, 2008; Anderson, et. al., 2019). Quaye and Harper (2015) argued that it is not just the students' responsibility for their own campus engagement. It is of the utmost importance that faculty and student affairs practitioners foster conditions that enable high-impact practices.

How do high-impact practices work to engage students? Kuh (2008) purported these practices typically demand that students devote considerable time and effort to purposeful tasks, and most require daily decisions that deepen a student's investment in an activity. For example, internships, service-learning courses, living/learning communities, and capstone projects all require students to invest in a long-term commitment that includes multiple meetings or a long-term placement (for a semester or year) to complete a learning goal (Kuh, et al., 2017). Another key piece of a HIP is faculty/staff and peer interaction. Creating opportunities that foster face-to-face interactions between students and their faculty or student peers also creates opportunities for the students to receive feedback (Kuh, 2008). These kinds of peer and faculty relationships help students feel more connected to campus, thus leading to higher retention and graduation rates. Kuh (2008) stated that the essential learning outcomes of a HIP include personal and social responsibility such as civic knowledge and engagement (both local and global), intercultural

knowledge and competence, and foundations and skills for lifelong learning. Anderson et al. (2019) found that communication, collaboration, and student connections to one another and the university were also outcomes of HIPs. Further, Miller, Rocconi, and Dumford (2017) found that engaging in HIPs had an impact on career goals and post-graduation plans, and had several career-related benefits, such as networking and the ability to tell the “stories” of their experiences to potential employers. Blewitt, Parsons, and Shane (2017) stated that engaging specifically in service-learning allows students to feel more competent in work roles and helps them take responsibility for themselves.

Kuh (2008) found that historically underserved students tend to benefit more from engaging in HIPs than their White student counterparts. His study found that students of color were more likely to return to the same institution for a second year after engaging in a HIP. As a result, Kuh (2008) recommended that every student on a college campus be given the opportunity to participate in at least two high-impact activities during their undergraduate program, with one being in the first year (such as a first-year seminar, residence hall living-learning community, or service-learning). According to Kuh (2008), colleges should structure curriculum so that every student has an opportunity and is available to participate in an HIP during their first year. Similarly, Miller, Rocconi, and Dumford (2017) found that students who engaged in HIPs want to continue their educational experiences at their institution and find other modes of involvement and learning. They also argued that students who have positive experiences on campus are more likely to enroll in graduate school, as they will have more confidence in their performance (Miller, et al., 2017). Students who participate in HIPs better understand themselves in relation to others and the world around them (Kuh, 2008; Blewitt, et al., 2017).

While Kuh (2008) looked at a variety of HIPs, Jacoby (2015) focused her work specifically on service-learning as a HIP. Jacoby (2015) stated:

Service-learning is one of the high-impact educational practices that have been widely tested and shown to be beneficial to students from many backgrounds. High-impact practices increase the odds that students will invest time and effort; participate in active, challenging learning experiences; experience diversity; interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters; receive more frequent feedback; and discover the relevance of their learning through real-world experiences (p. 11).

Jacoby (2015) further stated that service-learning immersion experiences, such as Alternative Breaks, allow students “the combination of being away from home and campus, living in an unfamiliar culture, working closely over a period of time with people whose lives are different from theirs, and spending significant time in ongoing reflection has the potential to be a powerful learning experience” (p. 97).

In the *High Impact Educational Practices* report, Kuh (2008) discussed service learning and community-based learning in the classroom. Though Alternative Breaks are not typically curricular experiences, they are considered a form of service-learning. Kuh (2008) wrote that the focus of a service-learning experience is to “give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both apply what they are learning in real-world settings and reflection in a classroom setting on their service experiences” (p. 11). Blewitt, Parsons, and Shane (2018) found that engaging in service-learning projects aided students in developing communication skills, global awareness (including sensitivity with intercultural communication), social issues or problems awareness (such as

hunger or poverty), and teamwork. Reflecting on one's service experience is a key component of service-learning and will be expanded upon later in this chapter.

Service-learning is widely regarded as a high-impact practice (Kuh, 2008; Jacoby, 2015; Miller, et al., 2017; Blewitt, et al., 2018; Anderson et al, 2019). Linking hands-on experience with education is what makes service-learning a powerful learning experience (Miller, et al., 2017). The next section will discuss what exactly service-learning is and how it is practiced in higher education.

Service-Learning

Requiring mandatory national service began as a debate in the 1980s under President George H.W. Bush, which resulted in a resurgence in focusing on community service in the university setting (Marullo, 1996). According to Jacoby (1996) and Marullo (1996), the roots of service-learning are in experiential learning (Dewey, 1922). Through experiential learning, students will confront and solve problems in the systems in which they are working, such as working with community partners on developing a new program or project. They will develop problem-solving skills and gain a greater understanding of social forces that are at play (Marullo, 1996). Service-learning, compared to traditional community service, generates more student-to-student discussion and reflection, thus leading to greater learning opportunities (Astin et al., 2000).

Jacoby (1996) argued that service-learning is both curricular and cocurricular, “because all learning does not occur in the classroom” (p. 6). Anderson et al. (2019) found that students will make time for and still learn from non-course-based service-learning experiences. However, Marullo (1996) disagreed with Jacoby (1996) and argued that service-learning should be in academic units and “have academically credentialed directors to ensure academic integrity and

legitimacy” (p. 10). Through experiential learning, students confront problems and constraints to take what they are learning in the classroom and apply it to their environment: “Service learning programs should be designed to tap students’ interests and meet their needs, including development of career and vocational opportunities for service” (Marullo, 1996, p. 9). Marullo (1996) expanded upon Dewey’s (1922) idea of community engagement and involvement and shared that the university should provide a tangible service to the communities in which they reside—it is an exchange of benefits for both the university community and the community at large.

Jacoby (2015) stated that service-learning experiences can be course-based or co-curricular and they can vary in frequency, duration, and depth of commitment. However, successful service-learning focuses on the root cause of the social issue that underlies the need for service, challenging the status quo (Jacoby, 2015). True social change focuses on building relationships with individuals most affected by the issue and empowers individuals to be advocates on their own behalf (Jacoby, 2015).

Jacoby (1996) discussed that service-learning should be community focused. She wrote:

The term community in the definition of service-learning refers to local neighborhoods, the state, the nation, and the global community. The human and community needs that service-learning addresses are those needs that are defined by the community. (Jacoby, 1996, p. 5)

Jacoby (2015) later wrote that there are three types of service in a community: direct, non-direct, and indirect. Direct service is a face-to-face interaction with the population at the service site (i.e., serving food at a homeless shelter). Non-direct service occurs at a community site but does not encounter community members directly (i.e., organizing a food pantry). Indirect

service is physically distant from the community population and the service site (i.e., website development). All these types of service can be considered service-learning if executed with reflection tied to the learning goals of the course or organization. Each of these experiences could have a deep learning element if the reflection tied with the service is thought-provoking and thorough.

Mitchell (2008) stated that “service-learning has emerged on college and university campuses as an effective practice to enhance student learning and development” (p. 51) but that ultimately, traditional service-learning is “service to individuals” (p. 52) because it emphasizes service without attention to systems of inequality. Furco (1996) created a linear model of five distinctions among service programs, which is replicated below:

Focus		
<i>Service</i>		<i>Learning</i>
Beneficiary		
<i>Recipient</i>		<i>Provider</i>
Service Learning		
Community Service		Field Education
Volunteerism		Internships

On one end, volunteerism is recipient- and service-focused (the client or community partner benefits the most in the exchange). On the other end, internships are provider- and learning-focused (the community partner benefits, and the student learns practical skills). Service-learning is right in the middle, striking a balance between student learning and the community outcomes.

Stanton et al. (1999) stated that service-learning is the joining of two complex concepts: community action and knowledge acquisition. They also wrote that service-learning advocates question whether the service experience alone will help the community and help students develop a critical consciousness. Stanton et al. (1999) argued that to truly learn from a service experience, there must be more done than just the service work. There should be reflection and knowledge acquisition from the community partner. Bernstein (2009) argued that service-learning challenges students to connect their coursework to the real world and helps to advance their discipline by helping students understand how the community problem came to be. Structured opportunities for critical reflection are key for students to better understand social injustices and community needs. Reflection is a key component of an Alternative Break program and will be discussed in more detail later.

Cipolle (2010) wrote that community partners are vital to the success of service-learning and communication is key. Communication begins when both sides (students and community partners) share their backgrounds, beliefs, and goals. Working with the community forces students to interact with one another as they attempt to solve real social problems and practice democracy (Bernstein, 2009). Expectations for both students and community partners must be clear and any limitations need to be put on the table (Cipolle, 2010). Feedback given by both community partners and students must be honest and reflective. Keen and Hall (2008) found that higher levels of engagement of students with community partners led to sustained peer interaction inside and outside of the classroom. Working with community partners and understanding the communities in which we work are core to the Alternative Break experience.

International service-learning

Many Alternative Break students travel internationally for their service, especially over long periods of time like winter and summer vacation periods. Many traditional study abroad programs also include a service component. Camacho (2004) traveled to Tijuana with her students and observed, “I felt that we were very much like tourists, elite tourists for that matter, as we sat from high in our chairs on the bus and drove around the city” (p. 35). There is a long history of Americans traveling abroad to serve others. Traveling internationally to volunteer began over 100 years ago as international travel became more widespread (Guttentag, 2009). Many of these trips began as religious missionary trips and many continue to have a religious component. Guttentag (2009) recalls a non-religiously affiliated service trip, where they were asked, “When are we getting the Jesus talk?” by a community member because the community had been inundated by missionaries. The purpose of religious mission trips is to elicit a culture change (Guttentag, 2009) which can be harmful to communities, especially if that culture change is unwanted.

Volunteering while traveling is not an uncommon occurrence in western culture. In fact, “voluntourism” is a big industry in the United States. This is defined as tourists who volunteer in an organized way while on vacation or holiday (Guttentag, 2009). Community benefits of these volunteer projects can include: the outcome of the work that is done in the community, revenue generated by the visitors, and the personal growth of volunteers (Guttentag, 2009). However, there can be a negative impact on the local communities. Companies often cater to volunteers’ desires and “heartstrings” instead of community need (Guttentag 2009). I recently visited a company’s website that was filled with pictures of White volunteers with Black children. The company was advertising a two-week service trip and upon further investigation, the itinerary

only included five days of service with no explicit intended outcome. The rest of the schedule included tourism-based activities, and the experience would cost several thousand dollars. There is a term used for the voluntourism industry called “poverty porn,” which plays on the heartstrings of volunteers—usually including pictures of Black children hugging White, female, volunteers who are all smiling, or African children with distended bellies surrounded by flies (Roenigk, 2017).

Voluntourism and religious missionary trips can create extensive unintended harm in the communities where they are serving. Oftentimes what volunteers are shown during their trips, or more importantly, what they share upon their return via social media, misrepresents the real issues that plague these communities and inspire charity, not activism (Roenigk, 2017). These voluntourism organizations can have far-reaching impacts beyond the timeframe of the actual service trip. Guttentag (2009) argued that some of the long-term consequences include:

Neglect of locals’ desires, caused by lack of local involvement; a hindering of work progress and the completion of unsatisfactory work because of volunteers’ lack of skills; a decrease in employment opportunities and a promotion of dependency, caused by the presence of volunteer labour; a reinforcement of conceptualizations of the ‘other’ and rationalizations of poverty, caused by the intercultural experience; and an instigation of cultural changes, caused by the demonstration effect and the actions of short-term missionaries (p. 537).

These tour groups can create community dependence on volunteers—relying on the money/attention they bring to the local organization even though the work being done is not quality (Guttentag, 2009). Real change comes when people are empowered to transform their

own communities where they live (Roenigk, 2017). By perpetuating dependence on volunteers, the cycle of poverty continues (Roenigk, 2017).

Mitchell (2008) agreed and took the idea of volunteer dependence a step further. If root causes to social issues are ignored, one perpetuates the “us vs. them” dichotomy and “bolsters privileged students to participate in and embrace systems of privilege” (Mitchell, 2008, p. 51). Oftentimes, participating in an international service experience is very expensive, which insinuates that those who sign up for the experience have the means to do so, including socioeconomic wealth and other forms of privilege. If critical reflection (Mitchell, 2008; Jacoby, 2015) is not practiced throughout the trip, participants are not understanding the root causes of social problems and are feeding into the idea of poverty porn by exploiting these communities. Voluntourism promotes volunteers’ values in the community, where the volunteer is the “expert,” instead of listening to the community voice (Guttentag, 2009).

Several scholars are critical of international service-learning experiences. Crabtree (2013) wrote “international service-learning can lead to a deficit approach to community development. International service-learning can lead to the belief that developing countries are inherently poor and Americans are all rich, or a persistent normalization of paternalistic/colonial relations” (p. 50). Short-term visits, like international Alternative Breaks or international faculty-led trips, can disrupt community dynamics and give the community a sense of loss at the end of the project and conflict could arise related to the project (Crabtree, 2013). This could be because a project was not done to the community’s standards or personal bonds were made between the participants and the community members and they don’t want to say goodbye to one another.

Service-learning programs can focus too much on the learning of the student and not enough on the change in communities (Mitchell, 2007). This creates a “band-aid” effect,

especially in international communities. Volunteers can “romanticize ideas of poverty and associate it with social and emotional wealth” (Guttentag, 2009, p. 546) when serving communities and people abroad. Again, this speaks to a “they’re poor, but happy!” mentality, which Guttentag (2009) discussed. Camacho (2004) stated that “while community service learning is ideally designed to be rooted in mutuality and reciprocity between servers and served, issues of power and privilege can create an asymmetrical relationship between both” (p. 31). Scholars do not suggest ending international service-learning experiences, but they do advise critical thinking about the impact that they have on communities and on students. Service abroad can be done well when thoughtful reflection is included, and participants work alongside a community partner.

Critical Service-Learning

Tania Mitchell and Barbara Jacoby are leading scholars on critical service-learning. Critical service-learning is a critical approach to service work that aims to dismantle structures of injustice (Mitchell, 2008) and is the most beneficial to the community. This “requires educators to focus on social responsibility and critical community issues” (Mitchell, 2008, p. 51). As Mitchell (2007) wrote:

The distinction between service-learning and critical service-learning can be summarized in its attention to social change, its questioning of the distribution of power in society, and its focus on developing authentic relationships between higher education institutions and the community served (p. 101).

Jacoby (2015) argued that for change and movement toward critical service-learning to happen, educators must “provide opportunities for students to critically analyze their work and learn how to use the levers of social change that are available to them” (p. 236). This can be done

through thoughtful reflection activities that involve focusing on the work done and the communities in which individuals are working.

Power dynamics between those being served and those doing the serving should always be considered in service work: “A critical service-learning pedagogy not only acknowledges the imbalance of power in the service relationship but seeks to challenge the imbalance and redistribute power through the ways that service-learning experiences are both planned and implemented” (Mitchell, 2007, p. 103). For example, this can be achieved by bringing in community partners into the classroom to co-teach or having the students themselves facilitate conversation. Service-learning, with justice-oriented goals, “is about disrupting the unacknowledged binaries that guide much of our day-to-day thinking and acting” (Butin, 2007, p. 180). Mitchell (2007) argued that critical service-learning helps students see differences to make connections with others. It is a way to analyze power, build relationships and allies, and develop empathy. For critical service-learning to be successful, it must include critical reflection, which involves challenging one’s knowledge of social issues in a broader context (Owen, 2016).

Alternative Breaks

Alternative Breaks began at Vanderbilt University in 1986 by a professor, Susan Ford Wiltshire, who challenged students to organize a week of service instead of participating in the typical spring break shenanigans (Sumka, et al., 2015). The initiative began with one trip, and the next year included four sites (Sumka, et al., 2015).

Two students who went on the first Alternative Spring Break (ASB) at Vanderbilt, Michael Magevney and Laura Mann, began Break Away in 1991 as a national organization that was dedicated to promoting, supporting, and spreading alternative breaks to other universities (Sumka et al., 2015). Break Away’s core practices, including its eight components (strong direct

service, diversity, orientation, education, training, reflection, reorientation, and substance free/full engagement), were built out of the 1999 book *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* by Janet Eyler, Dwight E. Giles, and Alexander Astin (Sumka et al., 2015). Many universities have followed the Vanderbilt model—student-driven in leadership structure where students hold positions of responsibility for trip planning and execution rather than paid professional staff (Sumka et al., 2015).

The Active Citizen Continuum (ACC) was developed by staff members of Break Away to describe the changes that occur within a student while participating on an Alternative Break (Break Away, n.d.). The model has four positions on a continuum: Member, Volunteer, Conscientious Citizen, and Active Citizen (Break Away, n.d.). Most Alternative Break programs nationally claim that students will be at the “Member” or “Volunteer” area of the ACC before they go on an AB trip but will be an “Active Citizen” after the trip experience is completed. Very little to no scholarly research exists on the ACC and how students go about making this transformation. The research that is available mainly focuses on the impact that service-learning can have on students (Astin, et al., 1999; Astin, et al., 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 2015). According to Sumka et al. (2015), “active citizens are energetically involved in their communities, in their society, and in the world through activism, organizing, or in the daily choices of their lives” (p. 34).

A key component of the Alternative Breaks program is working with a community to complete “strong direct service” (Break Away, n.d.). This ensures that AB programs are meeting community needs and not creating more work for a community partner. Working side-by-side with community partners also means developing new relationships. As Sumka, et al. (2015) wrote “Alternative Break experiences are also opportunities to build authentic relationships with

diverse people” (p. 33). Break Away (n.d.) and Bohon (2007) discuss the Eight Components of a Quality Alternative Break, which are:

- Strong direct service: Service that is not “busy work,” but has a long-lasting impact on the community.
- Diversity: A diversity of participants and social issues represented in the program.
- Orientation: Understanding the community partner’s mission, vision, and goals. Giving a tour of the organization and helping the students understand the impact the service work has on their organization.
- Education: Students engage in learning about the social issue and the community that they are serving.
- Training: Giving students the training necessary to carry out the tasks needed to complete the service (i.e., teaching them how to use a saw before asking them to cut wood).
- Reflection: Discussion, led by student leaders, about the service work performed, the community served, and the social issue.
- Reorientation: The “now what?” part of the program—when students return home, what do they do with the knowledge they have gained, and how do they apply it to their own communities?
- Alcohol and drug free policy/full engagement: Students should be substance-free during the trip and all activities related to the trip (pre-trip service, meetings, celebrations, etc.) to be fully present in all aspects of the trip experience.

When adhered to by different universities, these quality components are what provide a consistent experience across Alternative Break programs. Schools that are members of Break Away commit to including the eight components as part of their program curriculum. The

combination of these eight components of a quality Alternative Break experience leads to a transformational experience for students. “The transformational power of alternative breaks is increased when students focus on social justice education and solidarity, and when they challenge college students to reflect on their role in global inequities” (Sumka et al., 2015, p. 34). Much of this reframing is because of reflection.

Benchmarking Alternative Break programs

Alternative Break programs that are members of Break Away have developed their programs using the eight components mentioned above as a framework for trip structure and curriculum. Though the logistics of these trips may differ (such as type of housing accommodations, number of participants, and how meals are prepared and delivered), the eight core components of an Alternative Break are universal across college campuses that are members of Break Away. Many universities publish the eight components, their values, missions, and service experiences on their Alternative Break websites. For example, Central Michigan University (2019) not only lists the eight components, but also adds a ninth component for their campus specifically: sustainability. The CMU website also mentions their use of the Active Citizen Continuum and affiliation with Break Away (retrieved from: <https://www.cmich.edu/ess/volunteer/Programs/Pages/Alternative%20Breaks.aspx>).

Bowling Green State University’s (2020) mission statement for their Alternative Break program states: “Bowling Green Alternative Breaks (bGAB) educates and empowers individuals to become active citizens through immersive community service experiences that challenge them to foster positive social change” (retrieved from: <https://www.bgsu.edu/center-for-public-impact/programs-and-partnerships/alternative-breaks.html>). BGSU puts the idea of active citizenship on their main page. The University of Missouri’s (2019) Alternative Break website

publishes their core seven principles (the seven values, such as “communicate love” and “unplug,” that they hold as a program, which are different than the eight components from Break Away), as well as their social issue foci, along with resources for site leaders and parents (retrieved from: <https://breaks.missouri.edu/>). Meanwhile, the University of Louisville (2019) mentions active citizenship directly in their description of their Alternative Service Breaks: “ASB develops active citizens on our campus and in our community through immersive service-based trips” (retrieved from: <https://www.uoflelsb.org/alternative-service-break>). While Alternative Break programs may look slightly different from university to university, their core components remain the same: strong direct service, training, education, orientation, a focus on active citizenship, and reflection.

Reflection activities

Reflection is sometimes referred to as the “dash” in service-learning because it is what makes meaning out of the service that was done and connects service to the learning outcomes. Rhoads (1997) wrote that action and reflection have a reciprocal relationship. There can be no true action without reflection and no reflection without action. With one another, they provide the opportunity for social transformation (Rhoads, 1997).

Some researchers argue that service without a reflective component fails to be forward thinking about the future of the community and see beyond the present needs of the community being served. Rhoads (1997) wrote that ideally, community service is about building community for today and tomorrow. Stanton et al. (1999) also discussed reflection and wrote that structured reflection has the primary goal of helping students gain knowledge, skills, and self-awareness so that students will be more effective not only in their service, but in their lives (Stanton et al., 1999). Rhoads (1997) stated that reflection helps us make connections; the world is much

smaller than we think, and we are all connected. As Rhoads (1997) wrote, reflection “without action rings a bit hollow and fails to achieve many of the ideals stressed by critical views of education and society” (p. 180). Celio et al. (2011) discussed that “reflection is associated with students’ experiencing increased self-confidence and engagement, greater civic knowledge and social responsibility, and more caring relationships with others” (p. 167). Like Stanton et al. (1999), these authors also shared how much learning can occur during the reflection process.

There are many kinds of reflection. Stanton et al. (1999) describes quite a few examples from a variety of institutions, including creating works of art and critical questioning. Rhoads (1997) also discussed the importance of conversation and reflective writing. After taking students from Pennsylvania State University on a Habitat for Humanity trip to Maryland, Rhoads (1997) shared many stories that his students told him. Students were able to work alongside families and get to know them on a personal level as they prepared to move into their homes. Because these students felt they had a personal connection with the service work, their commitment to social service grew (Rhoads, 1997).

The benefits of reflection are vast. Celio et al. (2011) wrote that some of these benefits include “enhanced self-efficacy and self-esteem, more positive attitudes toward school and education, an increase in positive attitudes and behaviors related to community involvement, and gains in social skills relating to leadership and empathy” (p. 175). Through reflection activities, students begin to connect their service experience to their daily lives. Bohon (2007) discussed the benefits of continuing reflection after the trip, most commonly referred to as reorientation. By having students conceptualize how service could be a theme in their everyday lives, the hope is that they will continue to serve the community.

Critical reflection

Critical reflection is an essential element of critical service-learning and Alternative Breaks. Critical reflection involves analyzing and questioning one's service experience within a broad context of social issues and knowledge (Owen, 2016). Critical reflection must be conducted in a way that is "continuous, connected, challenging, and contextualized. It should take place before, throughout, and after a community engagement experience" (Owen, 2016, p. 38). These "Four C's of Reflection" were pioneered by Jacoby (2015), who wrote that:

- Continuous means that reflection must occur before, during, and after the experience (p. 27).
- Connected reflection builds bridges between content learning, personal reflections, and firsthand experience (p. 28).
- Challenging reflection poses old questions in new ways, is designed to reveal new perspectives, and raises new questions (p. 28).
- Contextualized reflection engages service-learners in activities and with topics that are meaningful in relation to their experiences and appropriate for their development levels in life situations (p. 28).

Critical reflection involves being pushed out of your comfort zone. Through critical reflection, "assumptions about the world can be revealed and interrogated, power dynamics and relationships can be examined, and diverse and often contradictory worldviews can be tested" (Owen, 2016, p. 39). Reflection during the service experience enables students to record their observations, to examine theory in practice, and to process the dissonance they may find between their expectations and the reality of their experience (Jacoby, 2015).

Jacoby (2015) stated that service-learners are more likely to have privilege in terms of race, ability, and/or class than those who they are serving. So, in critical service-learning, it is crucial to acknowledge and challenge these privileges and to challenge unjust structures and systems that are responsible for these differences (Jacoby, 2015). Part of critical reflection is identifying and discussing systemic and institutionalized oppression (Owen, 2016).

Jacoby (2015) challenged educators to think about students' current realities. Educators must respect and support students with where they currently are in their thinking about identity, race, and oppression (Jacoby, 2015). Engaging in service-learning in the community may be a student's first experience with difference. As educators, we must be willing to challenge students to grow and learn and understand that they may be at the very beginning of their understanding about structural and societal inequities. Reflection activities that cause students to think critically about identity, power, and privilege are incredibly important, but spaces need to allow for students to feel comfortable sharing about their experiences. As Mitchell (2007) stated, "service-learning classrooms can still aim to create comfort and safety among students. Establishing norms and ground rules to guide conversations and behaviors can establish trust and respect that is essential to developing a strong community" (p. 109). Critical reflection is most likely to happen when one is facing a disorienting dilemma (cognitive dissonance) and then they work to make meaning of said dilemma (Owen, 2016). Hui (2009) affirmed that reflection must include the opportunity to discuss power and privilege. They wrote "it is essential for students to reflect on issues of difference and privilege as they become more critically conscious" (Hui, p. 25, 2009). Critical reflection practices allow for students to grow in their cultural competency and recognize how power and privilege affect social issues in communities.

Jacoby (2015) argued that implementing critical reflection in service-learning work is a process and requires several steps. First, learning outcomes must be identified. Educators need to articulate learning outcomes in concrete, measurable terms. Outcomes serve as the basis for the design of reflection activities in both curricular and co-curricular contexts (Jacoby, 2015). Next, we must introduce students to the concept of critical reflection. Educators and facilitators need to define critical reflection and explain to students why it is an essential element of their service-learning experience. Rubrics that concretely describe critical reflection and “guide students toward incrementally higher levels of complexity of questions, topics, open-ended sentence stems, and quotes” should also be provided (Jacoby, 2015, p. 33). Designing a reflection strategy to enable students to meet the learning outcomes is also critical. Designing effective critical reflection requires faculty and staff to make choices that are informed by desired learning outcomes, as well as the opportunities and constraints that are inherent in the context of the course or experience (Jacoby, 2015). For example, if a learning outcome is the ability to engage in conversation with a peer, the reflection activity should include working with others instead of a solo activity. The next step is for educators to engage students in the reflection. Once outcomes and strategy are developed and the groundwork is laid, the educator begins reflection exercises. It is important to note that a facilitator may initially be uncomfortable when confronted with questions they cannot answer (Jacoby, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2012). The final step is assessing learning through reflection. The content of students’ feelings should not be assessed; rather, the authenticity and depth with which students think about their feelings should be assessed (Jacoby, 2015). This can be done by utilizing a rubric created using the learning outcomes.

Critical reflection can take a variety of forms. Jacoby (2015) shared some of the ways it manifests itself in practice. One way is through speaking or oral reflection. Reflection through

speaking encourages students to think carefully about their messages and the ways they speak. Examples can include directed discussions, presentations, personal interviews, storytelling, students teaching a class, debate, poetry readings, etc. (Jacoby, 2015). Another form of critical reflection involves writing, which challenges students to organize their thoughts to make clear arguments and offers an opportunity for them to improve written communication skills. This is the predominant form of reflection that takes place in academic courses and can include journaling or essays (Jacoby, 2015). Additionally, facilitating activities with individuals or a group can also be effective critical reflection. This is reflection through action that provides variety and can also help to develop relational and teamwork skills in groups (Jacoby, 2015). Examples include role playing or a forced-choice exercise where students must make difficult decisions in a simulated environment. Interactions with the community members students are serving can also be an effective form of a critical reflection activity because they force a student to compare and contrast experiences between themselves and the community (Niehaus et al., 2017). Finally, using media can be an effective form of critical reflection. This reflection strategy provides opportunities to capture subtle emotional truths that may be more easily expressed through media, since media and its forms recognize students' various talents. This could include doing individual or collective collages, drawings, photo or video essays, paintings, musical compositions, and other art forms such as dance or dramatics (Jacoby, 2015). When students have the ability to challenge their beliefs or engage with one another in critical reflection, they begin to create a new understanding of social problems and the relationships between social issues (Niehaus et al., 2017).

Social change occurs when complacency and one's worldview are challenged (Owen, 2016). Service-learning and critical reflection challenge students to dive deeper into their

preconceived notions about the world and their place in it. Helping students increase their empathy and building relationships with one another helps students connect to the communities they are serving. Own (2016) shared the critical reflection and discourse is essential by stating “critical discourse, or dialoguing across differences, is essential for enhancing understanding and building empathy” (p. 43). For students’ worldviews to change, and to create positive change in communities, we must talk about race, power, and privilege within critical reflection. It is the analytical component of reflection that can make service-learning revolutionary (Marullo, 1996). Through reflection, students will discover the systemic, social nature of inequality, injustice, and oppression (Marullo, 1996). Only once these issues are named and brought to light can something be done to make communities, and the world, better places to live. So many times, students get involved in community service because they “like to help people.” We as educators have a responsibility to help students understand the social injustices that exist that make it so people need help (Jacoby, 2015; Mitchell, 2008), Engaging in critical reflection helps students begin to address those injustices.

Community interaction

As part of the Alternative Breaks experience, students interact with community members where they are serving in a variety of ways. AB students are spending their time living in the community, they are working on service projects that affect a community, and they could also be spending social time engaged in their community. Barbara Jacoby (1996) stated that “the term *community* in the definition of service-learning refers to local neighborhoods, the state, the nation, and the global community. The human and community needs that service-learning address are those needs that are *defined by the community*” (p. 5).

Community interaction while on an Alternative Break can have a great impact on the students' learning experience. Cooks and Scharrer (2006) discussed the learning that goes on through community engagement and the reflection that happens afterward. They wrote that "terms for identities change and shift in various social scenes such as performing service or interacting over a meal; stories told of the self are altered and influenced by the audience for such performances" (p. 50). Students are often interacting with community members during the trip in more of a social setting. When communicating with community members, stories are told and shared with one another and thus have different impacts on students.

Rhoads and Neururer (1998) also discussed the importance of community interaction on a college student's development. They wrote that introducing students to diverse cultural groups through community service may be a way of overcoming some of the fear people tend to have of difference. The work of Bowen (2011) strengthened the point that community engagement has a powerful impact on students. In the study, Bowen (2011) found that students emphasized their desire to continue participating in community service, whether as part of a course or as a co-curricular activity, and later wrote students were motivated to become more active in the community after their Alternative Break experience.

Community engagement should have a positive impact on both the Alternative Break participants and the community partners. Meaningful service-learning involves service that strengthens community ties and forms positive relationships, meets some of the community's needs, and ideally, benefits both the community partners and the students (Celio, et al., 2011).

Active citizenship

According to Break Away (n.d.) the ultimate goal of the Alternative Break experience is to become an active citizen. But how is "active citizen" defined? Bernstein (2009) argued that

active citizens are connected to their local, national, and global communities. Astin, Sax, and Avalos (1999) suggested the following qualities of a citizen: student commitment to communities; helping others in difficulty; promoting racial understanding; influencing social values; and the development of life skills, social self-confidence, critical thinking skills, and conflict resolution skills. Students should also have an understanding of social problems and a commitment to civic values (Astin, et al., 1999). Astin and Antonio (2012) discussed a variety of ways students display active citizenship in their study. They shared “citizenship might be measured by voting behavior or by the amount and quality of participation in community activities, the earning of special awards for service to the community, or on the negative side, welfare or arrest records” (Astin & Antonio, 2012, p. 49). Bernstein (2009) suggested that today’s students view citizenship as volunteering and community engagement and less as political activity.

Newell (2014) stated that there are several indicators of community and civic engagement post-college. These include voting, volunteering, participation in artistic expression (art, music, dance, poetry), providing financial assistance for family survival, and helping a neighbor or family member. Newell (2014) discussed how civic engagement doesn’t begin in college. They wrote “civic engagement, however, does not begin in college; it occurs throughout life as a cumulative process in which the college years play an important role and which results in individuals expressing varying levels of civic engagement over time” (Newell, 2014, p. 71). Keen and Hall (2008) found that the alumni of the Bonner Scholars Program were more likely to discuss community issues, donate money to charitable or educational organizations, work with others to solve community problems, and vote. Their results indicated that alumni of the Bonner

Scholars Program were more likely to be active citizens than those who did not participate in the program (Keen & Hall, 2008).

According to the Lumina Foundation's *Degree Qualifications Profile* (2014), higher education has a responsibility to prepare students for participation in a democratic society. One of the learning outcomes the Foundation outlines is Civic and Global Learning. According to the Lumina Foundation's report (2014), bachelor's level students should be able to:

- Explain diverse positions, including those representing different cultural, economic and geographic interests, on a contested public issue, and evaluate the issue in light of both those interests and evidence drawn from journalism and scholarship (p. 19).
- Develop and justify a position on a public issue and relate this position to alternate views held by the public or within the policy environment (p. 19).
- Collaborate with others in developing and implementing an approach to a civic issue, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the process, and, where applicable, describe the result (p. 19).
- Identifies a significant issue affecting countries, continents, or cultures, presents quantitative evidence of that challenge through tables and graphs, and evaluates the activities of either non-governmental organizations or cooperative inter-governmental initiatives in addressing that issue (p. 19).

College students should be exposed to a variety of experiences that allow them to work with others, discuss difficult issues, and learn about power and privilege. Service-learning experiences, like Alternative Breaks, provide students with these opportunities.

Alexander Astin has been writing about how college affects students for decades. In his 1977 work, *Four Critical Years*, several outcomes from a student's time in college are described.

The behavioral affective outcomes of a student's time in college include personal habits, avocations, mental health, citizenship, and interpersonal relations, and the cognitive outcomes include career development, level of educational attainment, and vocational attainment (level of responsibility, income, awards of special recognition) (Astin). Higher education's commitment to educating students on how to be active citizens is not new. However, the importance of educating for democracy has grown. In The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement report, *A Crucible Moment* (2012), it was stated that since post-secondary education is required for success in today's economy, higher education has a responsibility to educate today's students in democracy. Today's college campus brings together a diverse range of students (across class, race, religion, nationality, and age) to practice citizenship daily (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Education, 2012). It is critical that students engage with one another in civil discourse and understand a variety of perspectives. Institutions of higher education create environments for students to engage across differences.

As the research shows, active citizenship can be seen in a variety of ways. Voting, volunteering, political engagement, career paths, and helping neighbors are all ways that graduates can be engaged in their communities. Participation in Alternative Breaks should give students the tools they need to be active in their communities and to be active citizens, post-graduation.

Chapter Summary

Alternative Breaks are a form of service-learning and are a high-impact practice that occur on many college campuses and at universities around the United States. High-impact practices help students feel connected to campus and foster face-to-face interactions with peers

(Kuh, 2008). Service-learning experiences, such as Alternative Breaks, facilitate several outcomes, including an increased sense of personal efficacy, an increased awareness of the world, a heightened sense of civic responsibility, and a greater awareness of one's own values (Astin et al., 2000). Service-learning and Alternative Break experiences should be designed to include strong direct service, social issue education, and opportunities for reflection (Stanton et al., 1999; Mitchell, 2008; Jacoby, 2015). Alternative Breaks can be hosted both domestically and internationally. When practicing service-learning, especially in communities that are not one's own, education on privilege, as well as listening to community voice, is especially important and should be emphasized (Camacho, 2004; Mitchell, 2007; Guttentag, 2009; Crabtree, 2013). It is therefore imperative that critical service-learning and critical reflection are practiced. Students need to be given the opportunity to critically analyze their service work and what next steps they can take (Jacoby, 2015). Alternative Breaks allow students the opportunity to do just that through critical reflection (Mitchell, 2008; Break Away, n.d.). Benefits of reflection include increased self-efficacy and increased self-esteem (Celio et al., 2011). Students also begin to connect their service work to their daily lives. Graduates of service-learning experiences like Alternative Breaks are more likely to vote, help others, participate in community groups, and attend community events as active citizens (Astin, et al., 1999; Newell, 2014).

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Alternative Break (AB) programs have existed on American college campuses since 1986, when they began at Vanderbilt University (Sumka, et al., 2015). While there is a history of participation across the US, there has been little, if any, information gathered on what alumni of these programs have done to continue their community involvement in their post-college life. The purpose of this study is to discover how participation in Alternative Break programs at institutions that are members of Break Away, the national nonprofit that supports ABs, contributes to the future community involvement of alumni. Though every college puts its own twist on the AB curriculum, colleges that are members of Break Away follow a general plan that includes strong direct service, reflection, and social issue education (Break Away, n.d.).

The research questions are:

1. How does participation in Alternative Breaks contribute to the development of the outcomes of citizenship and community engagement?
2. What civic engagement outcomes do students report that they take away, gain, or learn through their experience on an Alternative Break?
3. How should Alternative Break programs be designed to best facilitate achievement of these outcomes?

Overview of Research Design

A survey was conducted of alumni of Alternative Break programs at 183 universities, both public and private, that are members of Break Away (n.d.), a national nonprofit that supports universities with Alternative Break programs. Break Away member institutions have similar structures to their AB programs—they all contain strong direct service, daily reflection, and are centered around a social issue. The survey is based on the Higher Education Research

Institute's study, "Life After College: A Survey of Former Undergraduates." Questions specifically about a participant's Alternative Break experience (number of trips, locations, and leadership roles) were added. The survey was conducted online using Qualtrics. The researcher asked Alternative Break staff advisors from Break Away member institutions to send it out to their network of alumni via email, Facebook, and/or personal contacts.

Research Hypothesis and Questions

The hypothesis guiding the research is that students who are more involved (i.e., multiple trips taken, leadership positions held) with Alternative Breaks are more likely to be involved in their communities post-graduation than students who were less involved. The independent variables that will be analyzed for this study will be leadership positions held, number of trips taken, location of the trips taken (local, domestic, or international), and the time of year a trip took place (fall, winter, spring, summer, or weekend). The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How does participation in Alternative Breaks contribute to the development of the outcomes of citizenship and community engagement?
2. What civic engagement outcomes do students report that they take away, gain, or learn through their experience on an Alternative Break?
3. How should Alternative Break programs be designed to best facilitate achievement of these outcomes?

Sample Selection

Participants were alumni of Break Away member programs at four-year, public or private universities. The sample is a convenience sample, which is where respondents are chosen based on their convenience and availability (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). Currently, 183 schools are

members of Break Away (n.d.). Every student's Alternative Break (AB) experience is unique to them, but schools that are members of Break Away will have similar content in their AB curricula. To determine if their AB experience contributed to their post-graduation community involvement and civic engagement, this survey was directly distributed to *only* alumni of Break Away member AB programs. The survey was distributed to the Alternative Break staff advisors at current Break Away member schools via the Break Away listserv, and the researcher asked the staff member(s) to share with alumni via email and/or social media. Some universities keep in touch with their Alternative Break alumni in a formal manner (listserv, mailing lists, email, etc.) while most, in this professional's experience, do not. Most programs keep in touch with their alumni through social media or through personal connections. Therefore the researcher asked the staff members to pass the survey on to those they know have done an Alternative Break in the past. The researcher also asked participants to share the survey link with other AB past participants. This snowball method could lead to someone taking the survey who is not from a Break Away member institution, which is why the researcher planned to double check that all respondents attended AB programs at member institutions.

Instrument

The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) is housed at the University of California Los Angeles (HERI, n.d.). They partner with The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) to distribute a variety of longitudinal data-gathering surveys such as the Freshman Survey (TFS), Your First College Year (YFCY) Survey, Diverse Learning Environments Survey (DLE), and the College Senior Survey (CSS) (HERI, n.d.). Life After College: A Survey of Former Undergraduates was developed to respond to "the widespread concern over the lack of engagement among young adults in general, which has led to scrutiny of higher education's role

in preparing graduates to participate in our democracy and to assume leadership roles in society” (Vogelgesang & Astin, 2005, p. 2). The original use of the Life After College survey was for students who had previously filled out other CIRP national surveys.

The Life After College survey was used as the basis for this study because the questions focused on the civic engagement of college graduates when it was developed and distributed (HERI, n.d.). The 2006 report *Understanding the Effects of Service-Learning: A Study of Students and Faculty* stated that “participation in service-learning can indeed foster the development of motivation, values and behaviors that are conducive to civic engagement” (p. 8). The researchers also shared that “these findings on college students and adults point to the need for more substantial research, not just on values and motivations, but on actual behaviors of young adults during the post-college years” (HERI, 2006, p. 8). This study intends to better examine the reported behaviors of Alternative Break alumni.

The data set of the original Life After College survey included graduates who were participants who were surveyed three times: first, in 1994 as they entered college, again as they completed college in 1998, and a third time six years later, in 2004 (Vogelgesang & Astin, 2005). The survey was distributed to 19,394 students from all different types of four-year colleges: public and private, religious and secular, and universities and colleges. A total of 8,474 participants completed the Life After College survey and the data were compiled in Vogelgesang and Astin’s 2005 Post-College Civic Engagement Among Graduates HERI Report.

Keen and Hall (2008) specifically looked at data sets from the *Life After College* survey of alumni of the Bonner Scholars Program. According to the program’s website, “the Bonner Program provides a scholarship to students in exchange for weekly commitment to intensive and meaningful service with a local community organization over the four years as an undergraduate

student with our campus partners” (n.d.). Keen and Hall were curious to discover if alumni of the service-based scholarship program went on to be civically engaged. Through this data analysis, it was concluded that all (100%) of the 41 Bonner Scholar alumni were civically engaged post-graduation (Keen & Hall, 2008).

The original Life After College survey examined many types of post-graduation activities (career choices, family choices, etc.)—not just civic engagement outcomes. Astin et al. (2006) found that students who participated in service-learning experiences, such as Alternative Breaks, were more likely to volunteer post-college than students who did not. For the purposes of this study, questions not related to civic engagement were removed.

The researcher added six additional questions for participants to indicate their specific Alternative Break experiences, such as what college they attended, the year they graduated, the number of trips they participated in, leadership roles they held on the trips or on the executive board, and location (domestic or international) of the trips they attended.

One question was edited to include a focus on Alternative Breaks. Originally, the question was, “How important are the following in your decision to participate in community service/volunteer activities?” It has been edited to ask, “How important were the following in your decision to participate in Alternative Breaks? (A major reason; A minor reason; Not a reason).” A fourth option, “Unsure/Don’t remember,” was added in case a participant truly did not remember what their motivation was, to better answer the research questions. A final “Comments” section was added to allow the participant to share anything else they wanted the researcher to know about how their Alternative Break experience influenced them. The survey was administered via a Qualtrics link to past participants of Break Away member Alternative Break programs.

Validity

Astin et al. (2006) found that the Life After College survey results grouped participants into three categories of behaviors, values, and beliefs that contribute to civic engagement:

- *Community/civic engagement*: civic leadership, working with communities, volunteerism, charitable giving, and involvement with alma mater (p. 22).
- *Political engagement*: general political engagement and its four subfactors: political activism, political expression, commitment to political/social change, and voting behavior (p. 22).
- *Civic values/goals*: pluralistic orientation, self-efficacy, and the goal of promoting racial understanding (p. 22).

From the results listed above, it is clear that the instrument measured what the researchers intended to measure, which Creswell and Creswell (2018) defines as construct validity.

HERI's Life After College survey was originally conducted in 2004 as part of a longitudinal study on civic engagement post-graduation (Vogelgesang & Astin, 2005). During the process of creating the survey, service-learning scholars were assembled, and focus groups were conducted with students, and a research team at the HERI developed a draft of survey questions (Astin et al., 2006). The survey was then piloted with 23 college graduates in 2004, and feedback sessions were held (Astin et al., 2006). Changes were made based on the feedback, and the changes were approved by the research team of experts, including service-learning scholars in May 2004 (Astin et al., 2006).

There are some potential threats to the validity of the instrument. This survey requires participants to recall experiences in their past and self-report. Creswell and Creswell (2018) defined the threat of "maturation" as "participants in an experiment may mature or change during

the experiment, thus influencing the results” (p. 170). The participants may or may not have a clear memory of what they did or didn’t participate in in college, especially those who graduated many years ago. Because Alternative Breaks are considered a high-impact practice (HIP) (Kuh, 2008), there should be some long-term memories created based on the experience (Jacoby, 2015; Miller, et al., 2017). However, time could warp a person’s perception of their participation in an Alternative Break. Another potential threat is in regard to the question about political involvement. Given that this survey was distributed around the time of the 2020 election cycle and the issues that were then facing the United States with COVID-19, people could have been more involved in politics than in years past. In addition, some of the questions asked about what a participant has done in their community in the last year. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, the results of these questions may not reflect a lot of activity, as communities across the United States and the world have been deeply affected by mandates and health precautions.

Study Variables

Astin’s (1993) Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) model was used to define the variables. This model suggests that individual characteristics and experiences that students bring with them into their college experience (inputs), in addition to other experiences they have in college (environment), are considered in order to estimate the effects (outputs) of specific college experiences (Astin, 1993; Soria & Johnson, 2017). In this study, additional environmental factors that were considered include number of Alternative Break experiences, AB leadership roles held (trip leader or executive board member), and location of trips (domestic or international). Using the I-E-O model considers a participant’s field of study in college and their career field post-graduation.

Independent variables

The independent variables are the input and environment variables in the study, and include:

- Current or most recent occupation (in the public sector, private sector, nonprofit, unemployed)
- Major or field of study
- Approximate number of trips participated in
- Trip type (spring, winter, summer, fall, or weekend trip)
- Leadership roles held in Alternative Breaks
- Trip locations (local, domestic, or international)
- Social issues worked on
- Graduation year
- Reasons for participation in Alternative Breaks

Dependent variables

The dependent variables are the outcome variables (Salkind, 2014). Per the I-E-O Model, the output, or outcome being studied, is the community engagement of alumni of Alternative Break programs. Community engagement indicators include voting habits, political engagement, volunteering (Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Bernstein, 2009), participation in community events including artistic expression (Newell, 2014), and donating to charitable causes (Keen & Hall, 2008). Questions were grouped together under the following variable categories: political engagement, volunteering, community engagement, and philanthropy.

Data Collection

Outreach to advisors of Alternative Break programs was made via the Break Away listserv. Once the Alternative Break advisors agreed to participate, the researcher sent them sample emails and social media posts with the survey link to pass on to alumni of their programs. The researcher also used their own personal social media channels to reach potential respondents. See Appendix I for recruitment messages for both email and social media.

The survey methods and questions were approved through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) office at the researcher's university. The survey included informed consent language and asked what college a participant attended for their break experience. See Appendix II for the informed consent language. Because not all colleges that execute Alternative Breaks or related service immersion trips are members of Break Away, it was important that the first question asked the respondent to fill in their university. If the participant answered with a college that is not a Break Away member, their survey data was discarded. This language was included in the consent form. The survey responses were collected via Qualtrics. Survey questions can be found in Appendix III.

Steps for collecting data

Step	Implementation Plan	Data Collection Procedure
Step 1 Obtain permission to conduct the study	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Permission obtained from the Institutional Review Board at Illinois State University• Permission obtained to distribute survey via Break Away listserv and social media platforms	n/a
Step 2 Administer Survey	Survey link sent via email and social media	Quantitative data from surveys collected via Qualtrics

Step 3	Data disaggregation using the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and JASP Open-Source Software. Hypotheses were analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)	Quantitative, demographic (trip type/location; not identifying data); qualitative open-ended question from survey
Step 4	Report of data in Chapter IV of dissertation	Quantitative and demographic data from survey; qualitative data from open-ended question

Data analysis

Information from the completed surveys was uploaded into JASP, an open-source statistical program supported by the University of Amsterdam, and SPSS Statistics software. First, any survey submitted where the institution is not a member of Break Away was discarded. Even though marketing was targeted at alumni of Break Away member programs, there was always a chance that a survey would get submitted by someone who either attended a school that is not a member or did a different type of service trip experience. This could happen because respondents were asked to share the survey with others and participants of Alternative Break programs may not know if their program was a member of Break Away. Often only AB leadership may be aware of Break Away membership. To maintain that respondents had a common Alternative Break structure and experience, those who identified that they did not attend a Break Away member institution were removed from the analysis. Of the 619 recorded responses, 520 were found to be alumni of Break Away member institutions and were therefore eligible for the study; this means that 99 survey responses were discarded. Sixty-four Break Away member colleges were represented in the sample.

Next, the answers to the questions regarding post-graduation civic engagement were compiled for each category (volunteering, political engagement, community engagement, and philanthropy) and the Likert scales were converted into numerical scores. Using the Higher

Education Research Institute Graduate School of Education and Information Studies University of California, Los Angeles report on *Understanding the Effects of Service-Learning: A Study of Students and Faculty* (2006) as a model for scoring, the numerical values for questions regarding jobs/duties performed were: Frequently = 4; Occasionally = 3; Once or twice = 2; Never = 1. For questions regarding how often someone engages in activities, scoring was as follows: Frequently = 3; Occasionally = 2; Not at all = 1.

Upon completion of the data collection, the following analysis procedures were completed: (a) descriptive statistical analysis of the independent variables; (b) internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) reliability analysis of each question category group and scores; and (c) analysis of variance among the instrument's scores. A value of .7 and higher is considered a strong correlation for Cronbach's alpha (Field, 2018), and was the threshold used for this study. A scree plot was created for each category group. A scree plot shows the relative importance of each factor and the point of inflexion for the curve is used as a means of extraction (Field, 2018). The questions that scored above the point of inflection have the most significance and are indicated by their scores in tables 17–32 in Chapter IV. The scores below the inflection point are not statistically significant. Finally, (d) an analysis of variance among the instrument's scores and the independent variables was conducted.

Next, responses to the open-ended question “Is there anything else you want us to know about your Alternative Break experience and how it has influenced your post-college life?” were coded. Coding is a way to organize data so that one can give a designation to specific pieces of data (Merriam, 2009). Several themes emerged from the coding and will be discussed in Chapter IV.

Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics are used to define the background information about the participants. These include the type of trips respondents participated in, their majors, the social issues trips focused on, location, and roles held.

Reliability analysis

The Cronbach's alpha reliability procedure was used to examine the internal consistency of the participants' civic engagement activities. The analysis was conducted by the question categories of volunteering, political engagement, community engagement, and philanthropy.

Analysis of variance

To make comparisons among the various independent background variables in relation to the instrument items, analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedures was utilized. ANOVA is a test that reveals if there are any statistical differences between the means of three or more independent groups (Salkind, 2014). ANOVA can help a researcher determine whether there are significant differences between the means of the independent variables. Salkind (2014) stated that a researcher would use ANOVA to test a particular hypothesis: "You would use ANOVA to help you understand how your different groups respond, with a null hypothesis for the test that the means of the different groups are equal" ("What is ANOVA", n.d.). If the results are statistically significant, then it means that the two populations are different ("What is ANOVA", n.d.). For this study, ANOVAs were conducted with the participant's background variables of leadership level, number of trips taken, location of trips, and time of year of trips.

Summary

Alternative Breaks are high-impact practices (Kuh, 2008) that could lead to a commitment to future civic engagement. The purpose of this study is to examine the civic

engagement activities of alumni of Alternative Break programs. Alternative Break programs that are members of Break Away, the national nonprofit supporting AB programs, and aspire to produce active citizens, or active community members (Break Away, n.d.). This study will help to understand if programs are producing active citizens, how those alumni are contributing to their communities, and how Alternative Break programs can be designed to achieve this outcome.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This chapter will discuss the results of the study. The purpose of this study was to discover how alumni of Alternative Break programs were engaged in their communities post-graduation. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How does participation in Alternative Breaks contribute to the development of the outcomes of citizenship and community engagement?
2. What civic engagement outcomes do students report that they take away, gain, or learn through their experience on an Alternative Break?
3. How should Alternative Break programs be designed to best facilitate achievement of these outcomes?

Data were collected using the Life After College survey from the Higher Education Research Institute (2004) by surveying alumni of schools that are Break Away members for Alternative Break programs. Questions were added to the original survey to specifically ask participants about their Alternative Break experiences. Prior to this study, no others were found that have evaluated the civic engagement of Alternative Break alumni as a population. The current study was developed to understand whether Alternative Break programs were meeting the goals of creating citizens who are active and engaged in their communities.

This summary of results presents the outcomes of running a series of tests—which were introduced in the methodology chapter—including descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and analysis of variance. These tests were run with a participation base of 520 completed and eligible surveys. This chapter will share the results of the study.

Summary of Survey Sample

Requests for participation and the survey link were sent out to institutional members of Break Away and were shared personally on social media networks by colleagues. There were 520 eligible responses received (out of 619 total responses; 99 responses were discarded because respondents did not attend a university that is part of the Break Away organization), representing 64 colleges that are all members of Break Away. All participants were 18 years of age or older. Participants were asked to share demographic information about their Alternative Break experiences, including trip location and type, social issue focus, role(s) they played in the program, academic major, and number of trips taken while in college.

Solicitation of Participants

Several recruitment methods were used to secure participants for the study. First, the recruitment email was sent on the Break Away listserv, which encompasses all 183 institutional members of Break Away. Then the request was posted in several social media outlets, including Facebook groups for service-learning professionals, Alternative Breaks alumni groups, and the researcher's personal pages. The survey was also shared via Break Away's Facebook page and the Facebook page of the researcher's home program; finally, the survey was forwarded to AB alumni listservs by current Alternative Break program coordinators.

Of the 619 recorded responses, 520 were verified as alumni of Break Away member institutions and were therefore eligible for the study. As mentioned above, 99 responses were discarded because respondents attended institutions that were not part of Break Away. Sixty-four Break Away member colleges were represented in the sample.

Summary of Descriptive Statistics for Instrument Items

Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and standard deviations, were computed for the demographic data used in the study.

Social Issue Frequency

Participants were asked what social issues they focused on in their Alternative Break experiences. Social issues refer to the topic(s) that the students address through service work and education. Before the trip departs, student leaders will host meetings for participants where they will learn about how a particular issue or issues are affecting the community they are visiting and serving. These topics may include affordable housing, education, and the environment. Some trips could have focused on multiple issues (for example, a trip could have been planned in an area that was devastated by a natural disaster, where participants also worked to rebuild affordable housing), while others would have focused on one issue. In the survey, participants were asked to mark all that applied to their AB experience:

Table 1

Social Issue Frequency

Social Issue	Number of Responses
Youth Development/Education	259
Affordable Housing	253
Environment	227
Hunger	190
Social Justice	109
Health	103
Disaster Relief	95

(Table Continues)

Table 1, Continued

Social Issue	Number of Responses
Disabilities	95
Other	83
Animal Welfare	75
Women's Rights/Domestic Abuse	58
Immigration	42
LGBTQ+	32
Unsure/Don't remember	6

The most frequently identified social issue was Youth/Development and Education, closely followed by Affordable Housing and the Environment. In the researcher's own experience with Alternative Break programs, this comes as no surprise as there are several non-profit organizations focused on these issues that welcome Alternative Breakers. These organizations often make coordination easy by providing housing and food options for students who are on the trips. For example, the Habitat for Humanity Collegiate Challenge (n.d.) provides a pre-set trip with housing and service work for Alternative Break programs at a cost (usually around \$250 per person), to allow students to work on affordable housing issues.

Location of trips taken

Participants were asked to share the location of their Alternative Break experience(s) while in school. They were asked to "mark all that apply," so some participants may have experienced all three types of trips; others may have only experienced domestic. Not every university offers international or local opportunities for Alternative Breaks.

Table 2*Location of Trips Taken*

Location	Frequency
Domestic (within the United States)	490
International	141
Local (within the university community)	79

Time of year for trips

The time of year the trips occurred for participants was also collected. Again, some colleges only offer trips over spring break, while others run trips throughout the academic year. Some universities may only have a short fall break that would not make it feasible to offer a trip, whereas others have a week off for fall break. Respondents were asked to “mark all that apply” and could have selected multiple options.

Table 3*Time of Year of Trips*

Type	Frequency
Spring Break	458
Winter Break	195
Weekend	102
Summer Break	91
Fall Break	29

Roles held in the program

Participants were asked what roles they held in their Alternative Break program(s). These roles include Participant (someone who just experiences the trip and participates in service and reflection), Trip or Site Leader (someone who leads the specific trip experience, leads reflection, and often has a hand in planning logistics of the trip), and Executive Board Member (which is a student leadership role for the Alternative Break program as a whole). When a participant serves as an Executive Board Member, that indicates that the Alternative Break program functions as a registered student organization with a faculty or staff member serving as an advisor. Some participants held multiple roles throughout their program, which is reflected in the table below.

Table 4

Roles Held in Program

Role	Frequency
Participant	473
Trip or Site Leader	310
Executive Board Member	141
Participant ONLY	196
Trip or Site Leader ONLY	36
Executive Board ONLY	3
Participant AND Trip or Site Leader	148
Participant AND Executive Board Member	10
Trip or Site Leader AND Executive Board Member	8
Participant AND Trip or Site Leader AND Executive Board Member	120

Number of Alternative Break trips taken during their college experience

Some students have the opportunities to take many Alternative Break trips during their college experience, while some may have only had the opportunity to go one or two. Participants were asked how many trips they took during their collegiate years.

Table 5

Number of Trips Taken

Number of trips	Frequency
1–2 trips	247
3–4 trips	154
5–6 trips	70
7 or more trips	47

As illustrated above, the most common response was “1–2 trips taken.” Since many colleges may only offer one opportunity per year (such as just a spring break option), this is not a very surprising outcome.

Years out of college

Participants were asked what year they graduated from college. That year was then subtracted from 2020, the year this survey was distributed, to discover how many years it had been since their college experience.

Table 6

Years Out of College as of Fall 2020

Years out of college	Frequency
Less than 6	189

(Table Continues)

Table 6, Continued

Years out of college	Frequency
6–10 years	124
Over 10 years	200

This table illustrates that alumni representing a range of years after graduation responded to the survey. Alternative Breaks is a relatively new program on college campuses so the alumni base may not have as many years of experience with post-graduation civic engagement. The first Alternative Break program began in 1991 at Vanderbilt (Sumka et al., 2015,) and grew over time to include 183 institutions.

Majors Represented

Participants were asked what their major field of study was and to mark all that applied.

Table 7

Majors Represented

Major	Frequency
Social Sciences	195
Education	119
Other	76
Health Professions	66
Business	59
Hard Sciences	43
Arts	26

Reason for Participation in an Alternative Break

Table 8 shares the mean and standard deviation of the responses for each question about why someone chose to participate in an Alternative Break. The standard deviation measures the variation or spread of response scores among participants. Participants could choose a response about their reasons for participation in Alternative Breaks, and each reason was associated with a number between 0 and 3 (A major reason (3); A minor reason (2); Not a reason (1); Unsure/Don't remember (0)).

Table 8

Reason for Participation in an Alternative Break

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason	Unsure
I wanted to help other people.	509	2.93	.309	480	25	2	2
I wanted to do my part as a community member.	509	2.80	.446	418	81	10	0
I wanted to do something about an issue that matters to me.	509	2.75	.542	407	79	21	2
I liked working with people who share my ideals.	510	2.61	.635	351	121	36	2
I wanted to create a more equitable society.	509	2.49	.783	328	113	56	12
It made me feel good about myself.	509	2.42	.655	259	203	47	0
By getting involved, I could influence what happens in my community.	509	2.28	.771	236	187	79	7
I wanted to meet people.	510	2.17	.702	172	529	74	5
I was inspired by someone I admire.	508	1.99	.871	180	153	165	10

(Table Continues)

Table 8, Continues

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason	Unsure
To fulfill my civic duty.	506	1.98	.844	170	165	167	6
My friends were involved in these activities.	509	1.71	.795	106	150	251	2
Someone personally invited me to participate.	508	1.67	.925	130	113	234	31
I wanted to further my career.	510	1.67	.756	86	172	249	3
It was an expression of my faith.	510	1.36	.654	47	93	367	3
I was working to change laws or policies.	508	1.28	.578	28	90	385	6
To receive a tax write-off.	498	1.00	.099	0	3	501	2

The responses generating the highest averages were “I wanted to help people,” “I wanted to do my part as a community member,” “I wanted to do something about an issue that matters to me,” and “I liked working with people who share my ideals.” These data demonstrate an intrinsic motivation for the student or participant. They were motivated to do the trip through a lens of helping others and working with others. This information can be used for Alternative Break programs to market the opportunity to future participants. For example, when recruiting students to programs, appealing to students who enjoy volunteering and doing good for others could help garner more participants.

A means analysis was also conducted for the activities that participants have done since leaving college. Tables 9 and 10 represent possible volunteering opportunities. Participants ranked their level of involvement as: Frequently (4); Occasionally (3); Once or Twice (2); Never (1).

Post-College Volunteering

Participants were asked to share “since leaving college, how often have you participated in community service/volunteer work through the following organizations?” The table below reflects those responses.

Table 9

Post-College Volunteering Organizations

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Frequently	Occasionally	Once or Twice	Never
A school or educational organization.	493	2.86	1.027	159	174	90	70
Through your employer.	494	2.71	1.094	142	168	82	102
A community organizing effort or neighborhood group.	491	2.16	1.069	67	125	119	180
Other organization.	486	2.15	1.123	80	108	103	195
Of your own initiative, not through an organization.	494	2.14	1.030	58	128	135	173
A civic organization (e.g., United Way, YMCA/YWCA, Kiwanis, etc.).	493	2.06	1.052	57	116	118	202
A cultural or arts organization.	493	1.94	.989	40	107	130	216
A religious or faith-based organization.	494	1.90	1.130	73	74	79	268
An advocacy/issue group (e.g., Sierra Club, Common Cause, local advocacy group, etc.).	493	1.90	1.028	49	91	115	238
A public/governmental agency.	492	1.74	.999	42	72	95	283
A hospital or health organization.	493	1.74	.989	43	64	107	279
A political organization (e.g., political party, campaign, etc.).	490	1.72	.986	36	80	84	290
A sports or recreational organization.	491	1.71	.987	44	56	105	286

Involvement with a school or educational organization scored the highest but was closely followed by volunteering through an employer. Corporate social responsibility is rising in popularity and many companies today encourage employees to spend time doing volunteer work. Workplaces like State Farm Insurance encourage community involvement by both employees and local residents in their Neighborhood of Good program. State Farm has even partnered with non-profit organizations like the American Red Cross and Junior Achievement to encourage their employees to volunteer regularly.

Post-College Volunteer Activities

Participants were asked to share “what kind of activities have you performed as a volunteer since leaving college?”. Their responses are reflected below.

Table 10

Post-College Volunteer Activities

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Frequently	Occasionally	Once or Twice	Never
Teach, tutor, mentor, coach, referee.	490	2.61	1.168	152	116	99	123
Collect, prepare, distribute, or serve food.	491	2.33	.946	50	176	150	115
Fundraiser or sell items to raise money.	493	2.28	1.088	78	147	105	163
Perform physical labor.	490	2.24	.960	47	159	151	133
Collect, make, or distribute clothing, crafts, or goods other than food.	490	2.13	.995	48	135	141	166
Provide professional or management assistance including serving on a board or committee.	492	1.99	1.191	91	72	69	260
Other.	429	1.69	1.009	38	58	64	268

(Table Continues)

Table 10. Continued

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Frequently	Occasionally	Once or Twice	Never
Provide information, be an usher, greeter, or minister.	489	1.56	.926	34	47	76	332
Provide general office services.	490	1.56	.882	25	55	91	319
Engage in music, performance, or other artistic activities.	493	1.64	.962	38	57	88	310
Provide counseling, medical care, fire/EMS, or protective services.	490	1.48	.955	40	42	33	375
Supply transportation for people.	488	1.34	.672	7	34	78	369

Table 10 illustrates the types of activities that Alternative Break alumni engaged in post-college. The most popular options were teaching, coaching, tutoring, refereeing, or mentoring, with a mean score of 2.61, and activities surrounding the collection and distribution of food, with a mean score of 2.33. These activities are readily available in many communities through local school programs and food banks, so it is not surprising that these activities scored highly for alumni.

Table 11 describes community engagement opportunities, political engagement, and philanthropic opportunities where participants could volunteer. Participants could answer Frequently (4); Occasionally (3); Once or Twice (2); or Never (1) to the following prompts for the question “please indicate if you have performed any of the following since leaving college”.

Table 11

Community Engagement, Political Engagement, and Philanthropic Activities Performed Post-College

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Frequently	Occasionally	Once or Twice	Never
Voted in a state/local election.	482	3.65	.765	383	47	35	17
Discussed community issues.	483	3.48	.818	314	108	41	20
Bought a certain product or service because you like the social or political values of the company.	480	3.14	1.011	230	140	57	53
NOT bought something or boycotted it because of the social or political values of the company.	482	3.09	.970	208	149	84	41
Voted in a national election.	483	3.04	1.026	420	19	35	9
Used online communication with family and friends to raise awareness about social and political issues.	483	3.04	1.026	210	134	86	53
Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by signing a written, email, or online petition.	482	2.81	1.079	71	92	111	208
Donated money to a human services or community services organization (e.g., United Way, a local food bank, etc.).	480	2.73	.989	118	184	109	69
Donated money to an educational organization.	479	2.51	1.065	101	151	117	110
Worked with others to solve a problem in the community where you live.	482	2.47	1.121	112	132	108	130
Played a leadership role in your community.	483	2.43	1.147	113	125	100	145

(Table Continues)

Table 11, Continued

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Frequently	Occasionally	Once or Twice	Never
Donated money to a political candidate or cause.	482	2.31	1.168	77	95	99	207
Worked on community projects that involved a government agency or program.	482	2.12	1.107	79	89	123	191
Worn a campaign button, put a sticker on your car, or placed a sign in the front of your house supporting an issue or candidate.	478	2.06	1.157	87	74	99	218
Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by contacting or visiting a public official.	482	2.05	1.101	71	92	111	208
Donated money to a religious organization.	479	1.88	1.160	76	68	56	279
Donated professional services on a “pro bono” basis.	478	1.68	.958	28	83	75	292
Worked with a political group or official.	481	1.60	.948	41	35	95	310
Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by contacting a newspaper or magazine.	482	1.50	.894	30	42	65	345
Worked as a canvasser going door to door for a political candidate or cause.	482	1.27	.683	13	26	38	405
Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by calling a radio or television talk show.	481	1.18	.570	9	15	31	426

Table 11 illustrates several civic engagement activities, such as voting in local elections (mean of 3.65), discussing important community issues (mean of 3.48), and supporting businesses and products based on their values (mean of 3.14). Unsurprisingly, given new technologies at the time the survey was distributed, expressing an opinion via newspaper or radio

show was not highly scored (means of 1.50 and 1.18), while online communication scored much higher, with a mean of 3.04.

Table 12 represents the mean data and standard deviations from participants' perceptions as to the extent that each of these involvement opportunities prepared them for life after college. Participants were asked to share the following perceptions in response to the prompts using the following scale: Strong Impact (3); Moderate Impact (2); Little or No Impact (1); Not Applicable (0).

Table 12

Impact on Post-College Life

As you look back on your undergraduate experience, what impact has each of the following had in preparing you for life after college?

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Strong Impact	Moderate Impact	Little or no Impact	N/A
Friendships/student-peer interactions	520	2.43	.935	340	115	16	49
Involvement in community service/volunteer work	520	2.40	.930	324	124	27	45
Involvement in Alternative Breaks	520	2.36	.939	311	128	37	44
Living away from home	520	2.31	.981	298	142	23	57
Involvement in student clubs	520	2.15	1.042	262	140	53	65
Living on campus	520	2.03	1.066	225	164	53	78
Interaction with faculty	520	2.02	.959	196	186	90	48
Mentors	520	1.98	1.113	230	138	65	87

(Table Continues)

Table 12, Continued

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Strong Impact	Moderate Impact	Little or no Impact	N/A
Work/employment during college	520	1.96	1.066	213	145	90	72
Coursework	520	1.91	.862	128	259	90	43
Involvement in an internship	520	1.70	1.243	197	118	56	149
Involvement in study abroad	520	.84	1.258	111	42	18	349
Involvement in fraternities or sororities	520	.71	1.128	76	48	43	353
Involvement in religious organizations	520	.67	1.039	53	64	63	340
Involvement in student government	520	.63	1.015	50	57	64	349
Involvement in athletics or intramural sports	520	.56	.835	26	39	134	321

Friendships and relationships with peers scored the highest, while involvement in community service and Alternative Breaks followed closely behind. Because Alternative Breaks are service-based experiences and all of the participants had been involved in them, it is not surprising that alumni of these programs scored those areas highly.

Summary of Results of Factor Analysis

Prior to conducting the analysis related to the primary research questions in this study, a series of factor analysis procedures were completed. Factor analysis is “a multivariate technique for identifying whether the correlations between a set of observed variables stem from their relationship to one another or more latent variables in the data” (Field, 2018, p. 740). Ultimately, factor analysis reduces a large number of variables into fewer factors to aid in analysis. Salkind

(2014) explained that factor analysis is a technique that analyzes how well items are related to one another and looks to form clusters or factors. Salkind (2014) also asserted that factors are more efficient than individual variables at representing outcomes and thus makes the analysis easier to understand.

For the questions regarding someone's participation since college, a principle component analysis (PCA) was conducted on the categories of political engagement, volunteering, philanthropy, and community engagement. A PCA finds the structure in the data set (Dallas, 2013) and is a type of factor analysis. PCA is most often used as a data reduction technique for selecting a subset of highly predictive variables from a larger group of variables. A PCA simplifies the data set and reduces data down to its basic components (Dallas, 2013). A principle component analysis evaluates the data factors to see which are relevant and should be used in analysis for statistical significance.

A value of .70 and higher is considered a strong correlation for Cronbach's alpha (Field, 2018). Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency—that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. It is considered to be a measure of scale reliability. A value of .70 or higher is good, .80 is better, and above .90 is best. For this study, .70 was used so that any relevant data were not excluded. A scree plot was created for each category group, which shows the relative importance of each factor, and the point of inflexion for the curve is used as a means of extraction (Field, 2018). The “elbow,” or abrupt turn in the curve, is a good visual indicator of which factors are not key components. The questions that score above the point of inflection, or the “elbow,” have the most significance and are indicated by their scores on tables 13–16. The scores below the inflection point are not statistically significant and are not included in the tables below.

Table 13*Political Engagement Principle Component Analysis*

Significant questions for political engagement with internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.864

Factor and Survey Item	Factor Loading
<i>Since leaving college, how often have you participated in community service/volunteer work through the following organizations?</i> A political organization (e.g., political party, campaign, etc.).	0.746
<i>Please indicate if you have performed any of the following since leaving college:</i> Used online communication with family and friends to raise awareness about social and political issues.	0.598
Donated money to a political candidate or cause.	0.763
Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by contacting or visiting a public official.	0.709
Worked with a political group or official.	0.754
Worn a campaign button, put a sticker on your car, or placed a sign in the front of your house supporting an issue or candidate.	0.758
Worked as a canvasser going door to door for a political candidate or cause.	0.633

The principle component analysis found the above questions to be significant for the post-graduation political engagement for Alternative Break alumni.

Table 14*Volunteering Principle Component Analysis*

Significant questions for volunteering with internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.858

Factor and Survey Item	Factor Loading
<i>Since leaving college, how often have you participated in community service/volunteer work through the following organizations?</i> A cultural or arts organization.	0.408
A civic organization (e.g., United Way, YMCA/YWCA, Kiwanis, etc.).	0.642
Other organization.	0.803
A community organizing effort or neighborhood group.	0.761
Of your own initiative, not through an organization.	0.569
<i>What kind of activities have you performed as a volunteer since leaving college?</i> Collect, prepare, distribute, or serve food.	0.546
Provide professional or management assistance including serving on a board or committee.	0.522
Perform physical labor.	0.487
Other.	0.825

The principle component analysis found the above questions in Table 14 to be significant for the post-graduation volunteering for alumni of Alternative Break programs. As seen above, and indicated earlier in Table 10, many alumni engaged in food collection and distribution.

Table 15

Community Engagement Principle Component Analysis

Significant questions for community engagement with internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.793

Factor and Survey Item	Factor Loading
<i>What kind of activities have you performed as a volunteer since leaving college?</i> Engage in music, performance, or other artistic activities.	0.527
<i>Please indicate if you have performed any of the following since leaving college?</i> Played a leadership role in your community.	0.724
Worked with others to solve a problem in the community where you live.	0.740
Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by contacting a newspaper or magazine.	0.749
Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by calling a radio or television talk show.	0.744

Table 15 indicates the significant responses for community engagement. Engaging in artistic activities in a community, as well as serving a leadership role in the community, proved to be significant for alumni of Alternative Break programs.

Table 16

Philanthropy Principle Component Analysis

All questions for philanthropy were considered significant, with an internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of: 0.684

Factor and Survey Item	Factor Loading
<i>What kind of activities have you performed as a volunteer since leaving college?</i> Fundraiser or sell items to raise money.	0.637
<i>Please indicate if you have performed any of the following since leaving college?</i> Donated professional services on a "pro bono" basis.	0.602
Donated money to a political candidate or cause.	0.519
Donated money to a religious organization.	0.463
Donated money to an educational organization.	0.787
Donated money to a human services or community services organization (e.g., United Way, a local food bank, etc.).	0.734

Table 16 demonstrates that all variables related to philanthropy were significant. Alumni of Alternative Break programs indicated high levels of philanthropic involvement, which will be discussed further later in the chapter.

For the final statistical analysis of the study, the data sets that were significant from the factor analysis were tested using ANOVA. The null hypothesis for any ANOVA is that all our group means are exactly equal. To normalize the data for analysis, two formulas were applied to the data sets and one was untransformed (meaning no formula was applied to the data). Normalizing is a technique in which data points are shifted and rescaled, so they end in a range from 0 to 1. The two formulas applied were square root (x) (SQRT), and log (x+1). The SQRT

helps to normalize all the data sets most effectively. ANOVA tests the independent variable, the dependent variable, then the interaction of the two variables. Even if the variables alone are not significant, there may be significant interactions. A significant interaction effect means that there are significant differences between groups and over time.

The ANOVA results give a variety of pieces of information about the data. As explained by Field (2018) and Salkind (2014):

- Sum of Squares: The sum of the differences of all the mean scores, which is then squared. This gives us an idea how different each group's score is from the overall mean (Salkind, 2014).
- Degrees of Freedom (df): "Degrees of freedom is an approximation of the sample or group size" (Salkind, 2014, p. 242) and is calculated as $k - 1$ where k equals the number of groups.
- Mean Square: The average sum of squares (Field, 2018).
- F ratio: "a ratio of the variability among groups to the variability within groups" (Salkind, 2014, p. 239)
- p : The statistical significance. If $p < .001$, then the result means there was a difference between the groups, and you reject the null hypothesis that the groups are equal (Salkind, 2014). For this study, $p < .10$ will be used to measure significance.

Alternative Break Leadership Levels

Table 17 tests the leadership level of a respondent with the community engagement responses. For tables 17–20, P represents those whose highest level of participation in an Alternative Break was as a Participant, L for those who were Trip Leaders as their highest level, and E for those whose highest level was as an Executive Board Member.

Table 17*ANOVA—Community Engagement and Leadership Level SQRT(x)*

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
P, L, or E	0.163	2	0.082	0.446	0.640
Participation Response	48.523	3	16.174	88.311	<.001
P, L, or E * Participation Response	0.892	6	0.149	0.812	0.561
Residuals	287.367	1569	0.183		

Responses by participants in Alternative Breaks to the question of community engagement (level of CE) were not statistically significant ($p = 0.640$) when examined by leadership position (participant, trip leader, or executive board member), but were significant overall for the factor/variable in level of participation in community engagement ($p < .001$). This indicates that across all the participation responses, with no other variables, the responses range across options P, L, and E. Some cases are higher than others, which is to be expected in an evenly distributed large sample.

The post hoc comparisons indicated that the response levels were significant for all responses, except when comparing the response of “frequently” to “never.” There was no significant interaction or any differences when examining participation in community engagement by leadership level ($p = 0.561$). Post hoc tests are after-the-fact comparisons (Salkind, 2014) and help explain where the differences in the means lie. Tukey’s post hoc test was used in all categories and no differences in significance were reported for the level of program leadership regarding community engagement, philanthropy, political engagement, and

volunteering. However, there were significant differences overall in the levels of participation response, regardless of leadership position. The pattern did reveal significant interactions between these two variables with the level of engagement.

Figure 1

Descriptive Plots for Table 17

Plots of the mean of SQR(x) data for each variable were created with standard error of the mean bars. The plot shows that there are no differences in leadership levels but significant differences between responses of “frequently” and “never,” versus “occasionally” ($p < .001$). The respondents are either fully engaged or not at all in the measures. Fewer respondents identified as being in the middle ground between “occasionally” and “once or twice.”

Table 18 repeats the ANOVA on philanthropy regarding leadership levels.

Table 18*ANOVA—Philanthropy and Leadership Level SQRT(x)*

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
P, L, or E	0.015	2	0.007	0.049	0.952
Participation Response	13.522	3	4.507	29.873	<.001
P, L, or E * Participation Response	1.743	6	0.290	1.925	0.074
Residuals	197.953	1312	0.151		

The results indicate that the leadership levels are not significant ($p = 0.952$). However, response level is again significant ($p < .001$) and there were significant interactions ($p = 0.074$). Responses by participants in Alternative Breaks to the question of philanthropy were statistically significant for the level of leadership in the program while in college. The interaction between the level of leadership held and participation in philanthropy post-college was also significant. Post hoc analyses reveal the responses for “frequently” and “occasionally” differed based on a respondent’s leadership role. Executive board members were more likely to respond “frequently” to involvement in philanthropy, as illustrated by the plot below.

Figure 2

Descriptive Plots for Table 18

Table 19 repeats the ANOVA on political engagement regarding leadership levels.

Table 19

ANOVA—Political Engagement and Leadership Level SQRT(x)

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
P, L, or E	0.249	2	0.125	0.437	0.646
Participation Response	138.692	3	46.231	162.335	<.001
P, L, or E * Participation Response	2.726	6	0.454	1.595	0.145
Residuals	470.467	1652	0.285		

The results indicate that the leadership levels (participant, trip leader, or executive board member) are not significant ($p = 0.646$). However, response level is again significant ($p < .001$) and there are no interactions ($p = 0.145$).

Figure 3

Descriptive Plots for Table 19

Table 20 repeats the ANOVA on volunteering regarding leadership levels.

Table 20

ANOVA—Volunteering and Leadership Level SQRT(x)

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
P, L, or E	0.648	2	0.324	0.742	0.476
Participation Response	348.045	3	116.015	265.884	<.001

(Table Continues)

Table 20, Continues

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
P, L, or E * Participation Response	7.664	6	1.277	2.927	0.008
Residuals	754.863	0.436	0.436		

The results indicate that the leadership levels are not significant (0.476). However, response level is again significant ($p < .001$), as well as the interactions between leadership roles and their responses. As illustrated in the plot below, leaders were more likely to respond “occasionally” to volunteering opportunities. The differences between the three levels of participation are especially noticeable for the responses of “occasionally” and “once or twice.”

Figure 4

Descriptive Plots for Table 20

The results indicate across all four types of post-graduation involvement (community engagement, philanthropy, political engagement, and volunteering) that a respondent's leadership position in their Alternative Break program did have statistical significance in the categories of philanthropy and volunteering. Additionally, in all four involvement types, the participation response was statistically significant.

Alternative Break Location

The same ANOVA tests were run on the Alternative Break location. Participants were asked to share if they had attended a local trip (within the university community), a domestic trip (within the United States) or an international trip. Fewer than 10 participants indicated that they had only attended a local trip for their Alternative Break experience. Thus, there were not enough data points to provide meaningful data. These responses were removed from the analysis, and the ANOVAs were run on those who attended domestic trips and those who attended international trips. Table 21 repeats the ANOVA on volunteering regarding location.

Table 21

ANOVA—Volunteering and Location $SQRT(x)$

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
AB Location	0.013	1	0.013	0.031	0.861
Participation Response	308.172	3	102.724	234.437	<.001
AB Location * Participation Response	2.076	3	0.692	1.580	0.192
Residuals	758.039	1730	0.438		

The results indicate that the trip locations (domestic or international) are not significant ($p = 0.861$) for volunteering. However, response level is significant ($p < .001$), meaning responses varied across the board and there were no significant interactions ($p = 0.192$).

Figure 5

Descriptive Plots for Table 21

Table 22 repeats the ANOVA on community engagement regarding location.

Table 22

ANOVA—Community Engagement and Location Sqrt(x)

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
AB Location	0.006	1	0.006	0.030	0.862
Participation Response	41.861	3	13.954	76.707	<.001

(Table Continues)

Table 22, Continues

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
AB Location * Participation Response	2.238	3	0.746	4.101	0.007
Residuals	285.417	1569	0.182		

The results indicate that the trip locations (domestic or international) are not significant ($p = 0.862$) for future community engagement. However, response level is significant ($p < .001$) and there were significant interactions ($p = 0.007$). As illustrated in the plot below, international trip participants were more likely to be involved in community engagement activities than those who participated in domestic Alternative Break experiences.

Figure 6

Descriptive Plots for Table 22

Table 23 repeats the ANOVA on philanthropy regarding location.

Table 23

ANOVA—Philanthropy and Location $SQRT(x)$

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
AB Location	0.324	1	0.324	2.169	0.141
Participation Response	11.255	3	3.752	25.084	<.001
AB Location * Participation Response	2.210	3	0.737	4.926	0.002
Residuals	196.373	1313	0.150		

The results indicate that the trip locations (domestic or international) are not significant ($p = 0.862$) regarding philanthropy involvement. However, response level is significant ($p < .001$), as well as the interactions ($p = 0.002$). As seen below, international trip participants again were more likely to engage in philanthropy efforts more frequently than those that participated in domestic experiences. Conversely, those who attended domestic AB trip experiences were more likely to answer “never” in response to philanthropic prompts.

Figure 7

Descriptive Plots for Table 23

Table 24 repeats the ANOVA on political engagement regarding location.

Table 24

ANOVA—Political Engagement and Location SQRT(x)

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
AB Location	0.002	1	0.002	0.006	0.940
Participation Response	121.825	3	40.608	142.069	<.001
AB Location * Participation Response	2.367	3	0.789	2.760	0.041
Residuals	472.198	1652	0.286		

The results indicate that the trip locations (domestic or international) are not significant ($p = 0.862$) for political engagement. However, response level is again significant ($p < .001$) and the interactions were also significant ($p = 0.041$). Those who participated in domestic trips were more likely to answer “never” for political engagement, and international trip participants were more likely to answer “frequently” and “once or twice.”

Figure 8

Descriptive Plots for Table 24

Statistical significance was found based on the location where an Alternative Break was held (domestic or international) for community engagement, philanthropy, and political engagement. Location was not significant for volunteering.

Number of Alternative Breaks Taken

The same ANOVA tests were run on the number of Alternative Breaks taken by the participants. Participants were asked to share approximately how many Alternative Break trips

they participated in, and the options were 1–2; 3–4; 5–6; and 7 or more. Table 25 repeats the ANOVA on community engagement regarding the number of trips taken.

Table 25

ANOVA—Community Engagement and Number of Trips $SQRT(x)$

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Number of AB Trips	0.088	3	0.029	0.060	0.981
Participation Response	86.101	3	28.700	58.919	<.001
# of Trips * Participation Response	14.828	9	1.648	3.382	<.001
Residuals	935.262	1920	0.487		

The results indicate that the range of the number of trips taken is not significant ($p = 0.981$) among the data set. However, response level is significant ($p < .001$) and there were significant interactions ($p < .001$). As illustrated below, the respondents were close with the number of times they answered “occasionally,” but those who took more trips answered “frequently” in higher numbers.

Figure 9

Descriptive Plots for Table 25

Table 26 represents the ANOVA on philanthropy regarding the number of trips taken.

Table 26

ANOVA—Philanthropy and Number of Trips SQRT(x)

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Number of AB Trips	63.140	3	21.047	43.326	0.611
Participation Response	0.884	3	0.295	0.606	<.001
# of Trips * Participation Response	8.842	9	0.982	2.022	0.033
Residuals	932.686	1920	0.486		

The results indicate that the number of trips range is not significant ($p = 0.611$) for philanthropy. The response level is significant ($p < .001$) and there were significant interactions ($p = 0.033$). As the plot below illustrates, those who take more trips were more likely to engage in philanthropy.

Figure 10

Descriptive Plots for Table 26

Table 27 repeats the ANOVA on political engagement regarding the number of trips taken.

Table 27*ANOVA—Political Engagement and Number of Trips SQRT(x)*

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Number of AB Trips	140.647	3	46.882	82.151	0.489
Participation Response	1.385	3	0.462	0.809	<.001
# of Trips * Participation Response	7.856	9	0.873	1.529	0.132
Residuals	1095.723	1920	0.571		

The results indicate that the range of the number of trips taken is again not significant ($p = 0.489$) for political engagement. The response level is significant ($p < .001$) and there were no interactions ($p = 0.132$). As illustrated below, those respondents who took more Alternative Break trips were more likely to be “frequently” or “occasionally” engaged in political matters.

Figure 11

Descriptive Plots for Table 27

Table 28 repeats the ANOVA on volunteering regarding the number of trips taken.

Table 28

ANOVA—Volunteering and Number of Trips SQRT(x)

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Number of AB Trips	362.651	3	108.884	149.985	0.467
Participation Response	1.848	3	0.616	0.848	<.001
# of Trips * Participation Response	20.308	9	2.256	3.108	0.001
Residuals	1393.848	1920	0.726		

Finally, the results indicate that the number of trips taken is not significant ($p = 0.467$) for volunteering. The response level is significant ($p < .001$) and there were significant interactions ($p = 0.001$). Once again, respondents with higher numbers of trips taken were more engaged in volunteering opportunities after graduation than their peers who participated in fewer AB trips.

Figure 12

Descriptive Plots for Table 28

In conclusion, the data find that the number of trips someone took while in college was significant for philanthropy, political engagement, and volunteering after college. It was not significant for their post-college community engagement.

Time of Trips

Finally, the same procedures were followed for analyzing the results of the time when a participant took the trips: winter, spring, summer, fall, or weekends.

Table 29 represents the ANOVA on community engagement regarding the time of year the trips were taken.

Table 29*ANOVA—Community Engagement and Time of Trips SQRT(x)*

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Time of Trips	0.257	4	0.064	0.652	0.625
Participation Response	38.782	3	12.927	131.405	<.001
Time of Trips * Participation Response	0.977	12	0.081	0.828	0.622
Residuals	185.933	1890	0.098		

The results indicate that the timing of trips taken is not significant ($p = 0.625$). However, response level is highly significant ($p < .001$) and there are no interactions ($p = 0.622$). Answers of “frequently” varied more than others for the different trip times, as seen below.

Figure 13

Descriptive Plots for Table 29

Table 30 represents the ANOVA on philanthropy regarding the time of year the trips were taken.

Table 30

ANOVA—Philanthropy and Time of Trips SQRT(x)

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Time of Trips	0.102	4	0.025	0.167	0.955
Participation Response	12.283	3	4.094	26.896	<.001
Time of Trips * Participation Response	1.592	12	0.133	0.872	0.576
Residuals	339.160	2228	0.152		

The results indicate that the timing of trips taken is not significant ($p = 0.955$). However, response level is highly significant ($p < .001$) and there are no interactions ($p = 0.576$).

Figure 14

Descriptive Plots for Table 30

Table 31 represents the ANOVA on political engagement regarding the time of year the trips were taken.

Table 31

ANOVA—Political Engagement and Time of Trips SQRT(x)

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Time of Trips	0.095	4	0.024	0.177	0.976
Participation Response	54.099	3	18.033	89.096	<.001

(Table Continues)

Table 31, Continued

Time of Trips * Participation Response	1.560	12	0.130	0.642	0.807
Residuals	448.515	2216	0.202		

The results indicate that the timing of trips taken is not significant ($p = 0.976$). However, response level is significant ($p < .001$) and there are no interactions ($p = 0.807$). As illustrated below, those who took fall trips had different occurrences of the responses “occasionally” and “once/twice” than those who took trips other times of the year. This outcome is not significant to the study.

Figure 15

Descriptive Plots for Table 31

Table 32 repeats the ANOVA on political engagement regarding the time of year the trips were taken.

Table 32*ANOVA—Volunteering and Time of Trips SQRT(x)*

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Time of Trips	0.657	4	0.164	0.682	0.604
Participation Response	34.888	3	11.629	48.303	<.001
Time of Trips * Participation Response	.0839	12	0.070	0.290	0.991
Residuals	586.238	2435	0.241		

The results indicate that the timing of trips taken is not significant ($p = 0.604$). However, response level is highly significant ($p < .001$) and there are no interactions ($p = 0.991$).

Figure 16*Descriptive Plots for Table 32*

In terms of the time of year a trip occurred, the data reveal that this was not significant on a participant's post-college civic engagement. However, some response levels were significant in the data set. This only illustrates that responses were evenly distributed across categories and does not indicate any importance in a respondent's post-college civic engagement.

Results of the Analysis for Research Questions

There were three research questions guiding this study:

1. How does participation in Alternative Breaks contribute to the development of the outcomes of citizenship and community engagement?
2. What civic engagement outcomes do students report that they take away, gain, or learn through their experience on an Alternative Break?
3. How should Alternative Break programs be designed to best facilitate achievement of these outcomes?

The following will discuss the results as they relate to the research questions.

Research Question 1: How does participation in Alternative Breaks contribute to the development of the outcomes of citizenship and community engagement?

Results from the first research question reveal that in the participation mean scores for community service, volunteer work, and activities performed post-graduation (Tables 9–11), participants are active in their communities. When asked, “How often have you participated in community service/volunteer work through the following organizations? (Frequently (4); Occasionally (3); Once or Twice (2); Never (1)),” (Table 9), the mean scores for a school or educational organization (2.86) and through a participant's employer (2.71) indicate that on average, Alternative Break alumni volunteer with these at least “once or twice” or “occasionally.” In Table 10, the mean scores for “teach, tutor, mentor, coach, referee” (2.61),

“collect, prepare, distribute, or serve food” (2.33), “fundraiser or sell items to raise money” (2.28), and “perform physical labor” (2.13) also indicate that alumni are engaged at least “once or twice” or “occasionally” in those kinds of service experiences.

Finally, in Table 11, it is shown that Alternative Breaks alumni scored highly (Frequently (4); Occasionally (3); Once or Twice (2); Never (1)) for the following activities: “Voted in a state/local election” (mean score 3.65); “Discussed community issues” (mean score 3.48); “Bought a certain product or service because you like the social or political values of the company” (mean score 3.14); and “NOT bought something or boycotted it because of the social or political values of the company” (mean score 3.09).

Some of the most telling outcomes regarding how Alternative Breaks contributed to a person’s post-graduation engagement came in the responses to the open-ended question at the end of the survey. That question was, “Is there anything else you want us to know about your Alternative Breaks experience and how it has influenced your post-college life?”, and the responses gathered were coded. Coding is a way to organize data so that one can give a designation to specific pieces of data (Merriam, 2009). The five themes that emerged from the coding process were: how the Alternative Break experience impacted career choices, passion for service or a social issue, social justice, risk taking/stepping out of a comfort zone, and friendship or relationship building.

Several participants remarked that their Alternative Break experience had an impact on their career choices or on a change of major. Some representative examples that respondents shared under the theme of career included:

- “AB helped me identify my passion as working with kids with disabilities. Through that AB it led me to a career as an SLP [speech-language pathologist] and BCBA [board certified behavior analyst].”
- “The skills learned as an executive board member were directly applicable to engaging in nonprofit work—fundraising, governance, program logistics, budgeting, etc.”
- “One alternative break impacted me so strongly that I changed my major following. That career has been a huge part of my post-college choices/life. 100% would not be the same person. In addition, the friends I made within Alternative Breaks continue to be my strongest and longest friendships in my life.”
- “It led me to becoming a Peace Corps volunteer after college.”
- “AB set me on a new career path dedicated to public service.”
- “Life changing. Introduced me to AmeriCorps which served as a springboard for a career in nonprofit/public sector and Masters in Public Affairs.”
- “It helped me view public service as a career option.”

Twelve respondents to the open-ended question mentioned participating in national service programs, such as AmeriCorps or PeaceCorps, after graduation. Several others also mentioned that their Alternative Break experience led them to a change in major, which ultimately led to a career in a particular field. Several teachers, higher education administrators, social workers, and non-profit employees stated that their Alternative Break experience opened the door to new career opportunities.

Some of the open-ended responses indicated that a participant found a passion for service or for a particular social issue. Their exposure to the social issue their trip focused on gave them

new information and led to a new passion for the issue or for helping others. Some examples of responses made within this theme included:

- “Alternative Breaks fine-tuned my passion and allowed me to focus on specific social issues once graduating. I have dedicated my life to service (as a nurse) and it is because of Alternative Breaks.”
- “Alternative Breaks helped me to really see there are layers to issues.”
- “It was a great way to begin adult/independent life and was a tangible way to be involved in a community. I’ve since volunteered with an education non-profit once a week for 7 years.”
- “Alternative Breaks inspired me to become an engaged and active citizen. I’m particularly mindful of where I shop and what I eat, choosing the most environmentally sustainable options available.”
- “I became a vegetarian for environmental purposes.”

Fifty participants shared that Alternative Breaks opened their eyes to social issues that were affecting their communities or that AB led them to wanting to volunteer or serve more in their post-graduation lives. Others shared that their AB experience led to a shift in values, such as becoming a vegetarian or being more mindful in shopping practices. The high mean scores in Table 11 also indicated that Alternative Breaks led to an increased awareness of how people spent their money.

Thirteen responses reflected a new or renewed interest in social justice and human rights. Several respondents discussed how Alternative Breaks helped them have conversations about difficult topics like race and privilege. Some examples of responses follow:

- “I believe if every person had the opportunity to participate in an alternative break there would be less violence and conflict in the world.”
- “AB helped inform my world view and grew in my empathy, perspective, and advocacy.”
- “These experiences established values and made me keenly aware of my privilege and helping those less fortunate.”
- “AB helped me find my role in the social justice movement as an educator, healer, and scholar-activist.”
- “Alternative Breaks really solidified my foundational knowledge on social justice and how to successfully facilitate group dialogue.”

Social justice was a common topic in the open-ended question responses for participants, with 21 participants mentioning justice specifically in their answers. As discussed in Chapter II with critical reflection practices, many times, reflection conversations discuss difficult topics around race and privilege. Participants indicated that continuing their social justice education post-graduation in their current work and volunteer opportunities was an outcome of the AB experiences.

Another theme that emerged from the open-ended responses was risk-taking and stepping out of one’s comfort zone on an Alternative Break experience. Examples included:

- “I always felt welcomed and supported by AB, even though I entered my first trip not knowing a single person.”
- “I also learned to roll with the punches and make quick decisions when something went wrong.”
- “It was the first time I took a risk and tried something new—volunteering for the Michigan Special Olympics Winter Games. I had a lot of fun as a volunteer; it was a very

positive experience. For me, it was about being bold and stepping out of my comfort zone.”

- “The trip I led is one of the top three most stressful experiences and increased my capacity to work under pressure while others are depending on you to move forward.”
- “I was introduced to new places, people, students, perspectives, and social concerns. I was constantly placed outside of my comfort zone.”

Seventeen comments stated that participants were put in situations that were out of their norms on their Alternative Break experience. For some, their Alternative Break may have been the first time they traveled outside of the country, or even outside of their home state. Perhaps they ate food they weren’t used to, or were surrounded by a language they didn’t speak, or were visiting a community very different from their own. These experiences clearly left an impression upon participants.

Finally, 27 participants remarked that they developed friendships and relationships because of their Alternative Break experience, including someone who met their future spouse on their trip! Some other examples included:

- “Alternative Breaks changed my life. I found friendships that have proven to last through even the toughest of times and reignited a passion for service I thought I forgot.”
- “Alternative Breaks taught me a lot about the importance of finding friends and employers who share your values of a commitment to giving back.... Also AB helped me create some amazing and long lasting friendships that have followed me through life and around the world.”
- “I met one of my best friends through it and we continue to inspire/motivate each other to be involved in the community.”

- “I’ve formed relationships with like minded people who I can have important, but difficult conversations with.”
- “The friends I made within Alternative Breaks continue to be my strongest and longest friendships in my life.”
- “I found out recently that a friend I made post-college participated in AB at their university across the country and it helped me trust them more.”

It was clear that participants had made deep lasting relationships from their experiences in Alternative Break programs at their universities.

The data from the open-ended question illustrate that alumni of Alternative Break programs are engaging in their communities through political engagement, volunteering, community engagement opportunities, and philanthropy. Further, the responses gave depth to the ways that Alternative Breaks made an impact, specifically on a person’s choices post-graduation through career paths, passion for service or a social issue, stepping out of a comfort zone and taking risks, social justice education, and building friendships or relationships.

Research Question 2: What civic engagement outcomes do students report that they take away, gain, or learn through their experience on an Alternative Break?

The second research question was answered using descriptive statistics, including mean scores. Various tests were conducted on the responses to “Please indicate if you have performed any of the following since leaving college? (Frequently (4); Occasionally (3); Once or Twice (2); Never (1)).” There were several outcomes that scored highly, with means above 3.0 out of 4.0 possible, as seen in Table 11. These included: “Discussed community issues” (mean = 3.48); “Bought a certain product or service because you like the social or political values of the company” (mean = 3.14); “Voted in a state or local election” (mean = 3.65); and “Used online

communication with family and friends to raise awareness about social and political issues” (mean = 3.04). All of these outcomes were reported to be done “frequently” or “occasionally” by respondents. Voting, in particular, was incredibly high, with a mean of 3.65, which indicates high levels of political engagement. “Discussing community issues” could have a variety of meanings, from politics, to schools, to roads, to neighbors, but the mean score of 3.48 indicates that these topics were on people’s minds often.

Items that scored lowest included: “Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by contacting a newspaper or magazine” (mean = 1.50); “Worked as a canvasser going door to door for a political candidate or cause” (mean = 1.27); and “Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by calling a radio or television talk show” (mean = 1.18). These low mean scores were not surprising. Communication has changed since this survey was originally written and social media has grown significantly, as well as online consumption of news (Newspapers, 2021). Respondents could have responded differently if the questions included expressing an opinion via an online source.

As seen in Table 12, friendships and peer interactions scored the highest of all the options for the question, “As you look back on your undergraduate experience, what impact has each of the following had in preparing you for life after college? (Strong Impact (3); Moderate Impact (2); Little or No Impact (1); Not Applicable (0))” with a mean of 2.43, falling between Moderate and Strong Impact. In the open-ended questions, 27 participants rated the friendships and connections that they made with others because of their experience with Alternative Breaks as having a long-term impact. Additional comments from the open-ended responses include:

- “AB truly helped me in college. It was the main reason I stayed enrolled and it helped me create a friend group after struggling my freshman year.”

- “Because of AB I met so many incredible people from across the country. Many of whom I am still in contact with today.”
- “I made one of my best friends through alt breaks. This person genuinely saved me at times and I’m so grateful for all the memories.” Building life-long friendships is not the expressed goal of the Alternative Break experience, but clearly, it can be an additional outcome.

Closely following friendship and peer interactions, participants also rated the post-college impact of involvement in Alternative Breaks highly, with a mean of 2.36, and service and volunteer work with a mean of 2.40. Meanwhile, items that scored lower included involvement in fraternities or sororities (mean = .71); involvement in student government (mean = .63); and involvement in athletics or intramural sports (mean = .59). This could indicate that the respondents overall were not involved in those activities as much or perhaps could only commit to one program that had an additional cost, as involvement in most fraternities and sororities means paying dues and involves considerable time commitments. It is not surprising that respondents of this survey, who are all alumni of Alternative Break programs, ranked their involvement in Alternative Breaks and service programs as having a strong impact on preparing them for post-college life.

Students also expressed some outcomes for how Alternative Breaks prepared them for life after college in the open-ended questions. Aligning with the reported ability to discuss community issues, one respondent shared, “I feel better prepared to have open dialogue with others about the current climate of our country.” Empathy, understanding, and compassion were values and skills that often came up in the open-ended questions. One respondent stated that “[AB] has helped me to have more compassion and understanding for those that I did not know

much about,” while another said, “AB helped inform my worldview and grew in my empathy, perspective, and advocacy.” These statements align with the Active Citizen Continuum because students are becoming active citizens in their communities by moving toward prioritizing the needs of the community before their own needs (Break Away, n.d.).

In contrast to the many positive experiences shared in the open-ended question responses, one person was critical of their experience(s) on an Alternative Break. They wrote, “I’ve now realized how problematic Alt Breaks are in perpetuating white saviorism and I would not participate again if given the opportunity.” White saviorism is one of the critiques of experiences like Alternative Breaks. Serving communities, especially a group of (all or mostly) white Americans serving outside of the United States, “can lead to the belief that developing countries are inherently poor and Americans are all rich” (Crabtree, 2013, p. 50) and lead to the continued cycle of systemic oppression, privilege, and power. What is encouraging is that this individual has engaged in critical reflection about their service experience after the fact and will now, hopefully, think critically about future service opportunities in their communities. Critical reflection should be a principal component of service-learning (Jacoby, 2015; Mitchell, 2008) and should be practiced beyond the initial service experience.

Respondents attributed several civic engagement outcomes to their Alternative Break experience. These included discussing community issues, voting, building relationships, and demonstrating the ability to engage in critical reflection. These skills illustrate that Alternative Break participants have moved along the Active Citizen Continuum. The goal of a Break Away member Alternative Break program is to help participants explore social issues and begin to think critically about those issues. This is seen as moving from Member to Volunteer; Volunteer to Conscientious Citizen; and Conscientious Citizen to Active Citizen. Each step requires a

participant to dive deeper into learning about issues and ask questions about how and why these issues are affecting communities. The results of this study indicate that Alternative Break participants are continuing to learn about social issues and are taking action to address those issues in their communities.

Research Question 3: How should Alternative Break programs be designed to best facilitate achievement of these outcomes?

In response to this final research question, statistical significance was found based on the leadership positions a person held in their program in the civic engagement categories of volunteering and philanthropy. Offering leadership opportunities for students is considered a high-impact practice by scholars such as George Kuh (2008) and Alexander Astin (1993). Clearly, those participants who had the opportunity to receive additional training before their leadership experience and in turn lead Alternative Break experiences were shown to have greater civic engagement after college. This leads to a recommendation that programs should continue to offer leadership opportunities or consider creating them if they are not yet in place.

Reflection practices and activities were an important component of several learning moments for respondents. Trained student leaders on trips are critical to the success of reflection activities. One person remarked, “I will always remember how impactful the intentional activities that were planned on the trips to help build the student group closer together as each day passed [sic]. You could truly see the progression of the group form from strangers to develop meaningful connections and life-long friendships.” Another shared, “I think one of the most important things I’ve carried with me is the importance to look outside myself.” A third respondent wrote, “I really valued the group reflection aspect of AB!” Barbara Jacoby (1996; 2015) and others have shared how important reflection is in service work. These students’

responses reveal that it is critical that reflection remains a key component to the Alternative Break experience and that student leaders feel comfortable and confident leading reflection exercises.

One of the most important findings was in how the number of trips in which an individual participated did have significance with the civic engagement outcomes of philanthropy, political engagement, and volunteering. What this reflects is that colleges and universities should give students as many opportunities to attend an Alternative Break experience as possible. The analysis also indicated that the time of year that the trips were held did not have a significant outcome. So, for the practitioners in the field, if you have the staffing and/or resources, offer more trip options throughout the year. The more trips a person goes on while in college, the more likely they are to be engaged in their communities post-graduation. One finding in particular could be beneficial to programs, and that is the outcome of philanthropic engagement. The data show that those who attended seven or more trips engaged in philanthropy at a higher rate than those who went on fewer trips. Could those participants be potential alumni donors in the future? Alternative Break programs should track a person's AB participation throughout their college career to reach out to them as a donor who would give back to the program, for a scholarship, or a fee waiver donation.

Finally, trip location (domestic or international) was significant in the categories of community engagement, philanthropy, and political engagement. Those who attended international experiences scored higher for engagement with those opportunities in post-college life. International experiences can bring additional challenges to an Alternative Break program, including higher costs and more risks. These risks could include the logistics of air travel and ground transportation, resources like healthcare access, and communication challenges (like lack

of internet or phone service). And of course, being conscious of voluntourism and the white savior complex (Guttentag, 2009) is critical to make sure service is not doing harm to a community. But offering international experiences leads to higher engagement levels in communities post-graduation. If an international experience is feasible for a program, it should be considered as part of the opportunities for current students.

In conclusion, programs should offer both domestic and international Alternative Break experiences, offer multiple opportunities for students to engage in AB throughout the year, and should foster leadership opportunities for students. These three elements will lead to graduates being civically engaged in philanthropy, community engagement, political engagement, and volunteering after they graduate.

Chapter Summary

Alumni of Alternative Break programs reported several civic engagement outcomes, such as volunteering with educational or civic institutions, teaching, coaching, mentoring, and donating food to those in need. They also reported that volunteering, Alternative Breaks experiences, and peer relationships were some of the most important things that prepared them for life after college. The data revealed that there was a significant relationship between those participants who had served in AB leadership roles and their post-graduation civic engagement. There was also significance in the location of their trips (domestic or international) and the number of trips a person took in college on after-college outcomes reported. This indicates that the Alternative Break experience does make a difference in how someone engages in philanthropy, political engagement, volunteering, and community engagement post-college.

Chapter V will discuss what these findings suggest for Alternative Break program design, and includes recommendations for further research. Programs should consider offering

intentional international experiences if they currently do not. Leadership positions for students in the program should be created or maintained, and multiple opportunities for trips throughout the year should be considered if budgets and resources allow. The next chapter will further explore these important findings.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Chapter V provides findings and recommendations regarding Alternative Break participation and how that influences a person's post-college civic engagement. This chapter will draw conclusions, discuss implications for practice, share limitations, and offer future research opportunities. Previous studies have shown that students have intentions to be engaged in their communities after participating in an Alternative Break (Niehaus, 2017) and that alumni of a different kind of service-learning experience, the Bonner Scholars Program, were engaged in their communities post-graduation (Keen & Hall, 2008). Prior to this study being conducted, no others were found that evaluated the post-graduation civic engagement of Alternative Break alumni. This study was developed to understand just how Alternative Breaks had an effect on participants' civic engagement after college.

This study measured post-college civic engagement using the Higher Education Research Institute's *Life After College* survey. The survey asked participants to share information regarding their Alternative Break experience: what social issues were focused on, how many trips they took, if they held any leadership positions on the trip or in the program, what their academic major was, if they traveled domestically or internationally, and why they participated in an Alternative Break. They were then asked to share how often they engaged in a variety of civic engagement opportunities by answering questions that fell within four themes: community engagement, philanthropy, political engagement, and volunteering.

Participants from 64 Break Away member institutions responded to the survey, and 520 responses were recorded. If a survey was submitted by an Alternative Break alum who did not attend a Break Away member institution, their answers were discarded. Descriptive statistics,

factor analysis, and analysis of variance were used to analyze the results. Chapter IV presented the results of the study. The findings included examples of civic engagement for Alternative Break alumni. The variable of what time of year the trips were taken proved to be insignificant as it related to a participant's post-graduation civic engagement. However, the number of trips a student went on, the leadership positions held during those trips, and the location of their travel (domestic or international) were significant in several of the four areas of community engagement, philanthropy, political engagement, and volunteering.

Based on the results of the study, Chapter V shares a summary of findings, presents conclusions from the survey results, discusses limitations of the study, provides implications for practice, and presents future recommendations for research.

Summary of Findings

The study's overall purpose was to understand how alumni of Break Away member Alternative Break programs are civically engaged post-graduation. Responses from 520 participants were evaluated through variables such as leadership positions held, number of trips attended, time of year trips were held, location of trips, majors, social issues worked on, and graduation year. Several statistical tests were employed (including descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and analysis of variance), and a number of conclusions were revealed. The findings are as follows:

1. Statistical significance was found based on the leadership positions a person held in their program (participant, trip or site leader, or executive board member) in the civic engagement categories of volunteering and philanthropy.

2. Statistical significance was found based on the location that a person's Alternative Break was held (domestic or international) for community engagement, philanthropy, and political engagement. It was not significant for volunteering.
3. No statistical significance was found based on the time of year a trip took place (fall, spring, summer, winter, or weekend).
4. Statistical significance was found for the civic engagement categories of philanthropy, community engagement, and volunteering for the number of trips attended. Political engagement was not statistically significant for the number of trips taken ($p = 0.132$).
5. In several analyses, the response level was significant. Certain variables were more likely to show answers of "frequently" or "occasionally" than others. For example, executive board members were more likely to respond "frequently" to involvement in philanthropy than trip leaders or participants.

The following section examines the findings of the study in relation to the research questions and the researcher's interpretation of the results, and draws a number of conclusions. The results will be discussed based on the research questions introduced in Chapter I.

Conclusions and Implications for Practice

The first research question asked, "How does participation in Alternative Breaks contribute to the development of the outcomes of citizenship and community engagement?" The results of the data analysis show that Alternative Break alumni are actively involved in their communities. There were several factors in each of the four categories (community engagement, philanthropy, political engagement, and volunteering) that had high average scores. What was shown to be insignificant for their post-graduation civic engagement was the timing of their trips (winter, spring, summer, fall, or weekend). This insignificance is not surprising, though, as the

trip should provide similar experiences regardless of the time of year it occurs. Factors that *were* found to be significant, though, were the number of trips taken, what leadership roles a student held, and whether their trips were domestic or international. Alternative Breaks and service-learning programs are considered a high-impact practice (HIP) (Kuh, 2008). Blewitt, Parsons, and Shane (2018) found that engaging in service-learning projects, such as Alternative Breaks, aided students in developing communication skills, global awareness, and awareness about social issues. Responses to the survey indicated that alumni of AB programs are civically engaged post-graduation and continue to learn about social issues that affect their communities.

In the open-ended question, several responses indicated the impact that the Alternative Break experience had on a participant in their future community engagement. Participants indicated that their Alternative Break experience led them to new careers in public service and time spent in service, such as AmeriCorps or PeaceCorps, and helped them to become social justice advocates. Kuh (2008) and Blewitt, Parsons, and Shane (2017) stated that students who participate in HIPs better understand themselves in relation to others and the world around them. Mitchell (2007) wrote that critical service-learning experiences, such as Alternative Breaks, focus on social change and examine power dynamics in communities. Participants indicated in their open-ended responses that their commitment to social change came from their participation in Alternative Breaks.

Civic engagement outcomes

For the second research question, “What civic engagement outcomes do students report that they take away, gain, or learn through their experience on an Alternative Break?”, there were several outcomes reported.

The highest scoring organizations that alumni volunteered with were a “school or educational organization” (mean score of 2.86) and “through their employer” (mean score of 2.71). The next most popular were a “community organizing effort or neighborhood group” (mean score of 2.16), “other” organization (mean score of 2.15), and “of their own initiative, not through an organization” (mean score of 2.14). These results are encouraging to see that alumni opt to engage in civic engagement when the opportunity presents itself, such as with an employer or a local school, as well as on their own or through their own initiative.

Several volunteer activities scored highly in the analysis, including: “Collect, prepare, distribute, or serve food” (mean score of 2.33); “Teach, tutor, mentor, coach, referee” (mean score of 2.61); “Fundraiser or sell items to raise money” (mean score of 2.28); “Perform physical labor” (mean score of 2.24); and “Collect, make, or distribute clothing, crafts, or goods other than food” (mean score of 2.13). These are very common civic engagement options in most communities through organizations like a local food bank or with an organization like Habitat for Humanity. The results of the 2004 *Life After College* survey indicated that those who had participated in service-learning activities while in college engaged in many civic engagement behaviors after college like those listed here (The Higher Education Research Institute Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, 2006). The results of this study indicate that alumni of Alternative Break programs are taking advantage of involvement opportunities to support their communities, much like those who participated in service-learning opportunities in the 2004 survey.

The most common community engagement activities that participants reported participating in were: “Discussed community issues” (mean score of 3.48); “Bought a certain product or service because you like the social or political values of the company” (mean score of

3.14); and “NOT bought something or boycotted it because of the social or political values of the company” (mean score of 3.09). Large companies with online and delivery options, such as Walmart and Amazon, recorded sales surges during the pandemic (Stebbins & Suneson, 2020). Because people were encouraged to stay home and spend less time in public indoor spaces during the pandemic, many turned to online shopping and in 2020, Amazon’s year-over-year sales increased by 40% (Stebbins & Suneson, 2020). However, many Americans actively tried to avoid using companies like Amazon due to the unrest over worker conditions (Palmer, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic forced many local and small businesses to adapt to the online environment. Small businesses took advantage of livestreams, online auctions, and curbside pickup (Gurchiek, 2020). Now that there are so many options to purchase goods, it is exciting to see Alternative Break alumni thinking critically about which companies they spend their money at.

In the 2006 report, *Understanding the Effects of Service-Learning*, the researchers discovered that respondents who reported participating in service-learning activities were more likely to be involved in philanthropy and political engagement post-graduation than those who had only participated in volunteer opportunities while in college (The Higher Education Research Institute Graduate School of Education and Information Studies). The results indicated that the most common political engagement activities that participants reported were: “Voted in a state/local election” (mean score of 3.65); and “Voted in a national election” (mean score of 3.04). This survey was distributed shortly after the 2020 election cycle and the 2020 election has the highest turnout of voters in history (Fabina, 2021). In addition, college-educated white women were more likely to vote Democratic, especially when comparing the 2016 election to the 2020 election (Zhang & Burn-Murdoch, 2020). The majority of volunteers in the US tend to be

white women (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015), and often, white women make up the majority of the population that takes part in Alternative Breaks. According to the US Census Bureau, voters with a bachelor's degree or higher had an 80% turnout rate, which was an increase from 76% in 2016 (Fabina, 2021). Voting is a critical piece of engaging in democracy, and to see Alternative Break alumni voting is an important outcome of their participation.

The most common philanthropic activities that respondents reported participating in were: "Donated money to a human services or community services organization (e.g. United Way, a local food bank, etc.)" (mean score of 2.73) and "Donated money to an educational organization" (mean score of 2.51). In the 2006 report, *Understanding the Effects of Service-Learning*, the results indicated that those that engaged in service-learning and volunteering while in college were more likely to contribute to charitable giving than those who did not. In this study, several factors were shown to increase philanthropy, such as serving as a leader while on trips or attending multiple trips.

The next section will discuss implications for practice. Several findings from the study led to ideas to consider when planning and executing Alternative Break programs.

Implications for Practice

For the third research question, "How should Alternative Break programs be designed to best facilitate achievement of these outcomes?", there were several findings that stood out with some implications for practice. These are outlined below.

Number of trips offered by a program

One outcome that should be considered is that the number of trips attended *did* have significant influence on a person's civic engagement. The more trips participants went on, the higher their scores were for engagement across philanthropy, community engagement, and

volunteering. Since time of year does not have a significant effect on civic engagement scores, AB programs should consider offering more trip opportunities if funding and resources allow. Universities have built-in academic, and semester breaks over winter, summer, spring, and fall periods. Alternative Break programs should consider expanding their offerings to other breaks if they currently only travel during spring break. If funding is a concern, one of the most interesting findings was that those who attended more trips engaged in higher levels of philanthropy. According to Ruffalo Noel Levitz, LLC. (n.d.), only 9% of a college's alumni base gives back to their alma mater. Programs could consider tracking AB participation and approaching highly engaged individuals for future donations to offset Alternative Break costs for students. Offering scholarships or fee waivers to participants or allowing Alternative Break experiences to be covered by financial aid packages so that they can afford to attend more trips, could open the door to more engaged alumni in the future. Current students may have a desire to attend more trips during their college experience, but cost could be prohibitive. Program directors should consider expanding fundraising efforts, especially with program alumni, to offer more affordable Alternative Break experiences. In addition, if the university is looking to offer service-based incentives such as scholarship awards akin to the Bonner Scholars Program, approaching alumni who engaged in service-learning experiences like Alternative Breaks could lead to more funding opportunities.

Leadership roles

Offering leadership roles for college students is a wonderful way for students to engage with one another, and the results of a person's leadership role was shown to be statistically significant for post-college civic engagement. Engaging in a leadership experience is considered a high-impact practice (Kuh, 2008), and there are many opportunities for student leadership

within AB experiences. Leadership positions within an Alternative Break program can include being a trip or site leader who leads the group while on the trip and leads reflection exercises or being a member of the executive board if the program is a student organization. Executive board positions could include being a president or director, treasurer, education coordinator, or training coordinator. Assessment of program needs every few years is critical in co-curricular work (Astin & Antonio, 2012). Working with experienced students in the AB program, as well as understanding the culture of the student population, may lead to exciting possibilities for new leadership experiences within Alternative Breaks. Perhaps a student may show interest in a career with a nonprofit organization. If so, AB program staff could develop a leadership position that is the outreach coordinator for local community partners.

As Quaye and Harper (2015) argued, students have the ability to apply skills such as communication, organization, event planning, and emergency response to real-world situations through leadership opportunities. Leadership development and training can lead to a variety of skills that weren't necessarily measured by the *Life After College Survey*, such as communication, problem solving, and ethical decision making. Two foundational skills of an Alternative Break leader are facilitation and leading reflection. Engaging in reflection activities is critical to skill building beyond the break experience (Stanton et al., 1999) by connecting the skills a person is executing in the AB experience with situations that could happen beyond the trip. Student leaders should engage in self-reflection about the skills they gained from their leadership experience. One way to do this is through pre- and post-experience assessments. Students could complete an assessment at the beginning of the year, and then again at the end in order to measure growth over time. Students and AB staff members can have a conversation about how they grew in their leadership skills and the right next steps to take—either as a student

leader again next year or in their transition to post-college life. Results indicated that alumni of Alternative Break programs volunteered in their communities in a variety of ways, including through their employer or through community organizing. Program directors should make sure to emphasize to student leaders in AB programs how the skills they are learning apply to the “real world” for career development, community organizing, and future volunteering.

In response to the open-ended question, participants discussed the professional skills gained from their experience, as well as how they were challenged on the trip to address difficult issues such as race and justice. This critical reflection provides opportunities for students to get out of their comfort zone (Owen, 2016) and think about new possibilities for themselves. 118 survey respondents indicated that they currently worked at a nonprofit organization, and 266 respondents indicated that they worked in the public sector in jobs in healthcare or education. This means that many former AB participants now work in human services, and several remarked that AB led them to choose a career path that would have a positive impact on their communities. One respondent remarked, “I’m now a Racial Equity partner for a non profit [sic], facilitating trainings and convos [sic] about race.” Another said, “Alternative Breaks really solidified my foundation knowledge on social justice and how to successfully facilitate group dialogue.” Giving students the opportunity to learn these critical skills through training to be a trip leader or executive board member creates foundational knowledge for their post-college life.

Program directors could work with campus partners to build a leadership experience if one does not currently exist. They could work with student affairs practitioners on student leadership education, or campus recreation professionals on facilitation skills. If the campus has a service-learning expert, working with them on building a reflection curriculum could also be critical to the success of creating leadership positions for students. Because Alternative Break

leaders may encounter a medical emergency or deal with a challenging participant or community partner while onsite, education on handling medical or emotional emergencies is also critical in order for leaders to be successful. Program directors could work with their conduct offices, Title IX offices, or emergency management offices to help student leaders build skills to handle difficult problems. Miller, Rocconi, and Dumford (2017) found that students who engaged in HIPs want to continue expanding their education and look for new modes of involvement and learning on campus. Partnering with different campus units for student leadership training will expose them to many resources on campus, as well as different learning opportunities that those units provide.

Program marketing

When respondents were asked about the reason they decided to participate in Alternative Breaks, the highest scoring reasons were “I wanted to help other people” (mean score of 2.93), “I wanted to do my part as a community member” (mean score of 2.8), “I wanted to do something about an issue that matters to me” (mean score of 2.75), and “I liked working with people who share my ideals” (mean score of 2.61). Marketing of Alternative Break programs should include the social issues that the trips are focused on so that future participants can find trips that will focus on and contribute to issues that matter to them.

Including the personal connections that students will make, whether with one another or with the community partner, also seems to be something that attracts a participant to the Alternative Break experience. It is interesting that respondents did not indicate that they did Alternative Breaks because their friends did (“My friends were involved in these activities” had a mean score of 1.71) so appealing to the general student population, instead of relying on word of mouth or participants recruiting their friends, may work better. Transparency about expectations

and details can help students feel more secure when signing up for an Alternative Break experience. Guttentag (2009) discussed how potential volunteers can romanticize the idea of helping those living in poverty, especially in volunteer experiences abroad. Offering information sessions to students that present the mission of Alternative Breaks and the thoughtful approach of centering community voices (Brown & Huck-Watson, 2006) in service may help students understand the purpose of the Alternative Break experience. Centering the community voice allows for the community's needs to be the focus of any service experience (Brown & Huck-Watson, 2006). When organized correctly, Alternative Breaks are not voluntourism experiences where the focus is on the volunteer and not the community (Guttentag, 2009). Students want to know what they are signing up for, so clear communication that describes the social issue, the accommodations, the service opportunities, and the costs can help students make informed decisions about their participation.

Reflection

Several responses from the open-ended question indicated that engaging in reflection activities during their Alternative Break experiences led participants to build relationships, consider career options, consider their values, and change their perspectives on social issues. Stanton et al. (1999) remarked that the primary goal of reflection is to help students gain knowledge, skills, and self-awareness. Celio et al. (2011) stated that engaging in reflection activities leads to students developing more caring relationships with others and greater civic knowledge and social responsibility. The results of this study indicate that those goals were met. One respondent remarked, "I strongly believe I learned more applicable knowledge from my Alternative Break experiences than from coursework."

Critical reflection must also be practiced in Alternative Break programs so participants do not cause harm to communities. In the open-ended responses, one individual stated that they felt uncomfortable with their perceived contribution to the white savior complex. The white savior complex is a term for white people who consider themselves wonderful helpers to Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) (Raypole, 2021). These individuals can sometimes think they know what is best for BIPOC and believe it is their responsibility to uplift BIPOC (Raypole, 2021). To avoid hurting communities, the voices of the communities being served must be centered and conversations around power and privilege must be part of the daily reflection (Brown & Huck-Watson, 2006; Guttentag, 2009; Raypole, 2021). Owen (2016) challenged facilitators of reflection to examine power dynamics and contradictory worldviews as part of reflection exercises. This can be done by helping trip participants explore their identities, along with the identities of their fellow participants, perhaps through exercises that prompt people to examine the privileges that they have had, or have not had, in their lives. Critical reflection must continue to be an essential element of the Alternative Break experience. If program directors need assistance in building critical reflection curricula for their Alternative Break experiences, outside of the work of scholars such as Barbara Jacoby (2015) and Tania Mitchell (2007; 2008), Break Away is a resource for consultation and offers a community of Alternative Break programs for collaboration.

Location

Participants of international experiences garnered higher scores in the areas of community engagement, philanthropy, and political engagement. Programs should consider offering international experiences if they have the resources to do so, as respondents who went on international experiences with their Alternative Break programs had higher levels of civic

engagement than those who only attended domestic experiences. Scholars agree that international travel experiences while in college are a high-impact practice (Kuh, 2008; Quaye & Harper, 2015). Paired with the service-learning experience of an Alternative Break, long-term benefits to students could include intellectual development, critical and creative thinking, communication, teamwork, and problem solving (Kuh, 2008; Anderson et al., 2019).

International experiences should be considered with care, especially when several companies exist that offer trips that contain more tourism than meaningful service. Program directors should do extensive research and work with campus partners—such as study abroad offices, university risk management, or university legal counsel—before committing to a community partner. Long-term goals for both the program and the community partner should be considered, and the partnership should be mutually beneficial. For many students, this could be the first time they’ve been given the opportunity to travel internationally. Programs should make sure to discuss travel logistics and provide pre-trip education about what participants should expect in the communities they are visiting. Mitchell (2007) warned that service-learning programs can focus too much on the students’ learning and not enough on the change in communities. Education and information about the community partner and the cultural expectations are also critical for the success of the experience. Alternative Breaks should not be trying to elicit a culture change in the communities; rather, they should be lifting the voices of the community and working alongside them on projects that are beneficial to that community (Brown & Huck-Watson, 2006; Guttentag, 2009). Programs should only consider international Alternative Break experiences if they can be assured that the partnerships are mutually beneficial for both the community and the students. Community partners should be working side-by-side with Alternative Break staff and students to plan for the experience (Sumka et al., 2015).

Working alongside the community allows students to form new connections and build relationships with community members and can lead to future collaborations such as internships or professional development (Sumka et al., 2015).

Several implications for practice were discussed. These included building leadership opportunities for students, new ways to think about program marketing, the importance of practicing critical reflection, and how programs should consider expanding to international experiences if they have the means. However, there were some limitations to the study, which will be discussed in the next section.

Limitations

Several limitations can be identified in this study. First, there were a block of questions in the survey that asked, “In the past year have you...” with several civic engagement activities listed, such as: worked on a political campaign, visited a museum or art gallery, attended a community festival, and socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group. The analysis of these results was found to be insignificant. At the time of the survey distribution, the COVID-19 pandemic was in its ninth month in the United States (Centers for Disease Control, n.d.). The Centers for Disease Control (n.d.) had been recommending staying home as much as possible, limiting social activities, and maintaining physical distance of six feet or more at the time that participants took the surveys. As a result, several respondents commented in the open-ended section of the survey that their activities in the last year had been limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Comments included: “Having graduated this past spring, I have been unable to engage with the communities in which I have lived and worked due to COVID-19. My attitude and passion for service was greatly impacted through serving with Alternative Breaks, and I hope soon to be able to carry out these values in the real world”; “I would love to volunteer more and I

plan to once things return to a more normal state”; “Some of the questions that asked about ‘in the last year’ were lower than they would be in a normal non-COVID year”; and “Tough to answer some of these with the pandemic going on.” Because of these unprecedented factors, these questions have been discarded from the analysis. Nonetheless, the results of this study give a broad picture over time for the civic engagement of Alternative Break alumni. Had the pandemic not interrupted “normal” life, these results could have revealed a different picture of the current interests and activities of AB alumni.

Respondents indicated a high level of voting activity; the results of “Voted in a state/local election” (mean score of 3.65) and “Voted in a national election” (mean score 3.04) show an average of “Frequently” or “Occasionally” for responses. It should be noted that this survey was distributed right after the 2020 election cycle. 2020 recorded the most voters of any previous election, and there was an increased number of college-educated voters (Fabina, 2021). Voter turnout for those with bachelor’s degrees had increased to 80% of eligible voters for the 2020 election (Fabina, 2021). Because of the timing of the survey distribution, the numbers could be skewed positively for civic engagement of alumni as the election had just occurred and voting habits were fresh in the minds of respondents. This could be especially true of the reports of local election participation. For 2020, many voters could have participated in both a national and a state or local election on the same ballot. However, local elections sometimes occur in different cycles. According to Zoltan L. Jajnal of the *New York Times* (2018), only 27% of eligible voters cast a ballot in their local elections. Had this survey been distributed before the 2020 election cycle, there may have been different results and significance may have been different with lower scores.

Participants who only selected that they had attended Alternative Break programs locally numbered less than 10 in the survey sample. When analyzing the locations, these few responses did not provide enough meaningful data, and were removed from the analysis. Because of this, there is not a clear picture of the long-term impact that local Alternative Break experiences could have on their participants. It could be that traveling to a community that is different than your own has a greater impact than staying within the local community. But with this data set, that is an unknown factor.

Because of the use of convenience sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), the data set only includes those participants who elected to take the survey. This could add sampling bias to the study as those who elected not to take the survey may have reported different behaviors and outcomes than those who did take the survey. In addition, the data set only includes those who attended Alternative Breaks. A data set that included both Alternative Break participants and non-participants could have gathered results that had been a better indicator of the influence of Alternative Break participation on someone's post-graduation civic engagement, compared with students who did not participate.

Several limitations were discussed, such as the timing of the survey distribution, as well as how the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for alumni to be as active in their communities as they may have wanted to be in the last year. In the next section, recommendations for future research will be shared.

Recommendations for Future Research

This section will discuss research recommendations for the future. Given the length of the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be beneficial to ask the questions about what participants have done in the last year, and to ask those questions a few years after the pandemic's conclusion

when life resumes a sense of normalcy. The pandemic caused many people to change their habits and to stop volunteering and engaging in the community in the same ways, as evidenced by some of the open-ended responses in the survey. Volunteering on a consistent basis was challenging, and in many ways discouraged, during 2020 because of the physical distancing guidelines and state mandates (Centers for Disease Control, n.d.). This study, or at least a continuation of this study asking about current behaviors, should be replicated. I would expect that in five to ten years, those responses will have more significance and will give a better picture of where participants spent their time and talents during the pandemic.

The open-ended question in the survey also yielded a lot of potential research areas. Several unintended outcomes were reported. Many participants indicated that Alternative Breaks had a strong impact on their friendships, career choices, and post-graduation life in general. A qualitative study is recommended to learn more about how Alternative Breaks impacted relationships with a person's fellow participants, community building with community partners, and friendships that went beyond the AB experience. Interviews could be conducted with past participants where questions ask more about how relationships were formed on trips and if/how those relationships continued post-graduation. Another qualitative study recommendation would be to have a study on how the Alternative Break experience impacted a person's career choice. In the open-ended question, some respondents indicated that they changed their major or went into a specific career field because of their Alternative Break experience. A future study that explores the connection between AB and career choice could yield rich data on the deeper impacts of the Alternative Break experience.

In addition, there could be additional analysis conducted on many pieces of data collected. If a future researcher wanted to look specifically at a particular element of civic

engagement, such as philanthropy, the research could lead to new findings. Every university engages in philanthropy for itself and new donors are sought constantly. Isolating the philanthropic habits of a particular population of students, whether it is Alternative Break participants or other students who engaged in high-impact practices, could lead to new donors for the institution who were not previously considered.

This study did not ask participants to share demographic information such as sex, gender identity, race, or ethnicity. A future study may focus on researching outcomes based on the demographics of gender identity and race. In my experience and from observation in my work, Alternative Break experiences are often mostly populated by white women. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015), the majority of volunteers in the US are white women. To better understand the experiences and motivations of those from minority backgrounds to go on AB experiences, a future study could focus on those from a variety of backgrounds. This information could help to recruit students from minority backgrounds for future trips.

Another suggested future study would be to compare the civic engagement of Alternative Break alumni with college alumni who did not attend Alternative Breaks while in college. These results could provide a better analysis of the impact of the Alternative Break experience on someone's post-college civic engagement. In fact, the study could look at a variety of forms of college engagement and student involvement and could compare civic engagement outcomes for different types of involvement. The aim of this research would be to see if other student life areas, outside of Alternative Breaks, impacted civic engagement. For example, university athletic programs often have a service or philanthropic component for the athletes. A study of the post-college civic engagement of college athletes could indicate whether or not those service experiences led to community involvement post-graduation. One of the components that sets

Alternative Breaks apart from other service experiences is the reflection exercises practiced in the program. There are often several student clubs that are service focused on a college campus, and they may or may not be engaging in reflection following those service experiences. A future study of students who engaged in other types of service programming, as opposed to Alternative Breaks, could indicate how the practices of AB make a difference in a participant's post-college civic life.

Respondents indicated that involvement in fraternities or sororities (mean = .71) did not have a large impact on their post-college life. This could have two different meanings: first, that few respondents were members of social fraternities and sororities, and two, the values of Alternative Breaks are not congruent with those of Greek life. As a member of a social fraternal organization myself, I know that each organization does work with philanthropy and service around a social issue. Further research could be done comparing the fraternal experience in service and philanthropy with direct service such as Alternative Breaks and could study the outcomes those activities have on participants.

Further exploring the connection to international Alternative Break experiences and civic engagement outcomes is also recommended. Students that participated in international experiences scored higher in several outcomes and the reasons for this should be researched. Potential reasons could be that for many international experiences that are longer in length (usually 10-14 days) or include deeper cultural immersion opportunities such as staying with a host family. These additional factors were not explored in this study and could yield important outcomes that could strengthen international Alternative Break experiences in the future.

Finally, more could be done to study and legitimize Break Away's Active Citizen Continuum (ACC). This model is used nationally by Alternative Break programs to represent the change that a participant goes through because of Alternative Breaks. But this model has not been substantiated in the literature. Creating a study that sets out to bring validity to the ACC would strengthen the model and create buy-in for Alternative Breaks to be considered a transformational experience.

Chapter Summary

Chapter V began with a summary of the significant findings of the dissertation research. Then, several conclusions were made regarding program design and civic engagement outcomes reported by participants. Limitations of the study were discussed, and future research opportunities presented. Alternative Break alumni were shown to be civically engaged post-graduation. These results lead to the recommendations that Alternative Break programs should include leadership opportunities, trip options throughout the academic year, and options for both domestic and international travel. Program directors should use their resources from both Break Away and their campuses to build rich and robust programs that prepare students with skills that will assist them in their post-college civic lives.

REFERENCES

- Adelman, C., Ewell, P., Gaston, P., & Geary Schneider, C. (2014). *The degree qualifications profile*. Retrieved from <https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/dqp.pdf>
- Anderson, K.L., Boyd, M., Marin, K.A., McNamara, K. (2019). Reimagining service-learning: Deepening the impact of this high impact practice. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 42(3), 229-248.
- Astin, A.W. (1977). *Four critical years: Effects of college on beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Astin, A. (1993). *What matters in college?* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Astin, A.W., & Antonio, A.L. (2012). *Assessment for excellence: The philosophy and practice of assessment and evaluation in higher education*. Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Astin, A.W., Sax, L.J., & Avalos, J. (1999). Long-term effects of volunteerism during the undergraduate years. *The Review of Higher Education*, 22(2), 187-202.
- Astin, A.W., Vogelgesang, L., Ikeda, E.K., & Yee, J.A. (2000). *How service learning affects students*. Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute.
- Bernstein, J.L. (2009). Special issue: Perspectives on citizenship education. *Learning and Teaching*, 2(3), 1-10.
- BG Alternative Breaks (bGAB). (2020). Retrieved from: <https://www.bgsu.edu/center-for-public-impact/programs-and-partnerships/alternative-breaks.html>
- Blewitt, J.M., Parsons, A., Shane, J.M.Y. (2018). Service learning as a high-impact practice: Integrating business communication skills to benefit others. *Journal of Education for Business*, 93(8), 412-419.

- Bohon, A.E. (2007). Alternative spring break service exchange: A case study at the community college level. *Inquiry*, 12(1), 62-67.
- Bowen, G.A. (2011). Fostering college students' civic commitment through alternative breaks. *Journal for Civic Commitment*, 16, 1-13.
- Break Away. (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://alternativebreaks.org/>
- Brown, L. & Huck-Watson, C. (2006). Emotionally meaningful service: The adapted five critical elements. Retrieved from: https://civicengagement.illinoisstate.edu/partnership-resources/readings/Elements_of_Service.pdf
- Camacho, M.M. (2004). Power and privilege: Community service learning in Tijuana. Michigan *Journal of Community Service Learning*, 31-42.
- Celio, C.I., Durlak, J., & Dymnicki, A. (2011). A meta-analysis of the impact of service-learning on students. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 34(2), 164-181.
- Cipolle, S.B. (2010). *Service-learning and social justice engaging students in social change*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Cooks, L., & Scharrer, E. (2006). Assessing learning in community service learning: A social approach. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 44-55.
- Crabtree, R.D. (2013). The intended and unintended consequences of international service-learning. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 17(2), 43-65.
- Creswell, J.W., & Creswell, J.D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

- Dallas, G. (2013). Principal component analysis 4 dummies: Eigenvectors, eigenvalues and dimension reduction. Retrieved from:
<https://georgemdallas.wordpress.com/2013/10/30/principal-component-analysis-4-dummies-eigenvectors-eigenvalues-and-dimension-reduction/>
- Dewey, J. (1922). *Democracy and education*. New York: The Macmillan Company.
- Eyler, J., & Giles, D.E. (1999). *Where's the learning in service-learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Educate, Connect, Elevate. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://strategicplan.illinoisstate.edu/>
- Fabina, J. (2021). Record high turnout in 2020 general election. Retrieved from:
<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/record-high-turnout-in-2020-general-election.html>
- Field, A. (2018). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Furco, A. (1996). Service-learning: A balanced approach to experiential education. In *Expanding Boundaries: Service and Learning*. Washington, DC: Corporation of National and Community Service.
- Grand Valley State University. (n.d.). Retrieved from:
<https://www.gvsu.edu/policies/policy.htm?policyId=4A5DE65F-DEAD-F53F-8DD204667872FDD3>
- Gurchiek, K. (2020). Small businesses get creative to survive during the pandemic. Retrieved from: <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/all-things-work/pages/small-businesses-get-creative-to-survive-during-the-pandemic.aspx>

- Guttentag, D.A. (2009). The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 11, 537-551).
- Habitat for Humanity. (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.habitat.org/volunteer/travel-and-build/collegiate-challenge>
- Jajnal, Z.L. (2018). Why does no one vote in local elections? Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/22/opinion/why-does-no-one-vote-in-local-elections.html>
- Higher Education Research Institute & Cooperative Institutional Research Program. (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://heri.ucla.edu>
- Hui, S.M. (2009). Difficult dialogues about service learning: Embrace the messiness. *About Campus*. doi:10.1002/abc.304
- Jacoby, B., and Associates. (1996). *Service-learning in higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Jacoby, B., and Associates. (2009). *Civic engagement in higher education: Concepts and practices*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Jacoby, B. (2015). *Service-learning essentials*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Keen, C., & Hall, K. (2008). Post-graduation service and civic outcomes for high financial need students of a multi-campus, co-curricular service-learning college program. *Journal of College and Character*, 10(2). DOI: 10.2202/1940-1639.1066
- Kuh, G.D. (2008). *High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

- Kuh, G.D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J.H., Whitt, E.J., & Associates. (2005). Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Kuh, G.D., Kinzie, J., Cruce, T., Shoup, R., & Gonyea, R. M. (2007). Connecting the dots: Multi-faceted analysis of the NSSE, and the institutional practices and conditions that foster student success. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research
- Kuh, G.D.; O'Donnell, K., & Schneider, C.G. (2017). HIPs at ten. *Change*, 8-16.
- Lumina Foundation. (2014). The degree qualifications profile. Indianapolis, IN: Adelman, C., Ewell, P., Gaston, P., & Schneider, C.G.
- Marullo, S. (1996). The service learning movement in higher education: An academic response to troubled times. Retrieved from: <http://comm-org.wisc.edu/si/marullo.htm>
- Merriam, S.B. (2009). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Miller, A. L., Rocconi, L.M., Dumford, A.D. (2017). Focus on the finish line: Does high impact practice participation influence career plans and early job attainment?. *Higher Education*, 75, 489-506.
- Mitchell, T.D. (2007). Critical service-learning as social justice education: A case study of the citizen scholars. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 40(2), 101-112.
doi:10.1080/10665680701228797
- Mitchell, T.D. (2008). Traditional vs. critical service-learning: Engaging the literature to differentiate two models. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 50-65.
- National Alternative Break Survey. (2018). Retrieved from <http://alternativebreaks.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/2018-National-Alternative-Break-Survey.pdf>

- National Survey of Student Engagement. (2018). Engagement insights: Survey findings on the quality of undergraduate education – annual results 2018. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research.
- Nelson Laird, T. F., Shoup, R., Kuh, G.D., & Schwarz, M.J. (2008). The effects of discipline on deep approaches to student learning and college outcomes. *Research in Higher Education*, 49, 469-494.
- Newell, M.A. (2014). What's a degree got to do with it? The civic engagement of associate's and bachelor's degree holders. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 18(2), 67-90.
- Newspapers fact sheet. (2021). Retrieved from: <https://www.journalism.org/fact-sheet/newspapers/>
- Niehaus, E.K. (2012). Alternative break programs and the factors that contribute to changes in students' lives (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Maryland, College Park, MD.
- Niehaus, E.K., & Kurotsuchi Inkelas, K. (2015). Exploring the role of alternative break programs in students' career development. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 52(2), 134-148.
- Niehaus, E. (2017). Building momentum in student engagement: Alternative breaks and students' social justice and diversity orientation. *Journal of College Student Development*, 58(1), 53-70.
- Niehaus, E., Holder, C., Rivera, M., Garcia, C.E., Woodman, T.C., & Dierberger, J. (2017). Exploring integrative learning in service-based alternative breaks. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 49, 1-25.

- Owen, J.E. (2016). Fostering critical reflection: Moving from a service to a social justice paradigm. *New Directions for Student Leadership*, 150, 37-48. doi:10.1002/yd.20169
- Palmer, A. (2020). How amazon keeps a close eye on employee activism to head off unions. Retrieved from: <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/10/24/how-amazon-prevents-unions-by-surveilling-employee-activism.html>
- Personal and social activities. (n.d.) Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/personal-social-activities.html#event>
- Popham, G. (2015). Boom in ‘voluntourism’ sparks concerns over whether the industry is doing good. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-travel-volunteers-charities-idUSKCN0P91AX20150629>
- Quaye, S.J., & Harper, S.R. (Eds). (2015). *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations*. New York: Routledge.
- Raypole, C. (2021). The savior no one needs: Unpacking and overcoming the white savior complex. Retrieved from: <https://www.healthline.com/health/white-saviorism>
- Richard, D. (2017). Quantitative research on service learning and student civic outcomes. In Hatcher, J.A., Bringle, R.G., & Hahn, T.W. (Eds.), *Research on student civic outcomes in service learning: Conceptual frameworks and methods* (221-240). Stylus.
- Rhoads, R.A. (1997). *Community service and higher learning explorations of the caring self*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Rhoads, R.A., & Neururer, J. (1998). Alternative spring break: Learning through community service. *NASPA Journal*, 39, 100-118.

- RNL (n.d.). Retrieved from: https://learn.ruffalonl.com/fundraising-solutions.html?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=fm-solutions-search&gclid=CjwKCAjwy7CKBhBMEiwA0Eb7akMyu2rgZ5weSIMPXVHYu3yFh9FE-Cvsx6n9CGII2akLnCAPoRgh5BoCkc0QAvD_BwE
- Roenigk, E. (2017). 5 reasons ‘poverty porn’ empowers the wrong person. Retrieved from: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/poverty-charity-media_b_5155627
- Salkind, N.J. (2014). Statistics for people who (think they) hate statistics. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Soria, K.M. & Johnson, M. (2017). High-impact educational practices and the development of college students’ pluralistic outcomes. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 35(2), 100-116.
- Stanton, T.K., Giles, D.E., & Cruz, N.I. (1999). Service-learning a movement’s pioneers reflect on its origins, practice, and future. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass.
- State Farm Neighborhood of Good. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://neighborhoodofgood.statefarm.com/>
- Strayhorn, T.L. (2008). How college students’ engagement affects personal and social learning outcomes. *Journal of College and Character*, 10(2), pages 1-16.
<https://doi.org/10.2202/1940-1639.1071>
- Stebbins, S. & Suneson, G. (2020). Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk among US billionaires getting richer during coronavirus pandemic. USA Today. Retrieved from: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2020/12/01/american-billionaires-that-got-richer-during-covid/43205617/>

Sumka, S., Porter, M., & Piacitelli, J. (2015). Working side by side: Creating alternative breaks as catalysts for global learning, student leadership, and social change. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

SVSU Guiding Principles. (n.d.). Retrieved from

<http://www.svsu.edu/president/missionvisionandcorevalues/>

The Bonner Program. (n.d.). Retrieved from: <http://www.bonner.org/apply>

The Higher Education Research Institute Graduate School of Education and Information Studies

University of California, Los Angeles. (2006). Understanding the effects of service-learning: A study of students and faculty.

https://heri.ucla.edu/PDFs/pubs/Reports/UnderstandingTheEffectsOfServiceLearning_FinalReport.pdf

The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. (2012). A crucible moment: College learning and democracy's future. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015). Volunteering in the united states, 2015. Retrieved from:

<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.nr0.htm>

Vogelgesang, L.J. & Astin, A.W. (2005). Post-college civic engagement among graduates. HERI

Research Report Number 2, 1-11.

Warne, R.T. (2014). A primer of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) for behavioral scientists. Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation. 19(17), pages 1-10.

What is ANOVA (analysis of variance) and what is it used for? (n.d.). Retrieved from:

<https://www.qualtrics.com/experience-management/research/anova/>

Zhang, C. & Burn-Murdoch, J. (2020). By numbers: how the US voted in 2020. Financial Times.

Retrieved from: <https://www.ft.com/content/69f3206f-37a7-4561-bebf-5929e7df850d>

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

The following are the data collection recruitment emails and social media posts.

Email request to Alternative Breaks staff:

The following email will be sent to Alternative Breaks staff advisors at current Break Away member institutions:

Hello (name of staff member or position title),

My name is Annie Weaver and I serve as the Alternative Breaks Staff Advisor at Illinois State University. I am also currently a doctoral student in the Educational Foundations and Administration program working with Dr. Phyllis McCluskey-Titus. I am conducting research on how participation in Alternative Breaks contributes to post-graduation civic engagement-- aka, are our alumni Active Citizens? If you are connected with any alumni from your program or alumni who you know to have done an Alternative Break, would you please pass on the following survey link to them? https://illinoisstate.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bBGMty8JfMDf42N

Their participation is voluntary and in the survey you will be asked about your past Alternative Breaks involvement and present community involvement in an online survey. In total, your involvement in this study will last approximately 10 minutes.

Thank you very much for your time and interest in this study. Once the data is compiled, I am happy to share my report with you.

Thank you for considering sharing my request.

Sincerely,

Annie

Email request directly to alumni of AB programs:

My name is Annie Weaver and I serve as the Alternative Breaks Staff Advisor at Illinois State University. I am also currently a doctoral student in the Educational Foundations and Administration program working with Dr. Phyllis McCluskey-Titus. I am conducting research on how participation in Alternative Breaks contributes to post-graduation civic engagement. If you participated in an Alternative Break while in college, would you consider taking this survey?

https://illinoisstate.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bBGMty8JfMDf42N

Your participation is voluntary and in the survey you will be asked about your past Alternative Breaks involvement and present community involvement in an online survey. In total, your involvement in this study will last approximately 10 minutes.

Thank you very much for your time and interest in this study. And if you know anyone else who went on an Alternative Break, I would be so appreciative if you share this with them.

Sincerely,

Annie

Facebook Post (personal page)

Hey friends! Did you or someone you know participate in an Alternative Break in college? I am looking for alumni of AB programs to participate in my dissertation study with the Educational Foundations and Administration program at Illinois State University. Your participation is voluntary and in the survey you will be asked about your past Alternative Breaks involvement and present community involvement in an online survey. In total, your involvement in this study will last approximately 10 minutes. If you would be so kind as to take this survey, I would be so appreciative! Please share widely!

https://illinoisstate.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bBGMty8JfMDf42N

Facebook Post (past participant groups and program pages)

Hey friends! Did you participate in an Alternative Break in college? I'm guessing if you are in the group you have! I am looking for alumni of AB programs to participate in my dissertation study with the Educational Foundations and Administration program at Illinois State University. Your participation is voluntary and in the survey you will be asked about your past Alternative Breaks involvement and present community involvement in an online survey. In total, your involvement in this study will last approximately 10 minutes.. If you would be so kind as to take this survey, I would be so appreciative! Please share with your fellow leaders, participants, and alumni! https://illinoisstate.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bBGMty8JfMDf42N

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Participant Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Annjanette Weaver under the supervision of Dr. Phyllis McCluskey-Titus of the Educational Administration and Foundations Department at Illinois State University. The purpose of this study is to examine how alumni of Alternative Breaks programs are engaged in their communities.

Why are you being asked?

You have been asked to participate because you are affiliated with an Alternative Breaks program. You are ineligible to participate if you are under the age of 18. If your university is not a member of [Break Away](#) [link to Break Away chapter schools], your information will be discarded. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You will not be penalized if you choose to skip parts of the study, not participate, or withdraw from the study at any time.

What would you do?

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked about your past Alternative Breaks involvement and present community involvement in an online survey. In total, your involvement in this study will last approximately 10 minutes.

Are any risks expected?

We do not anticipate any risks beyond those that would occur in everyday life.

Will your information be protected?

Your responses in the survey will be anonymous; nothing that will identify you will be linked to your responses. The findings from this study may be presented in conferences, meetings, and publications. When these findings are presented, your responses will be combined with the responses of other participants.

Who will benefit from this study?

While you may not directly benefit from this study, your responses will help inform best practices for Alternative Breaks and develop guidelines for quality Alternative Breaks experiences.

Whom do you contact if you have any questions?

If you have any questions about the research, contact Annie Weaver at amweave@ilstu.edu . If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, contact the Illinois State University Research Ethics & Compliance Office at (309) 438-5527 or IRB@ilstu.edu.

You can print this form for your records.

Documentation of Consent

Click below if you are willing to participate. If you do not want to participate, you can close the survey.

☐ I am 18 or older and willing to participate in this study

☐ I do not want to participate in the study

APPENDIX C: SURVEY QUESTIONS

What college or university did you attend for your Alternative Break experience?

What positions did you hold within your Alternative Breaks experience? (mark all that apply):

Participant; Trip or Site Leader; Executive Board Member

What destinations did you travel for Alternative Breaks? (mark all that apply): Domestic (within the United States); Local (within the university community); International (outside of the United States)

What type of Alternative Break experience did you participate in? (mark all that apply): Spring Break; Winter Break; Summer Break; Fall Break; Weekend Break

Approximately how many Alternative Break trips did you participate in?: 1-2; 3-4; 5-6; 7 or more

What social issues do you remember working with on your Alternative Break trips? (mark all that apply): Youth Development/Education; Hunger/Food Security; Homelessness/Affordable Housing; Environment; Health; Disabilities; LGBTQ+ Rights; Disaster Relief; Animal Welfare; Immigration; Women's Rights/Domestic Violence; Social Justice; Other: ____; Don't Remember

What was your major field of study? (check all that apply)

- Business
- Social Sciences (psychology, anthropology, communication, etc)
- Health Professions
- Hard sciences (chemistry, biology, etc)
- Education
- The Arts
- Other: _____

What year did you graduate with your undergraduate degree?

Your current or most recent primary occupation would be considered working in...

- Public Sector (education, non-profit, public service, etc)
- Private Sector (for-profit business, etc)
- Unsure/Don't know

[*Community Engagement*] How important were the following in your decision to participate in

Alternative Breaks? (A major reason; A minor reason; Not a reason; Unsure/Don't remember):

- I wanted to meet people
- My friends were involved in these activities
- I wanted to do my part as a community member
- By getting involved I could influence what happens in my community
- I wanted to further my career
- I was inspired by someone I admire
- It was an expression of my faith
- I liked working with people who share my ideals
- Someone personally invited me to participate
- I wanted to create a more equitable society

[*Volunteering*] How important were the following in your decision to participate in Alternative

Breaks? (A major reason; A minor reason; Not a reason; Unsure/Don't remember):

- I wanted to help other people
- I wanted to do something about an issue that matters to me
- It made me feel good about myself

[*Political Engagement*] How important were the following in your decision to participate in Alternative Breaks? (A major reason; A minor reason; Not a reason; Unsure/Don't Remember):

- I was working to change laws or policies
- To fulfill my civic duty
- To receive a tax write-off

[*Volunteering*] Since leaving college, how often have you participated in community service/volunteer work through the following organizations? (Frequently; Occasionally; Once or Twice; Never):

- A school or educational organization
- A cultural or arts organization
- A religious or faith-based organization
- A civic organization (e.g. United Way, YMCA/YWCA, Kiwanis, etc.)
- A sports or recreational organization
- A hospital or health organization
- Through your employer
- Other organization
- A community organizing effort or neighborhood group
- Of your own initiative, not through an organization

[*Political Engagement*] Since leaving college, how often have you participated in community service/volunteer work through the following organizations? (Frequently; Occasionally; Once or Twice; Never):

- A political organization (e.g. political party, campaign, etc.)
- A public/governmental agency

- An advocacy/issue group (e.g. Sierra Club, Common Cause, local advocacy group, etc.)

[*Volunteering*] What kind of activities have you performed as a volunteer since leaving college?

(Frequently; Occasionally; Once or Twice; Never):

- Collect, prepare, distribute, or serve food
- Collect, make, or distribute clothing, crafts, or goods other than food
- Teach, tutor, mentor, coach, referee
- Provide counseling, medical care, fire/EMS, or protective services
- Supply transportation for people
- Provide general office services
- Provide professional or management assistance including serving on a board of committee
- Provide information, be an usher, greeter, or minister
- Perform physical labor
- Other

[*Philanthropy*] What kind of activities have you performed as a volunteer since leaving college?

(Frequently; Occasionally; Once or Twice; Never):

- Fundraiser or sell items to raise money

[*Community Engagement*] What kind of activities have you performed as a volunteer since leaving college? (Frequently; Occasionally; Once or Twice; Never):

- Engage in music, performance, or other artistic activities

[*Community Engagement*] Please indicate if you have performed any of the following since leaving college? (Frequently; Occasionally; Once or Twice; Never):

- Discussed community issues

- Played a leadership role in your community
- Worked with others to solve a problem in the community where you live
- Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by contacting a newspaper or magazine
- Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by calling a radio or television talk show
- Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by signing a written, email, or online petition
- Bought a certain product or service because you like the social or political values of the company
- NOT bought something or boycotted it because of the social or political values of the company

[*Political Engagement*] Please indicate if you have performed any of the following since leaving college? (Frequently; Occasionally; Once or Twice; Never):

- Voted in a national election
- Voted in a state/local election
- Worked on community projects that involved a government agency or program
- Used online communication with family and friends to raise awareness about social and political issues
- Donated money to a political candidate or cause
- Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by contacting or visiting a public official
- Worked with a political group or official

- Worn a campaign button, put a sticker on your car, or placed a sign in the front of your house supporting an issue or candidate
- Worked as a canvasser going door to door for a political candidate or cause

[*Philanthropy*] Please indicate if you have performed any of the following since leaving college?

(Frequently; Occasionally; Once or Twice; Never):

- Donated professional services on a “pro bono” basis
- Donated money to a political candidate or cause
- Donated money to a religious organization
- Donated money to an educational organization
- Donated money to a human services or community services organization (e.g. United Way, a local food bank, etc)

[*Volunteering*] For the activities listed below, please indicate how often you have engaged in each during the past year (Frequently; Occasionally; Not at all):

- Performed volunteer work

[*Political Engagement*] For the activities listed below, please indicate how often you have engaged in each during the past year (Frequently; Occasionally; Not at all):

- Discussed politics
- Participated in protests/demonstrations/rallies
- Worked in a local, state, or national political campaign

[*Community Engagement*] For the activities listed below, please indicate how often you have engaged in each during the past year (Frequently; Occasionally; Not at all):

- Visited a museum or art gallery
- Discussed religion

- Discussed racial/ethnic issues
- Socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group
- Attended a religious service
- Attended or visited a community fair or festival

As you look back on your undergraduate experience, what impact has each of the following had in preparing you for life after college? (Strong Impact; Moderate Impact; Little or No Impact; Not Applicable):

- Coursework
- Living away from home
- Living on campus
- Involvement in student government
- Involvement in an internship
- Involvement in athletics or intramural sports
- Involvement in student clubs
- Involvement in fraternities or sororities
- Involvement in community service/volunteer work
- Involvement in religious organizations
- Involvement in study abroad
- Involvement in Alternative Breaks
- Interaction with faculty
- Work/employment during college
- Friendships/student-peer interactions
- Mentors

Is there anything else you want us to know about your Alternative Breaks experience and how it has influenced your post-college life?

-End of Survey-

APPENDIX D: SURVEY CODE BOOK

ParticipantNumber1-520

What positions did you hold within your Alternative Breaks experience? (mark all that apply):

- ParticipantOnly. Participant only (1);
- TripLeaderOnly. Trip or Site Leader only (2);
- ExecOnly. Executive Board Member only (3)
- PartLeader. Participant and a Trip or Site Leader (4)
- PartExec. Participant and an Executive Board Member (5)
- LeaderExec. Trip or Site Leader and Executive Board Member (6)
- PartLeaderExec. Held all three positions of participant, leader and executive board (7)

Destination1;2;3. *What destinations did you travel for Alternative Breaks? (mark all that apply):*

- Domestic. Domestic (within the United States) (1);
- Local. Local (within the university community) (2);
- International. International (outside of the United States) (3)

What type of Alternative Break experience did you participate in? (mark all that apply):

- SpringBreak. Spring Break (1);
- WinterBreak. Winter Break (2);
- SummerBreak. Summer Break (3);
- FallBreak. Fall Break (4);
- Weekend. Weekend Break (5)

Number. *Approximately how many Alternative Break trips did you participate in?:*

1-2 (1); 3-4 (2); 5-6 (3); 7 or more (4)

What social issues do you remember working with on your Alternative Break trips? (mark all that apply):

- YDEdu. Youth Development/Education; (1)
- Hunger. Hunger/Food Security; (2)
- AH. Homelessness/Affordable Housing; (3)
- Env. Environment; (4)
- Health. Health; (5)
- Dis. Disabilities; (6)
- LGBTQ. LGBTQ+ Rights; (7)
- Disaster. Disaster Relief; (8)
- Animal. Animal Welfare; (9)
- Imm. Immigration; (10)
- Women. Women's Rights/Domestic Violence; (11)
- Justice. Social Justice; (12)
- Other. Other:____ (13)
- Unsure. Don't Remember (14)

What was your major field of study? (check all that apply)

- Business. Business (1)
- SocialSci. Social Sciences (psychology, anthropology, communication, etc) (2)
- HealthPro. Health Professions (3)
- HardSciences. Hard sciences (chemistry, biology, etc) (4)
- Edu. Education (5)
- Arts. The Arts (6)

- Other. Other: (7)_____

GradYear. *What year did you graduate with your undergraduate degree?*

- YearsAgo- years ago graduated (2021- grad year)
- LessThan6. Graduated 0-5 years ago
- 6to10. Graduated 6-10 years ago
- Over10. Graduated over 10 years ago

Occupation. *Your current or most recent primary occupation would be considered working in...*

- Public Sector (education, non-profit, public service, etc) (1)
- Private Sector (for-profit business, etc) (2)
- Unsure/Don't know (3)

Important1-10 [*Community Engagement*] How important were the following in your decision to participate in Alternative Breaks? (A major reason (3); A minor reason (2); Not a reason (1);

Unsure/Don't remember (0)):

- 1 I wanted to meet people
- 2 My friends were involved in these activities
- 3 I wanted to do my part as a community member
- 4 By getting involved I could influence what happens in my community
- 5 I wanted to further my career
- 6 I was inspired by someone I admire
- 7 It was an expression of my faith
- 8 I liked working with people who share my ideals
- 9 Someone personally invited me to participate
- 10 I wanted to create a more equitable society

Important11-13 [*Volunteering*] How important were the following in your decision to participate in Alternative Breaks? (A major reason (3); A minor reason (2); Not a reason (1); Unsure/Don't remember (0)):

- 11 I wanted to help other people
- 12 I wanted to do something about an issue that matters to me
- 13 It made me feel good about myself

Important14-16 [*Political Engagement*] How important were the following in your decision to participate in Alternative Breaks? (A major reason (3); A minor reason (2); Not a reason (1); Unsure/Don't remember (0)):

- 14 I was working to change laws or policies
- 15 To fulfill my civic duty
- 16 To receive a tax write-off

PartSince1-10 [*Volunteering*] Since leaving college, how often have you participated in community service/volunteer work through the following organizations? (Frequently (4); Occasionally (3); Once or Twice (2); Never (1)):

- 1 A school or educational organization
- 2 A cultural or arts organization
- 3 A religious or faith-based organization
- 4 A civic organization (e.g. United Way, YMCA/YWCA, Kiwanis, etc.)
- 5 A sports or recreational organization
- 6 A hospital or health organization
- 7 Through your employer
- 8 Other organization

- 9 A community organizing effort or neighborhood group
- 10 Of your own initiative, not through an organization

PartSince11-13 [*Political Engagement*] Since leaving college, how often have you participated in community service/volunteer work through the following organizations? (Frequently (4);

Occasionally (3); Once or Twice (2); Never (1)):

- 11 A political organization (e.g. political party, campaign, etc.)
- 12 A public/governmental agency
- 13 An advocacy/issue group (e.g. Sierra Club, Common Cause, local advocacy group, etc.)

PartSince14-23 [*Volunteering*] What kind of activities have you performed as a volunteer since leaving college? (Frequently (4); Occasionally (3); Once or Twice (2); Never (1)):

- 14 Collect, prepare, distribute, or serve food
- 15 Collect, make, or distribute clothing, crafts, or goods other than food
- 16 Teach, tutor, mentor, coach, referee
- 17 Provide counseling, medical care, fire/EMS, or protective services
- 18 Supply transportation for people
- 19 Provide general office services
- 20 Provide professional or management assistance including serving on a board of committee
- 21 Provide information, be an usher, greeter, or minister
- 22 Perform physical labor
- 23 Other

PartSince24 [*Philanthropy*] What kind of activities have you performed as a volunteer since leaving college? (Frequently (4); Occasionally (3); Once or Twice (2); Never (1)):

- 24 Fundraiser or sell items to raise money

PartSince25 [*Community Engagement*] What kind of activities have you performed as a volunteer since leaving college? (Frequently (4); Occasionally (3); Once or Twice (2); Never (1)):

- 25 Engage in music, performance, or other artistic activities

PartSince26-33 [*Community Engagement*] Please indicate if you have performed any of the following since leaving college? (Frequently (4); Occasionally (3); Once or Twice (2); Never (1)):

- 26 Discussed community issues
- 27 Played a leadership role in your community
- 28 Worked with others to solve a problem in the community where you live
- 29 Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by contacting a newspaper or magazine
- 30 Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by calling a radio or television talk show
- 31 Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by signing a written, email, or online petition
- 32 Bought a certain product or service because you like the social or political values of the company
- 33 NOT bought something or boycotted it because of the social or political values of the company

PartSince34-42 [*Political Engagement*] Please indicate if you have performed any of the following since leaving college? (Frequently (4); Occasionally (3); Once or Twice (2); Never (1)):

- 34 Voted in a national election
- 35 Voted in a state/local election
- 36 Worked on community projects that involved a government agency or program
- 37 Used online communication with family and friends to raise awareness about social and political issues
- 38 Donated money to a political candidate or cause
- 39 Expressed your opinion on a community or political issue by contacting or visiting a public official
- 40 Worked with a political group or official
- 41 Worn a campaign button, put a sticker on your car, or placed a sign in the front of your house supporting an issue or candidate
- 42 Worked as a canvasser going door to door for a political candidate or cause

PartSince43-47 [*Philanthropy*] Please indicate if you have performed any of the following since leaving college? (Frequently (4); Occasionally (3); Once or Twice (2); Never (1)):

- 43 Donated professional services on a “pro bono” basis
- 44 Donated money to a political candidate or cause
- 45 Donated money to a religious organization
- 46 Donated money to an educational organization
- 47 Donated money to a human services or community services organization (e.g. United Way, a local food bank, etc)

PastYear1 [*Volunteering*] For the activities listed below, please indicate how often you have engaged in each during the past year (Frequently (3); Occasionally (2); Not at all (1)):

- 1 Performed volunteer work

PastYear2-4 [*Political Engagement*] For the activities listed below, please indicate how often you have engaged in each during the past year (Frequently (3); Occasionally (2); Not at all (1)):

- 2 Discussed politics
- 3 Participated in protests/demonstrations/rallies
- 4 Worked in a local, state, or national political campaign

PastYear5-10 [*Community Engagement*] For the activities listed below, please indicate how often you have engaged in each during the past year (Frequently (3); Occasionally (2); Not at all (1)):

- 5 Visited a museum or art gallery
- 6 Discussed religion
- 7 Discussed racial/ethnic issues
- 8 Socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group
- 9 Attended a religious service
- 10 Attended or visited a community fair or festival

CollegeAct1-16 As you look back on your undergraduate experience, what impact has each of the following had in preparing you for life after college? (Strong Impact (3); Moderate Impact (2); Little or No Impact (1); Not Applicable (0)):

- 1 Coursework
- 2 Living away from home
- 3 Living on campus
- 4 Involvement in student government

- 5 Involvement in an internship
- 6 Involvement in athletics or intramural sports
- 7 Involvement in student clubs
- 8 Involvement in fraternities or sororities
- 9 Involvement in community service/volunteer work
- 10 Involvement in religious organizations
- 11 Involvement in study abroad
- 12 Involvement in Alternative Breaks
- 13 Interaction with faculty
- 14 Work/employment during college
- 15 Friendships/student-peer interactions
- 16 Mentors

OpenEnded Is there anything else you want us to know about your Alternative Breaks experience and how it has influenced your post-college life?

Themes

- Blue- Career
- Pink- Passion/Social Issue
- Yellow- Values (emerging values- social justice, friendship and connection, community/putting others first, put you out of your comfort zone- risk taking
- Green- COVID concerns