

## ABSTRACT

Rachelle Marie Hoover-Plonk, THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF DOMESTIC CO-CURRICULAR ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK (ASB) EXPERIENCES ON PARTICIPANTS' LATER CIVIC BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES (Under the direction of Dr. David Siegel). Department of Educational Leadership, November, 2015

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to better understand the potential role that domestic alternative spring break experiences, as a particular co-curricular service-learning initiative within the larger framework of civic engagement, may have on participants' later civic behaviors and attitudes. The research question pursued was, "What is the potential role (if any) of the domestic co-curricular alternative spring break (ASB) experience on a participants' later civic behaviors and attitudes?" The 15 research participants represented seven different institutions. The participants were removed six to nine years from their ASB experience which meant they participated in at least one ASB experience between 2005 and 2011. The interview questions focused on what participants learned about the community, social issues, themselves, and others as a part of their ASB experience. Other questions concentrated on the participants' current community involvement and community service since the participants graduated three to nine years ago. Break Away's Active Citizen Continuum was chosen as the conceptual model to guide this research study. The Active Citizen Continuum frames lifelong active citizenship as a developmental process for participants as they progresses from the member phase towards the active citizen phase. The four phases that comprise the Active Citizen Continuum which are (a) member, (b) volunteer, (c) conscientious citizen, and (d) active citizen. In the final phase, called active citizen, the individual chooses to make the community a priority in the values and life choices he or she makes in his or her life. Creswell's (2007) Recommended Interview Procedures, Yin's (2009) sources of evidence for data preparation, and Creswell's (2007) Data Analysis Spiral were utilized to gather and analyze the data. The five themes that emerged from

the research were: (a) continued service, (b) performance of ASB (c) personal development gains, (d) relationships, and (e) social justices. Findings from this study suggest that domestic co-curricular ASB trips can play an important role in a participant's later civic behaviors and attitudes. Future research is needed to continue examining the long-term role that the ASB experience may or may not play in a participants' civic behaviors and civic attitudes.



THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF DOMESTIC CO-CURRICULAR ALTERNATIVE SPRING  
BREAK (ASB) EXPERIENCES ON PARTICIPANTS' LATER CIVIC BEHAVIORS AND  
ATTITUDES

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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by  
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BREAK (ASB) EXPERIENCES ON PARTICIPANTS' LATER CIVIC BEHAVIORS AND  
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## **DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to the students who began the alternative spring break movement that has continued for 30 years. Their actions are a reminder to all of us that we *can* make a difference.

*“Every individual matters. Every individual has a role to play. Every individual makes a difference. And we have a choice: What sort of difference do we want to make?”* Jane Goodall

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the interviews to be conducted. Their stories are important, and the data from this research has advanced the literature regarding alternative spring break trips. Blessings to all.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE.....	i
COPYRIGHT.....	ii
SIGNATURE.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Study.....	3
Research Question.....	4
Conceptual Model.....	4
Statement of Purpose.....	5
Significance of Study.....	8
Scope and Delimitations.....	10
Limitations.....	10
Definition of Key Terms.....	11
Research Design.....	15
Summary.....	17
Organization of the Study.....	18
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	19
Historical Role of Service and Civic Engagement in Higher Education.....	19

Civic Engagement and Institutionalization.....	24
Carnegie’s Community Engagement Elective Classification.....	26
Campus Compact.....	27
Student Participation Rates and Student/Faculty Perspectives regarding Service...	28
Service-Learning in Higher Education.....	33
Service-Learning: The Positive and Adverse Impact.....	34
Critical versus Traditional Service-Learning.....	43
Alternative Breaks and Short-Term Immersion Experiences.....	45
Break Away.....	47
Active Citizen Continuum.....	49
Alternative Break Research.....	50
Domestic Alternative Spring Break Trips.....	60
Alumni and the Long-Term Effect of Service-Learning.....	61
Community Service Persistence and Outcomes of Service-Learning.....	62
Alumni Civic Efforts and Benefits.....	63
Summary.....	65
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	68
Research Design.....	68
Conceptual Model.....	70
Institutional Review Board.....	71
Research Question.....	71
Threats to Validity.....	71
Assumptions.....	74

Participants.....	75
Recruitment.....	75
Institution Selection.....	76
Participating Institutions.....	78
Participant Selection.....	79
Data Collection.....	80
Semi-structured interviews.....	80
Recording, interview protocol design, and consent.....	82
Pilot interviews, interview location, and interview time.....	82
Data Analysis.....	83
First loop.....	83
Second loop.....	85
Third loop.....	86
Fourth loop.....	92
Analyzing strategies.....	92
Memoing and journaling.....	93
Scope and Delimitations.....	94
Summary.....	94
CHAPTER 4: OVERVIEW AND FINDINGS.....	96
Overview and Findings.....	96
Overview.....	96
Findings.....	98
Continued Service.....	98

Service-oriented career.....	99
Incorporating service into life.....	100
Performance of ASB.....	103
Positive experience.....	103
Gratitude and appreciation.....	104
Impact of ASB on participant’s life.....	105
Increased willingness to serve.....	107
Earlier participation in ASB.....	107
Impacted career choice.....	108
Work-life integration.....	116
Personal Development Gains.....	110
Making a difference.....	110
Increased skills and self-awareness.....	111
Exposure and broadening.....	113
Increased metacognitive skill development.....	114
Reflection.....	115
Relationships.....	117
Sense of comradery.....	117
Friendship.....	118
Morality of care.....	118
Morality of justice.....	120
Increased comfort with and/or exposure to diversity.....	121
Social Justice.....	123

Privilege.....	124
Responsible citizenship.....	125
Helping others.....	127
Social issues.....	128
Increased understanding of community and national problems.....	135
Sense of personalizing.....	137
Additional Data.....	138
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....	141
Discussion.....	141
Implications of the Findings.....	142
Continued Service.....	142
Performance of ASB.....	143
Personal Development Gains.....	144
Relationships.....	145
Social Justice.....	146
Implications for Research and Theory.....	149
Implications for Practice.....	152
Assisting and Supporting Participants to Continue Service.....	152
Essential ASB Program Components.....	155
Earlier Participation in ASB Programs.....	157
Tracking Alumni Members.....	158
Recommendations for Future Research.....	158
Replicating the Study.....	159

Adding a Quantitative Aspect.....	160
Extending the Study to Other Populations.....	160
Involving Students of Different Ages.....	161
Comparing Different Alternative Break Formats (fall, weekend, winter and spring).....	161
Conducting Studies with Multiple Interviews.....	161
Pursuing Questions Related to Student Participation in and Timeliness of ASB Trips.....	162
Focusing on Theory Development.....	162
Conclusion.....	165
REFERENCES.....	168
APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM.....	190
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTION PROTOCOL.....	193
APPENDIX C: BREAK AWAY LETTER OF SUPPORT.....	195
APPENDIX D: INSTITUTION PERMISSION REQUEST TO CONTACT ALUMNI MEMBERS OF ASB TRIPS.....	196
APPENDIX E: CORRESPONDENCE EMAILS SENT TO BREAK AWAY, PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS, AND PARTICIPANTS.....	197
APPENDIX F: RESEARCH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER INTERVIEW).....	201
APPENDIX G: GRADUATION DATE, NUMBER OF ALTERNATIVE BREAK EXPERIENCES. LIST OF ALTERNATIVE BREAK EXPERIENCES AND NUMBER OF YEARS REMOVED FROM EXPERIENCE.....	202
APPENDIX H: BRIEF PROFILES FOR ALUMNI MEMBERS.....	205
APPENDIX I: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER.....	208

## **LIST OF TABLES**

1. HERI Research Briefs for Faculty Members in 2004-05, 2007-08 and 2010-11.....	31
2. Research Studies Focused on Alternative Break Trips.....	51
3. Creswell's (2007) Recommended Interview Procedures .....	81
4. Alternative Break Trip Format and Number .....	88
5. Types of Service Trips, Number of Trips by Service and Location of Service Trip...	89
6. Final Themes and Sub-Themes.....	91

## LIST OF FIGURES

1. Active citizen continuum.....	6
2. Data analysis spiral.....	85

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century continues to be plagued with numerous social issues including unemployment, poverty and hunger, homelessness, and environmental degradation.

Domestically, the United States continues to have high levels of unemployment, poverty, and homelessness (Income, 2012; The State, 2012; U.S. Bureau, 2012). The unemployment rate in March 2013 was at 7.6%, which represents 11.7 million individuals (U.S. Bureau, 2013). The poverty level was 49.7 million in 2011, which equates to 20% of America's children living in poverty (U.S. Census, 2012). In January of 2012, there were 633,782 individuals who were homeless, which equates to 20 individuals for every 10,000 in the U.S. population (U.S. Census, 2012). Internationally, there are 2.4 billion (approximately 7.1 billion total world population) people who live on less than \$2 (U.S. dollars) a day according to the World Bank (The World, n.d.). Other international social concerns reported by the World Bank include food shortages, climate change, and economic shocks (The World, n.d.). According to the *State of the World 2010*, produced by the Worldwatch Institute, the rapid rate of the world's consumerism is putting the world on a disastrous course with the environment (Worldwatch, 2010). What role can higher education institutions play in changing this myriad of social issues?

When used effectively, civic engagement can enlarge the human, social, and cultural capital of communities and higher education institutions which can ultimately enhance our understanding and ability to address this myriad of social challenges (Peterson, 2009). Various forms of civic engagement can be leveraged by higher education institutions and communities as an effective strategy for accomplishing mutual goals focused on educational, civic, and economic outcomes (Campus Compact, 2012, 2011; Association, 2012). Many of higher education's writers and researchers, past and present, have declared that a primary goal of higher education is

to develop citizens who are civic minded and possess the skills and capacities to lead in our communities and nation (e.g., Dewey, 1916; Bowen, 1977; Astin, 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Hurtado, Engberg, & Ponjuan, 2003). Service-learning is one of the most researched forms of civic engagement. Since service-learning's inception, a large number of the service-learning pioneers have been driven by the idea of a "democratic education" in which education fosters a citizenry that is more actively involved in civic affairs (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999). Higher education institutions can facilitate community engagement opportunities through methods that include service-learning and specific service-learning programs such as alternative break trips. This research study focuses on Break Away, an organization that supports the development of quality alternative breaks for higher education institutions, with the aim of encouraging students to become active citizens. For Break Away, being an active citizen means the community will become a priority in the value and life choices students make (Break Away, n.d.).

The rising popularity of alternative spring break trips has been featured in numerous popular mediums including *The New York Times*, *USA Today* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Flaherty, 2000; Klinck, 2010; Lipka, 2004). These alternative break trips have continued to expand annually over the past 20 years across higher education campuses (Break Away, n.d.). During the 2011-2012 academic year alone, there were 16,406 students who participated in community service via an alternative break trip (Break Away, 2012). A total of 1,460 alternative break trips were conducted, and the participants provided an estimated 622,764 hours of direct service to communities focusing on assorted social issues such as children and youth, environmental stewardship, homelessness, hunger, disaster relief and recovery, education, rural and urban poverty, and affordable housing (Break Away, 2012). Over half (783) of these

trips were held during spring break. Higher education institutions have reinforced this continued student interest in service by providing designated centers along with the necessary faculty and staff to support the diverse forms of service and engagement efforts such as the ASB experience (Farrell, 2005).

### **Background of the Study**

During the past 30 years, many higher education institutions have amplified their civic engagement efforts and reaffirmed the service aspect of their mission, often becoming what has been called the “engaged campus” (Campus Compact, 2009; Carnegie, 2006; Saltmarsh, 2005). Based on Finley’s (2011) review of the literature on civic engagement in post-secondary education, a number of scholars acknowledge that the primary mission of America’s higher education institutions has been engaging and equipping students with the necessary skills, values, and actions to live in a society that is democratic and diverse.

The literature continues to endorse the instrumental role that colleges and universities can and should play in encouraging students to become more civically engaged. Many have called on higher education to increase its commitment to helping students connect their learning to the current social and civic issues of the day (Boyer, 1987; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 1996; Newman, 1985). The most recent National Call for Action (*A Crucible Moment*) was released in 2012 by the Global Perspective, Inc. (GPI) and the Association of American Universities and Colleges (AAUC) by an invitation from the U.S. Department of Education (Association, 2012). The overarching goal of *A Crucible Moment: College Learning & Democracy’s Future* was to spur higher education to act on behalf of its civic mission by ensuring that all students have some form of civic learning as a part of their collegiate experience (Association, 2012). Others urge institutions to assist students in developing a sense of purpose along with some sense of ethics

(Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Sullivan & Rosin, 2008). Astin (1997) analyzed the mission statements of colleges and universities and found some of the most common core themes included preparing students for responsible citizenship and for service to society. Furthermore, many higher education institutions have answered this calling inside and outside the classroom by encouraging students to commit to lifelong involvement by raising students' awareness of the issues and needs in different communities, and by developing students' ethical leadership (Bringle, 2003; Kendall, 1990).

### **Research Question**

This qualitative research was conducted in order to better understand the potential role the domestic alternative spring break experience, as a particular co-curricular service-learning initiative within the larger framework of civic engagement, may have on participants' later civic behaviors and attitudes. Therefore, the research question pursued was:

What is the potential role (if any) of the domestic co-curricular alternative spring break (ASB) experience on participants' later civic behaviors and attitudes?

The interview questions asked students about their ASB experience(s) and what they learned about the community, social issues, themselves, and others. Other questions focused on the participants' current community involvement and community service that the students have been involved in since their graduation three to nine years ago.

### **Conceptual Model**

The focus of this research was to understand the potential role the domestic co-curricular ASB experience may have had on participants' later civic behaviors and attitudes. The conceptual model that guided this research study was Break Away's Active Citizen Continuum (see Figure 1). The Active Citizen Continuum is the developmental model on which participants'

are educated as a part of their ASB experience. The continuum is composed of four distinct phases that explain an individual's role in the community as well as their involvement with social issues. These four phases are (a) member, (b) volunteer, (c) conscientious citizen, and (d) active citizen. An individual who is located in the member phase is not concerned with his/her role in social issues. In the volunteer phase the individual has good intentions but is not well-educated about the social issues. The conscientious citizen phase means the individual is focused on discovering the root causes of the social issues and asks "Why" questions. The final phase of the continuum is active citizen, and this phase is representative of an individual who chooses to make the community a priority in the values and life choices he/she makes in his/her life.

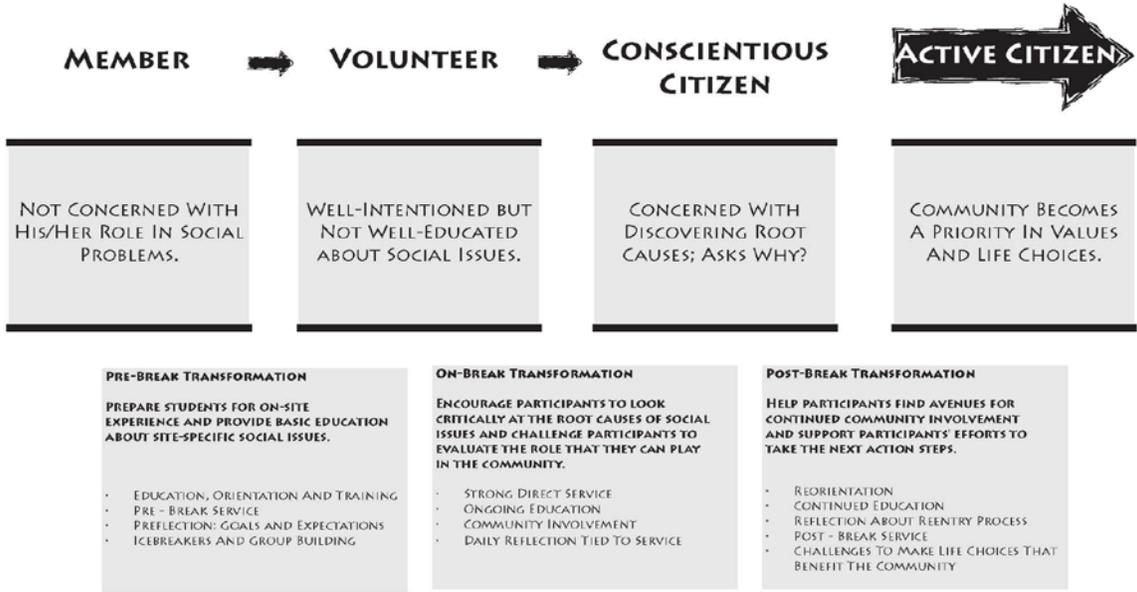
The Active Citizen Continuum frames lifelong active citizenship as a developmental process for participants as they progress from the member phase towards the active citizen phase. This progression through the continuum occurs as participants continue developing their identity and understanding of lifelong active citizenship (Break Away, n.d.). Through the ASB experience, participants also come to better understand their place in society and the community. In this way, the continuum serves as a framework or lens to determine the potential role the ASB experience may play in the participant's development towards the active citizen phase.

### **Statement of Purpose**

Numerous research studies point to the need for additional longitudinal research on college experiences and their impact on students as alumni (Astin et al., 2006; Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Bowman et al., 2010; Johnson, 2004; Powell, 2008; Tomkovick, Lester, Flunker, & Wells, 2008). This is primarily due to the predominance of research focused on the impact of diverse college experiences on students *during* their collegiate

**Break Away** | **20**  
YEARS OF ACTIVE CITIZENS

# THE ACTIVE CITIZEN CONTINUUM



THE ACTIVE CITIZEN CONTINUUM · BREAK AWAY: THE ALTERNATIVE BREAK CONNECTION, INC. · [WWW.ALTERNATIVEBREAKS.ORG](http://WWW.ALTERNATIVEBREAKS.ORG)

Figure 1. Active citizen continuum.

career, rather than *after* their collegiate career (Astin, 1998; Berger 2000; Kuh, 1999; Pascarella, 1984). In addition to a lack of longitudinal research, there is limited qualitative research focusing on the influence of service-learning experiences on alumni. As Bringle and Steinberg (2010) asked, “Are service learning experiences during college related to later behaviors after graduation?” (p. 436). Additionally, Warchal and Ruiz (2004) note the lack of research on service-learning and the long-term outcomes, especially since there has been a movement towards increased measures in the accountability and assessment measures for higher education’s accreditation process.

The overall goal of this qualitative research study was to advance the current body of knowledge regarding service-learning programs such as alternative spring break experiences and the potential role these experiences may play in participants’ later civic behaviors and attitudes. This research study proposed that ASB experiences are a way to get students civically engaged while they are still in college, and this study will try to uncover the potential role (if any) the domestic co-curricular ASB experience has had on these participants’ civic behaviors and attitudes three to nine years later.

Participants for this research study could have participated in multiple ASB trips that were domestic and/or international in nature. However, all of the participants interviewed for this research completed a domestic ASB trip in the spring of 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 or 2011 so that the participant’s would have been removed from one of their ASB experiences between three to nine years. This time span would have given participants some time to make the choice as to whether or not to be involved in his or her community, and it is not too far out into the future for them to recollect their ASB experience(s). Furthermore, this research study intersects with three prior studies that used a six or seven year time frame. The first was

Volgesang and Astin's (2005) work that surveyed students' civic engagement in 1994 (beginning of college), 1998 (at graduation) and 2004, (6 years post-graduation). The second study was Kiely's (2005) which was longitudinal and included participants who participated in a curricular two-week international service-learning experience. The third study was Fenzel and Peyrot's (2005) work that looked at whether participation in service-learning and community service was associated with subsequent service-related attitudes and behaviors three to nine years after graduation. Since this study is the first one to look solely at co-curricular domestic ASB trips one-week in length, one appropriate option seemed to select the six year time frame as a starting place.

This research included diverse institutions that are members of Break Away and Campus Compact, and the institutions received the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement in 2006, 2008 or 2010. The selected institutions have also had an alternative break program in place for 10 or more years, and they have met the full list of criteria discussed further in the methodology section, Chapter 3. The results of this study will help to determine how participation in domestic co-curricular alternative spring break experiences may play a role in participants' civic behaviors and attitudes three to nine years later.

### **Significance of Study**

Many of today's college students desire to participate in service, and many of them expect it to be a part of their collegiate experience (Association, 2012; Hollister et al., 2008; Hurtado, Ruiz, & Whang, 2012; Kiesa et al., 2007). Institutions have supported this student interest by providing centers and offices on campus that champion service-learning and community engagement efforts. The number of institutions with a service-learning office was 75% in 2000 and increased to 92% in 2004 (Farrell, 2005). These numbers were based on a

national survey of Campus Compact's 950 members, of which 44% responded (Farrell, 2005). Since a growing number of students continue to be interested in service work, from 2.7 million (2002) to 3.2 million (2011), it would be beneficial for institutions to track the continuation of civic engagement among alumni in the long-term (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2011). Long-term and longitudinal research helps to illuminate certain patterns and themes regarding the alternative break experiences students chose to be involved in as undergraduates, as well as how the effect of these service experiences has unfolded throughout their tenure as alumni.

The results of this research will support the efforts of many stakeholders in higher education institutions such as senior administrators, educators, and practitioners, especially those individuals who support service-learning programs such as ASB trips. A secondary goal of the research is to provide data for these stakeholders so they can continue developing the most effective practices that will encourage and support alumni to remain active citizens throughout their lives. Furthermore, the data may point to practices that need to be enhanced or changed to increase the efficacy of alternative spring break service-learning programs. Ultimately, this data will advance the civic and service mission of higher education institutions by showcasing and demonstrating how initiatives such as alternative spring break experiences can be a co-curricular experience that continues to shape a student's civic behaviors and attitudes in the long-term. Further benefits of this research also include connecting institutions with their alumni for an extended time period which could result in alumni members who are more willing to share their human and financial capital in support of their alma mater.

## **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of this research has been narrowed to focusing on domestic alternative break experiences held during spring break. When the alternative break movement began, the trips were only held during spring break. However, due to the increasing interest from students, alternative breaks are now being conducted during the fall and winter breaks, summer, and on weekends. Domestic ASB trips were chosen because the research is limited for them compared to international ASB trips (discussed further in Chapter 2). The first delimitation of the study was to interview participants whose institutions were members of Break Away, which is an organization that supports higher education institutions that sponsor alternative break trips. The second delimitation to the study was to narrow the potentially large number of Break Away institutions by focusing on specific characteristics of colleges and universities such as size, type, and geographic location. Further details regarding scope and delimitations are discussed in the methodology section, Chapter 3.

## **Limitations**

This study possessed several possible limitations that could have implications for this study's finding as well as future research conducted on the ASB experience. The limitations of this research study include:

1. The first limitation was getting the participants to respond to the email request asking them to participate in the research study. Some reasons for a low response could be a change in the participant's email address; individuals choosing to ignore emails, and participants do not know me and therefore may not trust me or want to participate in the research study.

2. A second limitation for this research study was the ability of the participants to remember these past ASB experiences along with their ability to reflect on the role these ASB experiences have played in the later life choices and commitments they have made. The participants' memory may have been influenced by other experiences between the ASB experience and their current lives.
3. A third limitation of the study was that participants chose to voluntarily interview with me, therefore the sample may have a higher level of interest and engagement towards the ASB experience. While generalizability is not an issue in qualitative research, I provided a "thick and rich" description of the participants so the reader clearly understands the background of the participants relative to ASB.
4. The fourth limitation was my skill level as a novice researcher and research interviewer could have impacted the quantity and quality of the data.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

The following list of definitions is provided to guide and inform the research. This is essential, especially within the context of research that focuses on service-learning, civic engagement, community service, engaged scholarship, and civic responsibility. Interestingly, after decades of research in the areas of service-learning and civic engagement, no finite definition for either term exists (Eyler & Gyles, 1999; Saltmarsh, 2005). This presents a challenge since the scholarship uses these terms in an interchangeable manner. On one hand, this can be considered a strength of the civic engagement terminology because of its relational ability to various issues such as student leadership, community development, mission reclamation, service learning as a pedagogical strategy, and public perceptions of education (Saltmarsh, 2005). On the other hand, this can be a weakness for the civic engagement terminology since this

lack of clearness can be a challenge when looking at the student learning outcomes which in turn can confound research and assessment. Although some may consider community service and service-learning as the same thing, others do not.

Therefore, these definitions are provided to guide the research.

*Alternative Break* – An alternative break trip is when a group of students (usually 10-12) decide to participate in community service during an official break in the academic calendar (fall, winter, spring). Students spend time together learning about the social issues and then work with a local non-profit organization located domestically or abroad. Each trip is focused on different social issues such as homelessness, education reform, health education, and the environment. These break trips provide an opportunity for students to reflect and think critically about the various problems found in the communities they serve (Break Away, n.d.).

*Alternative Spring Break* – A voluntary service experience where students spend five to seven days participating in service focused on a variety of social issues that incorporate individual and group reflection. The alternative spring break was started in the 1980's by college students as a way to counter the traditional spring breaks which were for travel purposes only (Break Away, n.d.).

*Citizenship* – Citizenship is defined by the active role an individual takes to improve their country and community by participating in public service, advocacy, government, or other activities which can make a difference in the lives of all citizens (Star, 2012).

*Civic Engagement* – Civic engagement involves the process of organizing the skills, knowledge, values and motivation of individuals who are brought together to make an impact in communities. A community's quality of life is promoted through political and non-political processes (Ehrlich, 2000).

*Civic-Minded Graduate* – A person who has completed a course of study (e.g., bachelor's degree), and has the capacity and desire to work with others to achieve the common good (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010, p. 429).

*Civic-mindedness* – A person's inclination or disposition to be knowledgeable of and involved in the community, and to have a commitment to act upon a sense of responsibility as a member of that community. Thus, the concept refers to a person's orientation toward the community and other people in the community (as distinct from an internal or self-orientation, family orientation, or a corporate/profit orientation).

*Civic Responsibility* – This refers to the personal responsibility individuals should feel in order to maintain their commitment as part of a community (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998, p. 15).

*Civically Responsible Individual* – “recognizes himself or herself as a member of a larger social fabric and therefore considers social problems to be at least partly his or her own... and take[s] action when appropriate” (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, Rosner, & Stephens, 2000)

*Co-curricular* – This refers to activities/programming designed to be complementary to the curriculum and are seen as additional opportunities to advance a number of abilities and skills and to provide additional exposure in the student's collegiate experience (Chickering & Reiser, 1993).

*Co-curricular Service-Learning* – Jacoby (1996) believes “service-learning is both curricular and co-curricular, because all learning does not occur in a classroom” (p. 6). An example of this is the alternative spring break which raises students' knowledge and awareness regarding various social issues found in communities (Howard, 2001).

*Community Service* – Individuals or groups, through their actions, actively contribute to a community and its institutions in ways that are beneficial to its social and economic well-being (Campus Compact, 2011).

*Democracy* – A form of government as well as a model of living together (Dewey, 1916/1961). Many scholars believe that education is critical to maintaining a democracy and educating its citizenry (DuBois, 1903/1973; Mitchell, 1953; Woodson 1933/1977).

*Experiential Learning* – A process that allows the learner to create links between theory and action by reflecting on experiences as a way to formulate ideas and generalizations which can be utilized later when the learner faces a new situation (Kolb, 1984).

*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, 1996, p. 5).

*Short-term Immersion Programs* – Learning experiences that have been intentionally designed, are short in duration (usually one month or less), and may include a service-learning component (Jones, Niehaus, Rowan-Kenyon, Skendall, & Ireland, 2012).

*Structured Reflection* - A process that is intentionally designed to challenge and guide students to scrutinize the important issues that relate to the service-learning project, help connect service experience to the course, augment civic skills and values development, and aid students in discovering a personal application of the work conducted (Rama & Battistoni, 2001).

*Social Justice* – “We (the authors) believe that social justice is both a process and a goal. The goal of social justice is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of

resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. We envision a society in which individuals are both self-determining (able to develop their full capacities) and interdependent (capable of interacting democratically with others). Social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others, their society, and the broader world in which we live” (Bell, 2000, p. 21).

### **Research Design**

This qualitative research was conducted to better understand the potential role the domestic co-curricular ASB experience may have had on participants’ later civic behaviors and attitudes. Some of the reasons that research problems utilize qualitative research include: (a) there is a lack of theory or previous research; (b) existing theory may be inaccurate, biased, or inappropriate; (c) there is a need to describe the phenomena or develop theory, or (d) the chosen phenomena is not suited to the use of quantitative measures (Eisner 1991; Hull 1997; Lee, Mitchell, & Sablynski, 1999; Merriam, 2002; Nasser, 2001). The first and third reasons, lack of research and the need for further description and knowledge about the phenomena, were the key reasons why I selected the qualitative research approach for this study.

Merriam (1998) defined qualitative research as “an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (p. 5). Creswell (1998) proposes five major traditions of inquiry which include biography, phenomenological study, grounded theory study, ethnography, and case study. Merriam (1998) has a similar list that does not include biography and includes basic or generic qualitative study instead. Merriam (1998) explains this category by saying, “Many qualitative studies in education do not focus on culture or build a grounded

theory; nor are they intensive case studies of a single unit or bounded system” rather they “simply seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives of worldviews of the people involved” (p. 11).

For this research, I employed the basic qualitative study approach (Merriam, 2002). This type of study employs other qualitative research methods such as grounded theory, case study, ethnography, and action research, but it does not claim to be any of these other methods (Merriam, 1998). The basic qualitative study also retains the central features of qualitative research, which include the use of field work, producing understanding and meaning, an inductive orientation to analysis, and providing findings that are thorough and well defined (Merriam, 1998). An inductive strategy is used by collecting data from interviews, document analysis, or observations. Then data analysis involves finding the common patterns or themes. Lastly, the research culminates in descriptive and informative accounts which reference back to the literature from which the study was framed. The research design is discussed further in the methodology section, Chapter 3.

I worked closely with the Break Away director and staff to identify institutions that had alternative spring break experiences which encompassed a critical service-learning model, high-impact practices, the utilization of Break Away’s Active Citizen Continuum, and the incorporation of reflection before, during, and after the alternative break trip. In addition, I chose to work with alternative spring break programs that were not connected to an academic course. The main purpose for this selection factor was to ensure that the participants *willingly* chose to participate in the service-learning experience and to advance the research on co-curricular service-learning experiences such as ASB trips.

## Summary

Since its inception, higher education has been charged to educate and train the future citizens of America's democracy. Higher education has embraced this imperative, which is evident through the pervasive nature of civic engagement initiatives on numerous campuses across the nation (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Sullivan & Rosin, 2008). These civic engagement activities occur in a variety of formats such as service-learning (in and outside the classroom), community service, volunteer service, internships, and leadership development programs (Bowman, Brandenberger, Lapsley, Hill, & Quaranto, 2010). Alternative break experiences are one example of these civic engagement activities that allow students to tackle the myriad of social issues at home and abroad.

The results of this study will specifically contribute to the limited research regarding the long-term influence of service-learning in the form of alternative spring break trips by utilizing the basic interpretive qualitative research approach. This research will support the increasing number of higher education institutions who want to implement and further expand the service aspect of their mission through service-learning initiatives such as alternative spring break experiences. It will provide a way for educators to discuss the long-term value of the experience to numerous constituents such as students, faculty, senior administrators, governing boards and community organization members. Additionally, the research will also aid higher education stakeholders to make the critical decisions regarding the utilization of service-learning in the form of alternative spring break experiences as an effective practice to encourage participants' commitment to lifelong involvement in their communities. Furthermore, the data will illuminate important themes and practices that should be continued, changed, or enhanced in order to

maximize the outcomes of alternative spring break experiences, especially since the number of students participating in alternative spring break trips has continued to increase in recent years.

### **Organization of the Study**

This research study is composed of five chapters. The first chapter has provided an overview of the research along with an introduction to the study. The second chapter will review the literature that is relevant to civic engagement, service-learning, alternative breaks, and the pertinent research studies on alternative breaks, service-learning, and alumni. Chapter 3 will explain the research design and methodology, which includes descriptions of the participating institutions and alumni participants, the interview protocol, and the data collection and analysis process. The fourth chapter will report the findings from the research. The fifth chapter will elucidate the findings, examine conclusions to be considered, provide recommendations for future practice and research studies, and conclude with an overall summary of the research conducted.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

This chapter reviews the relevant literature for this study which includes civic engagement, service-learning, alternative break and short-term immersion experiences, and alumni civic efforts and benefits. The beginning sections discuss the historical role of civic engagement and service in higher education, and service-learning in higher education. The following sections examine the high-impact practices model, the history of alternative breaks, Break Away, the major organization that supports this movement, and research on alternative breaks. The final sections discuss the alumni research that has been conducted to date regarding persistence in community involvement and service-learning outcomes, and alumni civic efforts and benefits. The summary synthesizes the information shared and discusses how this research will build upon the current body of literature.

### **Historical Role of Service and Civic Engagement in Higher Education**

The contract between higher education and society has continued to infiltrate the literature in the past three decades. An enduring priority for numerous higher education institutions is to create graduates who are able to compete in the job market as well as those who are able to generate ground-breaking research needed for industry (Suspitsyna, 2012). Another priority for many institutions is focusing on their role in preparing students to become engaged citizens in their communities and at the same time helping to maintain the democracy (Suspitsyna, 2012). The support for service-learning and civic engagement is at an all-time high according to John Saltmarsh (2005):

Civic engagement is featured in the strategic agenda of nearly every national higher education association, including the American Council on Education, Association of American Colleges and Universities, the American Association of State Colleges and

Universities, The American Association of Community Colleges, the American Association for Higher Education, Campus Compact, the Council of Independent Colleges, and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, and others and including an increasing number of disciplinary associations. (p. 52)

Since its inception, one of the key purposes for higher education has been to prepare graduates for involvement with their communities or what has now become called *civic engagement* (Lowery et al., 2006). For some of the founding fathers such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, it was imperative that educated men become well-versed and accountable in order to continue the democracy (Lowery et al., 2006). Through the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862, there would be institutions that had an inseparable relationship between public higher education and its community, or the idea of civic engagement which was specifically focused on industry and agriculture (Jacoby & Associates, 2009). Along with the 1862 Morrill Act, the 1887 Hatch Act, and the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 provided a public arrangement which connected the universities and citizens to form societies that were democratically stronger (Fitzgerald, 2012). A shift in focus towards advanced studies occurred in higher education as a result of these societies becoming increasingly progressive and multifaceted (Fitzgerald, 2012). It was not adequate or appropriate anymore to have applied research since it was unable to answer core questions in the sciences such as those that were natural, social, and biological (Fitzgerald, 2012).

The beginning of the twentieth century was marked by 11 presidents who came together to start the American Association of Universities (AAU) which worked on designing regulatory guidelines for the presence of advanced graduate degrees (Fitzgerald, 2012). This led to American universities adopting the German model of advanced studies which caused many

American higher education institutions to set a higher priority on the creation of knowledge rather than resolving the societal problems of the day (Fitzgerald, 2012).

The focus on generating new knowledge brought about a new set of expectations for faculty members who had become recognized as knowledge experts in their discipline after World War II (Fitzgerald, 2012). Faculty members were now being limited beyond their specialization and not having connection with the community. The discipline was now driving faculty and students rather than social and community needs. Research universities had moved the focus of public higher education from resolving societal issues to prizing accomplishment within the various academic disciplines. This caused a societal shift to no longer view higher education as the cherished public good that it once was (Fitzgerald, 2012).

What many may not know regarding the historical role of higher education is that in addition to civic service being a part of the institutional mission, one of the essential roles for faculty during the colonial era was to actually serve because they were considered public servants (Wade & Demb, 2009). However, over time, the faculty role evolved into a formal career trajectory, rather than just a public service role. During the 1850s, many professors served as prominent and influential community leaders which encompassed civic interests (Thelin 2004; Ward, 2003). After the 1850s, the faculty became known as the public intellectuals of the community (Cohen, 1998; Ward, 2003).

During the first half of the twentieth century, faculty still had a commitment to serve their communities (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003). Additionally, faculty became more professionalized as the idea of the research university advanced, and the idea of a faculty member committing to a specific discipline and the creation of a career ladder were born (Colby et al., 2003). These changes resulted in a new academic shift that prized research and the

advancement of knowledge over civic education and moral concerns (Colby et al., 2003). Although, there were many institutions still trying to balance the role of faculty (research, teaching, service) while keeping their commitment to society (Ward, 2003).

In the mid-1950s (after WWII), research received more federal funds which further supported faculty members to increase their research efforts (Chambers, 2005; Cohen, 1998; Thelin, 2004). Additionally, the land grant movement solidified the partnership between higher education and the government which drove institutions to produce research and knowledge for the good of society (Ward, 2003). Ultimately, the heavy push towards a research focus for faculty caused an imbalance between teaching, research, and service which was not the intent of the land grant movement (Bok, 2003; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Ward, 2003). According to Geiger (2011), this change of focus in the university's mission led to a field that has been heavily focused on research. Fast forward to today, and many faculty still operate amidst incompatible expectations, and sometimes with unclear performance guidelines (Ward, 2003). Boyer's (1994) work is frequently cited as one of the most fundamental documents that called on higher education institutions to remember one of their main foci which is to serve the community (Peterson, 2009). Other works by Boyer (1990; 1996) were instrumental because they helped to refocus and legitimize the faculty's work with service and demonstrated how teaching, research and service could be orchestrated in unison for the public good. Boyer's (1990) seminal work *Scholarship Reconsidered* introduced his idea of four types of scholarship which were: the scholarship of *discovery*; the scholarship of *integration*; the scholarship of *applications*; and the scholarship of *teaching*. Boyer (1990) felt it was time for the academy to have a broader and more dynamic understanding of scholarship and the role of a scholar, since the traditional categories of teaching, research, and service tended to be too rigid. In regards to service, this

rigidity was especially true for professors who at promotion and tenure time rarely heard service mentioned. Or for those professors who chose to be involved in the service work, this involvement could potentially jeopardize their career. Hence, Boyer's (1990) work introduced and coined the term "scholarship of engagement" when he stated the following:

Still, our outstanding universities and colleges remain, in my opinion, one of the greatest hopes for intellectual and civic progress in this country. I'm convinced that for this hope to be fulfilled, the academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems, and must reaffirm its historic commitment to what I call the scholarship of engagement. (p. 11)

Bacow, Kassim-Lakha, and Gill (2011) proclaimed in their article *A University's Calling: To Repair the Social Fabric* that higher education institutions are not ivory towers, rather they are social enterprises which embody the commitment of service to the society from where its support is received. One example of this service to society includes Tufts University researchers who helped the town of Somerville, Massachusetts (community near the campus) reduce its childhood obesity rate by joining with the city, public school officials, faculty, students and researchers (Bacow et al., 2011). The Tufts University researchers had found that almost half of the elementary students in grades first through third were overweight or considered at high risk for obesity. The partnership between the community and academy resulted in the creation of Shape Up Somerville which now serves as a model for others across the nation to help curb childhood obesity (Bacow et al., 2011). This is just one of numerous examples that demonstrate how higher education is preparing students for more than job readiness. Moreover, higher education must create students who will become citizens that can apply their gained knowledge and skills to resolve the problems and needs of their communities (Bacow et al., 2011).

## **Civic Engagement and Institutionalization**

Higher education has continued to experience eminent pressures to collaborate with their communities in order to impact the local, urban and regional areas (Boyer, 1990; Campus Compact, 2012). Universities have had to respond to these pressures by being more inclusive regarding what can be considered as valid forms of service for faculty member's community interests and work in order for their efforts to be counted, valued, and rewarded accordingly (Martin, 2009). Engagement can be considered civic which allows it to be at the center of an institution's decision making focus; therefore it must impact the institution's mission as far as how engagement will be pursued, and how future responsibilities will be assigned (Martin, 2009). This new form of administrative labor as Martin (2009) addressed has now provided a "fertile if not unexpected foundation for contemporary academic activism" that has typically been outside the realm of consideration for faculty (p. 842).

One way to visualize civic engagement is to let it serve as the larger overarching umbrella which embraces service-learning, engaged scholarship, community-based research, and social entrepreneurship (Furco & Miller, 2009). Through a campus' civic engagement efforts, democratic partnerships are pursued to appropriately meet the needs of the community and to ensure the campus will benefit as well. These partnerships can be created with various groups such as nonprofit organizations, schools, and government agencies to address specific social issues found at local, regional, and international levels. One of the main goals of an engaged institution is to ensure that a culture is created and maintained that infuses the practice of community-engaged research, service, and teaching as a part of the core mission (Furco & Miller, 2009).

Students who are involved in this type of engagement work are garnering valuable experiences that meet the needs of the community and campus. The significance of these democratic partnerships is thoroughly acknowledged by a number of researchers (Jacoby & Mutascio, 2010; Long, 2002; Zlotowski, Longo, & Williams, 2006). University-community partnerships allow students to be involved in a process where they can learn what it means to be agents of change in a community rather than operating in the typical hierarchal ladder. In this way, the campus is able to model what it means to be involved with a non-hierarchal relationship which is essential for a democratic society. This research study views the ASB experience as a form of service-learning that falls under the larger overarching umbrella of civic engagement as mentioned above.

The long-term sustainability of service-learning and its success is enhanced if it can be institutionalized as a part of the institution's mission and vision (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). Through Holland's (1997) work, four recognized levels of commitment were proposed regarding an institution's commitment to service. These four levels are low relevance, medium relevance, high relevance, and full integration. At the low relevance level, service-learning is not integral to the institution, and if it is mentioned in the mission, it is loosely defined, whereas at the full integration level, service-learning plays an integral and defining role of the mission (Holland, 1997). At the full integration level, the institution and community are partners with a relationship that is interdependent and mutually beneficial. The full integration level is characterized by the community taking a lead role in the university-community relationship rather than the institution being seen as the only expert (Holland, 1997).

The institutions that were selected for this research operate at the full integration level. This is confirmed by their receipt of the Community Engagement Classification by the Carnegie

Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (CFAT), and their membership in Campus Compact which are discussed next.

### **Carnegie's Community Engagement Elective Classification**

In 2006, the CFAT began an elective classification called Community Engagement for institutions who wanted to be recognized for their community engagement efforts that exhibited reciprocal relationships between their schools and the greater community (local, regional, national, international) where resources and knowledge were being exchanged (Carnegie, 2013). The classification occurs on a five-year cycle through an application process. The next cycle will occur in 2015. The classification is based on documentation that is evidenced-based and falls into the two main categories of Foundation Indicators, and Categories of Community Engagement. The Foundation Indicators is comprised of Institutional Identity, and Culture, and Institutional Commitment. The Categories of Community Engagement is comprised of Curriculum Engagement, and Outreach and Partnerships (Carnegie, 2013). The CFAT defines community engagement as:

The collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good (Carnegie, 2013).

The five institutions included in this research have received the Community Engagement Elective Classification in 2006, 2008 or 2010 which encompasses Curriculum Engagement and Outreach and Partnerships.

### **Campus Compact**

The number of organizations supporting service-learning and civic engagement has expanded over the years. The organization of particular importance to this research is Campus Compact because currently, it is the only national association in higher education which focuses specifically on campus-based civic engagement (Who, n.d.). In this capacity, “Campus Compact promotes public and community service that develops students’ citizenship skills, helps campuses forge effective community partnerships, and provides resources and training for faculty seeking to integrate civic and community-based learning into the curriculum” (Who, n.d.). By the end of November 2012, Campus Compact was comprised of 1,200 university and college presidents representing 6 million students that are committed to fulfilling higher education’s civic mission.

The membership process for Campus Compact was uniquely and purposefully designed to guarantee the institution’s president, the most senior leader, was fully committed to the institution’s membership and would be willing to gain buy-in across all areas of the campus (Who, n.d.). The institution’s president must sign a letter for that institution to join and a state compact must be in existence as well (personal communication). Campus Compact was started by three college presidents in 1985 who were convinced that if the appropriate support and resources existed it would increase the number of students involved with service (Who, n.d.). The founding presidents’ conviction seems to have been proven true regarding students’ willingness to serve based on results from Campus Compact’s 2012 annual survey (Campus

Compact, 2012). Of the 557 institutions that responded to the survey, 44% percent of these institution's students contributed 9.7 billion dollars in service to their communities (Campus Compact, 2012). In 2012, Campus Compact reported it recently began following alumni information. Examples of institutional support for alumni engagement and their percentages were compared between the years 2010 and 2012 and were as follows: (a) invites alumni to serve as speakers or mentors for current students (62%,79%), (b) recognizes alumni for service in publications (52%,65%), (c) communicates service opportunities to alumni (46%,61%), (d) cultivates alumni donors to support service activities (40%,49%), (e) gives awards to alumni for service (33%,42%), and (f) coordinates service days or weekends for alumni (30%,40%). Campus Compact acknowledges that involving alumni in these multiple ways can be beneficial to students, institutions, and communities. The 2011 survey included statistics for different forms of engagement. Of particular interest to this research was the increase in percentage of member campuses offering alternative spring breaks which was 73% in 2011 compared to 67% in 2009 (Campus Compact, 2011). Additionally, the rates of member institutions that have civic engagement as a part of their institutional mission was (91%) and for those that have civic engagement as a part of the strategic plan it was (90%) (Campus Compact, 2011).

### **Student Participation Rates and Student/Faculty Perspectives regarding Service**

According to the Volunteering in America website, college students volunteered at an average rate of 26.7% per year from 2008-2010 (Volunteering, 2010). Volunteerism in America experienced a large increase after the attacks on September 11, 2001 because citizens wanted to support their country, and college students accounted for the demographic group which grew the most (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2005). Between 2002 and 2005, the group of college student volunteers expanded by almost 20% (600,000 students) which resulted

in the numbers climbing from 2.7 million (2002) to 3.2 million (2005). For 2011, the number of college student volunteers rose to 3.3 million (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2011). The overall rate of college student volunteers has grown from 27.1% to 30.2% since September 2001. College students are similar to the national trend for gender which reports females (33%) volunteer more than males (26.8%). The data from the Corporation for National and Community Service supports the rising number of college students participating in service work as a part of their collegiate experience.

Each year the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) administers its annual College Freshman and Senior Survey as a part of the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA. The College Senior Survey asks students about plans after graduation, student debt, work, graduate school, anticipated career paths, and factors they considered when selecting a career. There were 20,747 graduating seniors who took the survey in 2012, and they represented 98 colleges and universities. One area of particular interest to this research study was social agency (HERI Research Brief, 2013). Social agency determines how much students value the personal goal of being involved socially and politically. This includes actions such as becoming a community leader, involvement with a community action program, staying current with political affairs, helping others in difficulty, influencing social values, and encouraging racial understanding. Overall, seniors increased their social and political commitments during their college years by 10 percentage points (from 31% as freshmen to 41% as exiting seniors). Additionally, there were 23% of the seniors who reported they planned to participate in volunteer activities after graduation (these students had service work as part of a class). A figure that more than doubled was asking students whether or not they thought helping others in difficulty was “not important” or only “somewhat important.” As freshmen, there were 27% who responded

that there would be some importance to this, but as seniors, there was 61% (almost two-thirds) who reported that helping others in difficulty was “very important” or “essential.”

The American College Teacher Faculty Survey is also administered by HERI on a triennial basis with the most recent survey being conducted in 2010-2011. This section includes results from the 2007-2008 survey since it specifically focused on civic engagement and diversity. Beginning with the 2007-2008 survey, the results indicated that faculty members believe institutions as well as students should be involved with addressing community issues. Of particular interest to this research study were two areas that increased the most: (a) instill in students a commitment to community service, and (b) enhance students’ knowledge of and appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups (see Table 1) (HERI Research Brief, 2009).

Instilling a commitment to community service area grew from 36.4% (2004-05) to 55.5% (2007-08) which was a 19.1% increase in percentage points, and the knowledge and appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups grew from 57.6% (2004-05) to 75.2% (2007-08) which was a 17.6% increase in percentage points (HERI Research Brief, 2009). Although in the 2010-2011 survey, instilling a commitment to community service fell 11 percentage points from 55.5% (2007-08) to 44.5% (2010-2011) (HERI Research Brief, 2012). Also, the knowledge and appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups fell slightly from 75.2% (2007-08) to 70.1% (2010-2011) (HERI Research Brief 2009; HERI Research Brief, 2012).

Both the 2007-2008 and 2010-2011 survey results indicated faculty members agree that an essential part of higher education’s mission is for their institution to be connected to their surrounding community. Faculty either “strongly” or “somewhat” agreed by 87.9% (2007-2008) and 87.0% (2010-2011) that higher education institutions should be responsible in working with their communities to address local issues (HERI Research Brief 2009; HERI Research Brief,

Table 1

*HERI Research Briefs for Faculty Members in 2004-05, 2007-08 and 2010-11*


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Name of Area	2004-2005%	2007-2008%	2010-2011%
Instilling commitment to community service	36.4%	55.5%	44.5%
Knowledge/appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups	57.6%	75.2%	70.1%
Institution should be connected to surrounding community		87.9%	87.0%
Institutions should encourage students to be involved with the community		87.9%	87.0%
Institutions should be involved in solving social problems		71%	74.7%
Help students develop personal values			64.1%
Enhance student's self-understanding			71%
Encourage students to become agents of social change			52.1%

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2012). Faculty either “strongly” or “somewhat” agreed by 87.9% (2007-2008) and 87.0% (2010-2011) that institutions should encourage students to participate in community service (HERI Research Brief, 2009). Furthermore, faculty either “strongly” or “somewhat” agreed by 71.0% (2007-2008) and 74.7% (2010-2011) that institutions should be involved in solving social problems. Notably, solving social problems was the only item that increased between the 2007-2008 and 2010-2011 survey which is relevant to the current study. The other areas that faculty agreed to be as “essential” or “very important” goals for undergraduate education were helping students develop personal values (64.1% for 2010-2011), enhancing students’ self-understanding (71% for 2010-2011), and encouraging students to become agents of social change (52.1% for 2010-2011). The change in these percentages between 2007-2008 and 2010-2011 were minimal. Although over half of the faculty members agree that students should be encouraged to become agents of social change, only 34.5% of faculty indicated that it is an issue of high importance at their university.

These surveys indicate that students desire to be involved with service, and the faculty members agreed institutions should be involved with work and service in their communities. This expressed interest by students to participate in community service during and after their collegiate years is important for higher education institutions to consider; especially since alumni will become the future active citizens of their communities. The numbers from these surveys also support the fact that faculty members have been and can be a valuable source of support for service-learning initiatives such as alternative spring break experiences. Based on the prior information discussed, how does this interest in continuing service as a student translate into the alumni’s behavior after graduation? In order to understand the answer to this question and others,

it is beneficial to recognize how service-learning has been an integral part of the higher education landscape.

### **Service-Learning in Higher Education**

According to Jacoby (1996), service-learning is both a pedagogical form and a program type. Through service-learning, participants are exposed to the “historical, sociological, cultural, and political contexts of the needs or issues being addressed” (Kendall, 1990, p.20).

Furthermore, service-learning can be considered co-curricular or curricular (Jacoby, 1996). Not all practitioners believe that service-learning can be considered both; however this research study supports Jacoby’s (1996) definition that co-curricular experiences such as ASB experiences can be considered service-learning if conducted appropriately with reflection and reciprocity.

Service-learning can play a valuable role as one method towards civic education goals, however it is important to also recognize that “citizenship cannot be reduced to service” (Dionne, Drogosz, & Litan, 2003, p. 25). Some believe the term “civic responsibility” represents service-learning that has students’ civic education as a clear objective for the method (Angelique et. al., 2002; Furco, 1996). Consequently, service learning can be considered as “serving to learn,” as well as “learning to serve” while working in communities through diverse methods such as service, working with nonprofit or grassroots organizations, and political activities (Furco, 1996).

Some actions that have helped to increase and support service-learning efforts at higher education institutions include the National and Community Service Act of 1990, the 1993 National Community Service Act that was supported by \$40 million in annual federal funding (Gujarathi & McQuade, 2002), followed by the American Association of Higher Education’s 1995 Annual Conference which was solely focused on the concept of the “engaged campus”

(Holland, 1997). The most recent action was taken by President Obama in 2009 when he signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. The act has been the greatest expansion of national service in a generation whose purpose is to support and address some of the nation's most pressing challenges (Who, 2012).

### **Service-Learning: The Positive and Adverse Impact**

Service-learning programs have been proclaimed through the research for their transformational quality which results in students who exhibit more robust communication and leadership skills; who display more open-mindedness, cultural awareness, and altruism; receive higher GPA's (although at a minimal level), and who possess greater critical thinking skills than non-service-learning students (Astin & Sax, 1998; Densmore, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Kezar, 2002, Markus, Howard, & King, 1993). Proponents of critical service-learning realize the possibilities these experiences can provide in transforming students who will become leaders and activists in their communities as well as the society (Marullo, 1999; Mitchell, 2008).

There are a number of learning and development gains attributed to service-learning in general. Some of these include improved problem solving and critical thinking skills (Eyler & Giles, 1999), advancement in academics (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Sax & Astin, 1997), gains in understanding and tolerating diversity (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones & Hill, 2001; Sax & Astin, 1997), collaborating with others which includes conflict resolution and conflict skills (Sax & Astin, 1997), further awareness of the social issues connected to the service-learning experience (Jones & Abes, 2004), and the ability to better identify and personalize with the individuals the students are interacting with as a part of the immersion experience (Rhoades & Neururer, 1998).

The research by Astin and Sax (1998) was historical and seminal because it began to fill a void in the literature for longitudinal, multi-institutional data regarding how students are affected

by service involvement. Astin and Sax (1998) evaluated the Corporation for National Service's Learn and Serve America Higher Education program as a part of the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The study's survey results were centered on freshman and follow-up data from 3,450 students representing 42 institutions. Of these 3,450 students, there were 2,309 that were service participants and 1,141 were nonparticipants (Astin & Sax, 1998). Overall, the study found that the area with the strongest influence of service was civic responsibility. The results demonstrated that there was a lasting impact of community service participation on alumni five years after their graduation. The researchers considered the most extraordinary longitudinal finding from the study "was that all 35 student outcome measures were favorably improved by service participation" (Astin & Sax, 1998, p.255). Specifically, students who chose to participate in volunteer service enriched their life skills, academic development, and civic responsibility. In regards to civic responsibility, Astin and Sax (1998) found that due to their participation in service, students will gain a stronger commitment to helping others, conducting volunteer work, being of service to their communities, promote racial understanding, working at a nonprofit organization, and have a tendency to believe individuals can make a difference in social issues.

Soon after Astin and Sax's (1998) research, Astin, Sax, and Avalos (1999) conducted further longitudinal research focused on service and its lasting impact on students after graduation. This research also utilized data from the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA which resulted in a final sample of 12,376 students/alumni from 209 institutions. These institutions had data from three points in time that the survey was administered which were 1985 (entry as freshmen), 1989 (four year follow-up survey), and 1994-1995 (nine year follow-up survey) respectively (Astin, Sax & Avalos, 1999). Some of the study's long-term effects point to

the fact that the research supports the underlying logic of many service-learning and service programs which is the idea that through service students become more socially responsible, more involved in their communities, more empowered and have a higher commitment to education. One statistical result from the research indicated that those students who participated in six or more hours of community service doubled their chances of continuing being involved in service as an alumni member, as well as doubling their chances of being an alumni member that is involved in service for at least one, three or six plus hours a week (Astin, Sax & Avalos, 1999). This research reinforces that short-term service in the community during a student's collegiate career does persist as an alumni.

A quantitative, longitudinal study was conducted by Vogelgesang and Astin (2000) and compared the effects of academic service-learning and co-curricular community service. The data was collected via surveys (upon entry to college and four years later) administered by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) through the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). The sample was comprised of 22,236 students that represented 177 institutions various types. The researchers looked at 11 outcome variables which encompassed cognitive (GPA, writing skills, and critical thinking skills), behavior (interpersonal skills, leadership ability, and leadership activities), and values and beliefs (commitment to promoting racial understanding, commitment to activism, and a student's level of agreement) as to whether or not an individual could help make changes in the society (Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). Pertinent to the current research is the finding that all 11 outcomes are positively influenced by academic service-learning and co-curricular community service. Also important to this study is the finding that co-curricular community service had an enhanced positive impact on self-efficacy and leadership outcomes compared to academic service-learning. Conversely, academic service-

learning courses had a more significant impact on writing and critical thinking skills, promotion of racial understanding, and commitment to activism compared to co-curricular community service (Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000).

Jones and Abes' (2004) research is an expansion of the work conducted by Jones and Hill (2001) in the "Crossing High Street" study. The researchers employed in-depth semi-structured interviews to assess the lasting effect service-learning has on a student's identity development and how service-learning can encourage a student's self-authorship (Jones & Abes, 2004).

Additionally, the researchers referenced Baxter Magolda's work (1999) which advocates how the promotion of students' development toward self-authorship is dependent upon the integration of cognitive complexity, interpersonal maturity, and intrapersonal (identity) development. In this study, the same service-learning course (10-week leadership theory class) was utilized to determine the long term impact of the course two to four years after the students participated in the course. The community service component of the class was comprised of students spending three hours a week at an AIDS service organization or a neighborhood food pantry. Students met 2.5 hours in class each week as well and half of class time was spent in reflection activities led by graduate teaching assistants. The reflection time was purposefully designed to aid students in incorporating the class knowledge into their community service work as well as issues they may have experienced such as privilege, social change leadership, and communities of difference. Reflection also took place via weekly journal entries with feedback given by the graduate teaching assistants and a group presentation was conducted to showcase the community service organization and the students experience with it.

The results from this study were similar to the "Crossing High Street" study by Jones and Hill (2001) in that participant's defined how instrumental that relationship building was to

developing their sense of self (Jones & Abes, 2004). An additional similarity was the fact that these relationships were fostered by an increasing sense of efficacy and the expansion of empathy and compassion (Jones & Hill, 2001). In addition to the understanding of self, the results of this study point to the influence service-learning can have on a student's self-authorship. This was primarily due to participant's participating in continuing reflection that allowed them to reframe and transform their thoughts regarding themselves, others and the community organization with whom they worked. There were three themes that transpired through the student interviews: relations between self and other (intrapersonal); changes in the types of commitments such as one's career and other goals (interpersonal); and enlarged open-mindedness towards new experiences, ideas, and people (cognitive) (Jones & Abes, 2004). The results of this research point to the enduring outcomes that service-learning can have beyond the actual experience which in this case was a class. This enduring impact includes facilitating a cohesive identity for participant's which in turn can generate an assured commitment by participant's to work and service that is socially responsible (Jones & Abes, 2004).

Numerous companies and organizations have become more involved with their communities over the past two decades (Young et al., 2007) as well. Employers have found that providing these volunteer programs have aided them in attracting and keeping valuable employees along with increasing employee's teamwork skills, morale, and profitably for the organization (McCarthy & Tucker, 1999). Additionally, involvement with their communities enhances the public image of the organization. Participants who have participated in service-learning programs are able to showcase this experience to employers as they move into the job market. Participants can share about the service conducted, and other students will be able to share how they designed and implemented the service-learning experience. In regards to the

community agency, they benefit from the additional number of students who can reach more people than what would normally occur. Many times participants can also be a respectable role model for the organization's intended audience (Gray, Ondaatje, & Zakaras, 1999).

More recent research continues to point to the benefits from service-learning and community service participation. Warchal and Ruiz (2004) conducted research which included surveying 124 alumni from a small private institution (with a strong service orientation) that graduated between 1961 and 2002. The researchers found that students who participated in community service or service-learning had a greater chance of selecting a career related to the student's area of service and frequently received offers of employment from the service site because of the service experience. Some of the other findings included that alumni do increase their community service each year as their time from graduation increases, and the alumni who will be more likely to hold a civic leadership role in their community are those that engaged in more postgraduate community service hours. It is important to note that over half, 54.7%, of these students service experiences were not required (Warchal & Ruiz, 2004).

Harper and Quaye (2009) conducted research on student engagement benefits which included academic performance, persistence, cognitive development, psychosocial development, ethical and moral development, college adjustment, practical competence, skills transferability, and acquisition of social capital. In her research and reflections on engaged scholarship, Peterson (2009) concurs with Giles, Honnet, and Migliore (1991) on the most common goals for service-learning programs. These include citizenship skills, assurance that students can and should make a difference in their communities, and developing the awareness of social problems and social justice, and community-related values. Eyler, Giles and Braxton's (1997) research used these goals to assist their work in understanding how service-learning impacted students. Their

research found that service-learning did influence students in all of the goals, although the impact on communication and critical thinking skills was not significant (part of citizenship goal). However, the general consensus of their work concluded “when students are directly involved with people experiencing the social problems they are usually studying or agencies working with these problems, they change the way they think about these issues” (Eyler et al., p. 13).

Chesbrough (2011) conducted mixed methods research that focused on the motivations, choices and learning outcomes regarding service involvement by students. The results of Chesbrough’s (2011) research indicated there are differences among the stories students share about their service experiences and the learning outcomes they experienced as a result of their gender, year in college and the amount of service hours completed. Utilizing shorter, one-time projects are helpful, especially for students who have not previously served, even though others in the service world may not agree (Chesbrough, 2011). The point is to attract students who may not have otherwise been interested in service and to support the idea that all students on a campus are invited to serve (Chesbrough, 2011). In particular, Chesbrough (2011) addresses the importance of increasing participation by male students. Practitioners need to be aware of how the service experience is marketed to ensure it is inviting to all students and not supporting the stereotype based in fact that women serve more than men (Chesbrough, 2011).

The work conducted by Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek (2007) resulted in a list of high-impact practices that educators can incorporate when creating an engagement framework. These practices are characterized as activities that are intentional, require intense periods of time invested by the student, and include active learning and involvement, and extraordinarily worthwhile determination (Henning, 2012). Some examples of these high-impact

practices are service-learning, internships, study abroad, first-year seminars, diversity experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, and senior capstone experiences (Henning, 2012). These high impact practices must have a high level of institutional collaboration, and they can occur inside or outside the classroom. In addition, Henning (2012) lists the nine features that a high-impact experience focused on learning would entail which are:

- Students devote considerable time and effort to purposeful tasks.
- Students interact with faculty, staff, and peers for extended periods of time.
- Students are required to make daily decisions that deepen their investment in the activity and their commitment to an academic program or college.
- Students experience diversity through contact with people different from themselves.
- Students have increased involvement in class and campus activities.
- Students have opportunities for directed reflection.
- Students receive substantive feedback on performance.
- Students have assistance synthesizing what they are learning in one context and applying it to others (integrated learning).
- Students clarify values and better understand themselves. (p. 16)

Break Away's alternative spring break trips can be described as encompassing these high-impact practices. The alternative spring break is a co-curricular form of service-learning that is supported by the institution. Students exert large amounts of time and effort before, during, and after the trip in various activities such as meetings with each other to plan the trip, to gain skills for the actual service that will be conducted in the community (such as tutoring and construction), and to complete other necessary logistics for a successful trip. Throughout these

meetings, various organizational activities, and the actual service conducted, students are collaboratively interacting with each other, staff and/or faculty members, the service organization's staff members, and the population for whom and with the service is being conducted. The members in these various constituent groups are diverse, and through this process students are learning more about themselves and others, and simultaneously clarifying their values. The primary method for this learning to take place is via reflection which is conducted individually and collectively before, during and after the alternative spring break experience. Students also share feedback with each other and receive feedback from staff, faculty, the service organization, and its members.

Although many tout the numerous benefits of service-learning, there are many others who criticize it because they see it as a form of charity or the service may be required which can reinforce social hierarchies, reasserting hegemonic dominance by race, class, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation and other lines (Boyle-Baise, 1998; Cooks, Scharrer, & Paredes, 2004; Cruz, 1990; Forbes, Garber, Kensinger, & Slagter, 1999; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Levinson, 1990; McBride, Brav, Menon, & Sherraden, 2006; Pompa, 2002; Sleeter, 2000). In order to move service-learning beyond impacting students' good feelings, it is essential for service-learning programs to be thoughtful and conscientious in the program design. Students must be included in the initiatives and activities that address the core reasons of social problems, otherwise the students' involvement with the community may perpetuate the inequality and the "us-them" dynamic that is trying to be dismantled (Mitchell, 2008).

Rhoads' work (1998) provides some crucial questions to enhance the utilization of a service-learning method: "Why do we have significant economic gaps between different racial groups? Why do women continue to face economic and social inequities? Why does the richest

country on earth have such a serious problem with homelessness?" (p. 45). Asking these questions allows students to examine the population served along with the policies and structures of the institution to remove these long standing systems of oppression and dependence (Levinson, 1990; O'Grady, 2000; Walker, 2000).

Peterson (2009) asserts that service-learning has its limits and must be used with caution. There is no one magical method or formula for success in ending all social injustices. However, she acknowledges the need for 'exploring how community-based education programs can move short-term, transactional service-oriented internships to transformative, social justice efforts with long-term advocacy goals' (Peterson, 2009, p. 548). As more students are becoming more involved with service-learning experiences in their communities, there will be an increased awareness level that will change the landscapes of universities and politics (Peterson, 2009). This means it will be no longer necessary to have a divisional line between higher education and the community; instead the two groups can come together as equal entities in the community engagement partnership where everyone is seen as knowledge holders, teachers and mentors (Peterson, 2009). Dialogue must occur in the classroom and community as to why the current systems of inequality exist and why assistance from outsiders is needed to provide services for the community (Peterson, 2009). In addition, use of reflection through dialogue or writing strengthens the student's conviction to make a difference in the community and to enrich prosocial thinking at the same time (Peterson, 2009).

### **Critical versus Traditional Service-Learning**

Mitchell (2008) conducted a service-learning literature review that she said seemed to separate service-learning into two different models which were traditional and critical. The traditional model of service-learning has a focus on service but will not address the systems of

inequality, whereas critical service-learning is focused on undoing the structures that support injustice (Mitchell, 2008). The key goal of critical service-learning “is to deconstruct systems of power so the need for service and the inequalities that create and sustain them are dismantled” (Mitchell, 2008, p. 50). According to Rosenberger (2000), an essential component of critical service-learning “demands that we become critically conscious of the issues of power and privilege in service-learning relationships” (p. 34).

In critical service-learning experiences, students are asked to see themselves as social change agents who can utilize their service-learning experience to act in response to the social injustices found in communities (Mitchell, 2008). Critical service-learning encourages students to create an image of what a more just society would look like and examines the steps needed to thrust society towards this image (Mitchell, 2008). At the same time, critical service-learning also helps students realize the positive and challenging aspects of service; on one hand it can make a positive difference and on the other hand it can perpetuate systems of inequality (Mitchell, 2008).

Based on these descriptions, I would characterize Break Away as utilizing critical service-learning in its educational model rather than traditional service-learning. As a part of the Break Away training, students are taught about power, privilege, and social justice. Students are encouraged to explore the root causes of these social issues which is embedded through the entire ASB trip experience and to remain involved (after the break trip) with their communities through service as active citizens and social change agents. As O’Grady (2000) stated, “Responding to individual human needs is important, but if the social policies that create these needs is not understood and addressed, then the cycle of dependence remains” (p. 13).

## **Alternative Breaks and Short-Term Immersion Experiences**

Alternative breaks continue to be an increasingly popular service-learning format which is typically a week-long immersion trip that focuses on various social issues (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004; Break Away, n.d.; Ivory, 1997; Jones et al., 2012). Alternative breaks can be held during the fall, spring, winter, or any other break period during the school year. The beginning alternative break trips appeared in the early 1980s. The trips were designed to include participating in voluntary service rather than traveling to a vacation destination during spring break (Break Away, n.d.). The alternative spring break trips are usually a week-long of service focused on various social issues, led by students, and comprised of 10-12 students. The institution and students partner with a non-profit organization that is located in the community where the students will travel to conduct their service (Break Away, n.d.).

Characteristics of these alternative spring break trips include focusing on particular social issues such as homelessness, poverty, literacy, and the environment, being submerged in the service work, and utilizing reflection exercises individually and collectively (Break Away, n.d.). As the alternative break movement progressed through the late 1980s and early 1990s, the trips became known as student led initiatives that were fully supported by their campuses who wanted the institutionalization of community service to occur (Break Away, n.d.). Each alternative spring break trip is led by a student site leader that has participated in some form of training such as the Alternative Break Citizenship Schools (ABCs) sponsored by Break Away. The ABCs are one week long and are held during the summer at various locations across the nation (Break Away, n.d.). The ABCs are experiential training sessions that help student and staff leaders gain the appropriate knowledge, resources, and skills needed to either start or advance their alternative break program (Break Away, n.d.). Participants actually engage in a direct service

experience which allows the ABCs to role model how students would conduct a successful alternative spring break trip at their institution (Break Away, n.d.). The ABCs also provide an opportunity for participants to interact with trained Break Away staff members, other students and staff, and contacts within the community where the training is held (Break Away, n.d.).

Alternative spring break trips are designed differently than mission trips, voluntourism and volunteer vacations in a number of ways (Break Away, n.d.). One of the key distinctions of ASB trips are the exceptional leadership development opportunity provided to the students since they create and lead the trips. Most ASB trip participants will begin working together in teams six months prior to the trip in order to become educated on the social issue and the organization that will be the focus of their trip (Break Away, n.d.). Some student groups may need to learn and practice various skills ahead of time (construction, tutoring) and will choose to participate in similar service in their own community before the trip (Break Away, n.d.). The ASB trips are dedicated to working together as a team and participating in team building activities prior to the trip, whereas other forms of service can happen without participants knowing each other ahead of time (Break Away, n.d.).

Another instrumental distinction of an ASB trip is the reflection component that can occur individually and as a group. Most often the group reflections will occur in the evening once the service for the day has been completed. The primary focus of the reflection is to connect the service work being conducted back to the social issue(s) the ASB trip is addressing (Break Away, n.d.). The individual reflection usually includes writing in a personal journal, and some groups will utilize a group journal as well. Group reflections may include sharing the highlights and challenges of each day out loud or in a written format, and conducting further discussions

focused on the social issue(s) being addressed at the service site. The ASB trips are also alcohol and drug free.

### **Break Away**

Break Away is a nonprofit organization that supports universities, colleges and universities who organize ASB trips. Fittingly, two Vanderbilt University students founded the organization in 1991 (Break Away, n.d.). In 2000, Break Away estimated 30,000 students participated in alternative break programs, and in 2010, it had more than doubled to 72,000 students, and these trips were primarily conducted during spring break (Break Away, n.d.). A more recent trend is for the alternative break trips to occur during fall, winter, and summer academic breaks as well as weekends. Break Away understands and knows alternative breaks can be a “powerful catalyst for a transformed world view and developing an identity and understanding of lifelong active citizenship” (Break Away, n.d.). Therefore, for Break Away, the alternative breaks are about accomplishing the necessary work done around social issues and shifting the volunteer's perspective of their place in society and the community.

The increasing number of students involved with alternative break trips and the addition of break trips throughout the year serve as strong indicators of undergraduate college students’ interest in service participation. According to Samantha Giacobozzi, Break Away Programs Director, one-fourth of American colleges and universities are affiliated with Break Away (personal communication). Based on her participation in alternative break trips as a student, Ms. Giacobozzi said, “The alternative breaks are just enough time in length to get students disoriented so they can self-evaluate, think differently and think about what they are doing” (personal communication). She supports the idea and the research that has indicated ASB trips can be impactful in a life changing way for students. The number of alternative breaks varies

from campus to campus. The institutional member that has the largest alternative break program is the University of Michigan with 84 trips, and other programs fall in the range from 22 to 54 trips (Break Away, 2012). Another important attribute of the Break Away model is that their alternative break trips incorporate the following eight components: (a) strong direct service, (b) orientation, (c) education, (d) training, (e) reflection, (f) reorientation, (g) diversity, and (h) alcohol and drug free.

Alternative break trips in general have been categorized as a short-term immersion experience (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Kehl & Morris, 2007; Keith, 2005; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; Milofsky & Flack, 2005; Parker & Dautoff, 2007; Rhoads & Neurerer, 1998). Although a finite definition of a short-term immersion does not exist because the literature is limited, Jones, Niehaus, Rowan-Kenyon, Skendall and Ireland (2012) describe short-term immersion experiences as being shorter than one-month, and planned with an intentional learning experience which may also involve a service-learning component.

The work of Jones et al. (2012) focused on the impact of short-term immersion programs through a multi-site case study which examined week-long immersion programs. The authors state their research one of the first studies to explore the impact of short-term immersion programs within the past 10 years (Jones et al., 2012). Since there has been a limited amount of research conducted on short-term immersion experiences, it has been challenging to find a clear definition (Jones et al., 2012). Based on their review of the literature, Jones et al. (2012) propose that short-term immersion experiences include being designed as intentional learning experiences, lasting less than a month-long, and possibly incorporating a service-learning element (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Kehl & Morris, 2007; Keith, 2005; Lewis & Niesenbaum,

2005; Milofsky & Flack, 2005; Parker & Dautoff, 2007; Rhoads & Neurerer, 1998). This study focused on alternative spring breaks as being a short-term immersion program.

### **Active Citizen Continuum**

The Active Citizen Continuum (see Figure 1) is the developmental model Break Away utilizes for its alternative break programs which works in unison with the incorporation of the Eight Quality Components for all alternative break programs. Break Away understands and knows alternative break experiences can be a “powerful catalyst for a transformed world view and developing an identity and understanding of lifelong active citizenship” (Break Away, n.d.). Thus, for Break Away, alternative breaks are about two things: getting needed work done around social issues, and changing the volunteer's perspective of their place in society.

There are four distinct phases in the Active Citizen Continuum regarding an individual's role as a member of a community and being involved with social issues. The four phases are (a) member, (b) volunteer, (c) conscientious citizen, and (d) active citizen. In the member phase, the individual is not concerned with his/her role in social issues. As a volunteer, the individual has good intentions but is not well-educated about the social issues. As a conscientious citizen, the individual is focused on discovering the root causes of the social issues and asking “Why” questions. The last phase of the continuum is the active citizen who chooses to make the community a priority in the values and life choices they make in their lives (Break Away, n.d.).

Another component of The Active Citizen Continuum includes the different transformations that occur throughout an alternative break which include pre-break, on-break and post-break transformation. The pre-break transformation involves adequate preparation of students for the on-site service experience and includes educating students about the specific social issues at the service site. Some of the pre-break activities can include teambuilding

activities to help the group bond with each other, participating in reflection which provides an opportunity for students to discuss the goals and expectations of the experience, and conducting pre-break service at a local organization which allows students to experience and practice the work they will do at the alternative break site (building houses, tutoring children, cleaning rivers). The on-break transformation involves guiding students to critically examine the root causes of the social issues at the site and challenge students to assess the different roles they can play in the community. Key components of the on-break transformation involves working with a site that allows the students to have a strong direct service experience, continuing education during the trip, daily reflection exercises that are tied to the service being conducted, and involvement with the community. The post-break transformation centers on helping students find opportunities to continue being involved with the community once they return from the trip and support the student's efforts in taking additional action steps. Some important elements of the post-break transformation is reorienting the students and providing continuing education, reflection time to discuss the reentry process, the possibility of participating in post-break service, and being challenged to continue making life choices to benefit the community (Break Away, n.d.). The conceptual model for this research is the Active Citizen Continuum discussed further in the methodology section, Chapter 3.

### **Alternative Break Research**

The research conducted on alternative spring break experiences is limited despite the fact these trips have been in existence for over thirty years. Some of the most important research that has been conducted to date is listed in Table 2 along with the results. This research will also be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Table 2

*Research Studies Focused on Alternative Break Trips*

Year/Author(s)	Name of Work	Research Description	Research Results
2012/Niehaus, E.	<i>Alternative break programs and the factors that contribute to changes in students' lives</i> Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, MD	Purpose was to understand how the AB influenced students' intentions or plans to volunteer, engage in advocacy, or study or travel abroad, or their major or career plans. Niehaus created the National Survey of Alternative Breaks and 2,187 students completed the survey which represented 443 separate AB trips (DOMESTIC and international) and 97 colleges and universities ( <b>non-academic course/quantitative</b> )	The students reported overwhelmingly that the AB trip did influence these outcomes. In particular, positive predictors for most of the outcomes included: students being emotionally challenged by connecting their AB experience to larger social issues, the frequency of journal writing, the amount of learning students gained from student colleagues and community members, and the richness of the reorientation program

Table 2 (continued)

Year/Author(s)	Name of Work	Research Description	Research Results
2012/Jones, S.R., Rowan-Kenyon, H.T., Ireland, S.M-Y., Niehaus, E., & Skendall, K.C.	The meaning students make as participants in short-term immersion programs. <i>Journal of College Student Development</i> , 53, 201-220.	Multi-site case study examining week-long immersion programs--two programs were DOMESTIC service-learning AB trips, one was an international AB trip and one was study abroad, built upon Kieley's (2004/2005) work <b>(non-academic course/qualitative)</b>	Meaning making for the students was enhanced via boundary crossing, personalizing and getting out of the bubble. This enhanced their understanding of themselves, other cultures, and multifaceted social issues. Importance of reentry programming to help students translate their experiences into current and future life (for example, career, and friendships)
2009/Jones, S.R., Robbins, C.K. & LePeau, L.A. (2009, November)	<i>Crossing developmental borders through participation in HIV/AIDS-focused service-learning</i> . Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Vancouver, British Columbia.	Focused on one DOMESTIC AB trip that was also part of Jones et al. (2012) work; interviewed five students to create personal narratives <b>(non-academic/qualitative)</b>	The students experienced "border crossing" which essentially means they approached, crossed, and retraced borders in their lives because of the alternative break experience

Table 2 (continued)

Year/Author(s)	Name of Work	Research Description	Research Results
2005/Kiely, R.	A transformative learning model for service-learning: A longitudinal case study. <i>Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning</i> , 12(1), 5-22.	Expansion of 2004 work by developing a transformative model Mezirow's (1991) model of transformative learning <b>(academic course/qualitative research)</b> international	Kiely created a conceptual framework from the data that can assist educators to help students get to transformative outcomes via their service-learning experience. The framework includes five learning processes: contextual border crossing, dissonance, personalizing, processing, and connecting
2004/Kiely, R.	A chameleon with a complex: Searching for transformation in international service-learning. <i>Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning</i> , 10(2), 5-20.	A two-week service-learning course in Nicaragua (international), conducted interviews longitudinally with 22 students <b>(academic course/qualitative research)</b>	Participation in this international service-learning course with a social justice theme did transform students' lifestyle and worldviews. Three dimensions of this transformation includes consciousness—(1) envisioning, (2) transforming forms, and (3) chameleon complex.

Table 2 (continued)

Year/Author(s)	Name of Work	Research Description	Research Results
1999/Garbuio, J.	<i>Alternative spring break and social responsibility: Is there a relationship?</i> Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.	There were 18 students out of 32 (who participated in the Navajo Nation ASB) who completed a pre- and post-trip interview and 17 out of 18 completed a survey. Utilized Scale of Social Responsibility Development (Olne & Grand, 1996) and Service-Learning Model (Delve, Mintz & Stewart, 1990). Alumni of the Navajo Nation ASB between 1990-1997 were also surveyed. There were 28 out of 107 that responded to the survey. <b>(non-academic/qualitative and quantitative research)</b>	The results were mixed as to whether or not the ASB experience had an impact on the students' level of social responsibility.
1998/McElhaney, K.A.	<i>Student outcomes of community service learning: A comparative analysis of curriculum-based and non-curriculum-based alternative spring break programs.</i> Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.	Interviewed 22 undergraduate students that were dispersed among two DOMESTIC sites for ASB trips <b>(one academic and one non-academic(semester-long)/qualitative)</b>	CB group gained more issues knowledge regarding the service topics, whereas NCB group had more social outcomes. Majority of outcomes for both groups were psychological and in the affective realm. More behavior changes with CB group.

Table 2 (continued)

Year/Author(s)	Name of Work	Research Description	Research Results
<b>1998</b> /Rhoads, R.A. & Neururer, J.	Alternative spring break: Learning through community service. <i>NASPA Journal</i> , 35(2), 100-118. doi:10.2202/1949-6605.1039	Interviewed 24 students during ASB trip at DOMESTIC site ( <b>non-academic/qualitative research</b> )	Research focused on impact of ASB on students' understanding of self, others, and community. Found that learning through service does enhance awareness of self, others and community.
<b>1997</b> /Ivory, B. T.	The re-entry crisis of students returning to campus following a volunteer alternative break experience: A developmental opportunity. <i>College Student Affairs Journal</i> , 16(2), 104-112.	Conducted interviews with 17 students two weeks after ASB trips to four different DOMESTIC locations ( <b>non-academic/qualitative research</b> )	Nearly all of the students experienced some form of re-entry crisis which included psychological and social difficulties similar to what study abroad students experience upon re-entry to the US.

Niehaus' (2012) recent work was ground-breaking because it was the first quantitative research that surveyed students utilizing the National Survey of Alternative Breaks which she created. Niehaus had previously worked with Jones et al. (2012) and others which influenced and guided her work. The survey was completed by 2,187 students that represented 443 separate alternative break (AB) trips (domestic and international) and 97 colleges and universities. The students reported overwhelmingly that the AB trip did influence their intentions or plans to volunteer, engage in advocacy, or study or travel abroad, or their major or career plans. In particular, positive predictors for most of the outcomes included students being emotionally challenged by connecting their AB experience to larger social issues, the frequency of journal writing, the amount of learning students gained from student colleagues and community members, and the richness of the reorientation program (Niehaus, 2012).

The work conducted by Jones et al. (2012) is instrumental since it is the most comprehensive work completed within the past 10 years regarding alternative breaks. The researchers conducted a multi-case study that involved four service-learning week-long alternative break trips (2 domestic, 1 international and 1 study abroad). This research focused on the context and characteristics of each trip and how that translated into boundary spanning, personalizing the experience, and changes that occurred in the students' life purpose and career interests. It also included one of the domestic trips that was a part of the earlier research conducted by Jones, Robbins, and LePeau (2009). The research by Jones et al. (2009) culminated in personal narratives by five students who participated in a New York trip focused on HIV/AIDS. The students experienced "border crossing" which essentially means they approached, crossed, and retraced borders in their lives because of the alternative break experience (Jones et al., 2009, p. 35). The students shared with the researchers that they "crossed

contextual, developmental, social, and cultural borders on the trip in ways that rarely occurred on campus” (Jones et al., 2009, p. 35).

Kiely’s (2004) work focused on academic international service-learning (with a social justice orientation) where he interviewed 22 students during a trip to Nicaragua. Then he interviewed the students multiple times during a one year time frame after the trip from 2001-2002. The 22 students had completed their alternative break trip in different years between 1994-2001 (over a seven year time period). The main finding was that U.S. students were impacted in a transformative manner by their participation in an international service-learning program particularly in regards to their view of the world and lifestyle (Kiely, 2004). Through the research, Kiely (2004) identified three discrete areas of a student’s learning that impact their emerging global consciousness which were envisioning, transforming forms, and chameleon complex.

The envisioning piece refers to students envisioning themselves acting on their intent to work with social justice issues upon returning home due to a transformation in their perspective. The transforming forms piece has six elements (political, moral, intellectual, cultural, personal, and spiritual) and students will experience a dynamic shift regarding how they see themselves and the world in at least one of these areas (Kiely, 2004). The chameleon complex represents the struggle students experience as they try and make enduring changes in their lifestyle and stay involved with social justice issues (Kiely, 2004). Many times there will be a disconnect that occurs for the student because the actions students want to take as a result of their transformation may be shunned by those close to them such as family and friends (Kiely, 2004). Kiely’s (2005) research expanded on his prior work in 2004 by developing a transformative model which utilized Mezirow’s (1991) model of transformative learning. The data analysis resulted in five

learning processes which are contextual border crossing, dissonance, personalizing, processing, and connecting. Students experience these processes as a part of the transformational learning process in service-learning (Kiely, 2005).

McElhaney (1998) conducted an exploratory qualitative study with 22 students that participated in a domestic alternative spring break trip. Part of the group participated in an alternative spring break trip that was curriculum based (CB) and the other group participated in an alternative spring break trip that was not curriculum based (NCB). The overall goal of McElhaney's (1998) research was to determine the service-learning outcomes on students who participate in alternative spring break trips. The main theoretical frameworks utilized for McElhaney's (1998) research were Astin's (1993) College Impact Model of Outcomes, and Gardner's (1983; 1993) Multiple Intelligences Theory. Her research utilized interviews and focus groups as well as the review of student journals, and participant observations. McElhaney (1998) expected that the level of change between the CB and NCB would be different and in favor of the CB group due to the integration of service with the theory learned in class. The results did indicate that the CB site had greater cognitive outcomes than the NCB site, and the NCB site had minor behavioral changes compared to the CB (McElhaney, 1998). Some of the other significant findings included: (a) students found the ASB trip was one of the most powerful experiences in their collegiate career, (b) career choices were affected by prior decisions or being exposed to new career possibilities, (c) students had an increased tolerance and understanding of others, (d) racial barriers and stereotypes were changed, (e) students were committed to being with others that are different from them (McElhaney, 1998).

The work conducted by Rhoads and Neururer (1998) focused on the types of outcomes students derived by participating in a non-academic domestic alternative spring break trip. In

particular, the researchers focused on how student participation in service impacts the understanding of self, others, and community. Their work was based on Radest (1993) and other symbolic interactionists such as Mead (1934), Goffman (1959), Blumer (1969), and Denzin (1977) who look at the formation of identity, feminist theorists such as Gilligan (1979), and work by Noddings (1984) which entails looking at the formation of identity in relations to others. The researchers interviewed 24 students; once at the beginning of the alternative spring break trip and once at the end of the trip. Additional data was gathered via a group journal, and evening reflection sessions. Some of the key implications from their study included: (a) valuable higher learning experiences can occur outside the classroom and through service; (b) students can learn through service which in turn can make an impact on them developmentally; (c) learning more about self, one's values, social responsibilities, and how one is connected and commitment to community are significant developmental markers for students who are traditional age; and (d) service is a mutual process that involves giving and receiving.

The work conducted by Ivory (1997) looked at the re-entry crisis students experience as a result of participation in an alternative spring break trip conducted at four locations across the United States. Ivory (1997) initially anticipated that students would return from their break trip with feelings of elation and personal gratification, but instead, students experienced a multitude of social and emotional difficulties. There were 17 students who participated in small-group interviews two weeks after they had returned from their break trip. Almost all of the students experienced some form of alienation as they tried to readjust back to their way of life on campus. Brislin's (1974) work discovered 30 re-entry concerns and problems that could influence returnee's culturally, socially, and personally. The students in Ivory's (1997) research experienced about two-thirds of the re-entry issues identified by Brislin's (1974) work. The five

dominant issues identified in Ivory's (1977) research were (a) readjustment to physical and educational environments, (b) academic dysfunction and uncertainty, (c) relationships and the barriers to communication and understanding, (d) distance and isolation in relationships, and (e) self-assessment of experience and reaction to others. Ivory's (1977) work suggested that educators should be aware of the continuing developmental challenges students experience as they return from the alternative trips and to use these challenges as a way to support and assist students in their development.

### **Domestic Alternative Spring Break Trips**

The decision to focus on domestic alternative spring breaks was supported by the work of Battistioni, Longo and Jayanandhan (2009). The authors discuss the idea of a new kind of citizenship which means service-learning practitioners must be able to connect the local with the global, and I would say that participants should be able to do the same as well. The authors provide a provoking illustration from Kwame Appiah (1996), philosopher, who learned from his father that the goal was to become a "rooted cosmopolitan." This meant that Appiah's father wanted him to learn about the world and how it was interconnected, and at the same time, focus on the local conditions of his community. Although there are a number of advantages of study abroad and international student programs, many of these experiences are not accessible by a large number of college students for various reasons such as cost (Battistioni et al., 2009). The domestic alternative spring break trips are typically less expensive than the international trips. The amount of money spent to travel to the country itself could equate to what a number of people around the world may make in a year or during their lifetime (Barbour, 2006). Some would argue that those monies could have made more of an impact being spent on the community directly rather than for student travel (Barbour, 2006). Furthermore, others would

argue that students can have valuable cross-cultural experiences that are similar to being abroad closer to home (Jacoby, 2009). For example, students could work domestically with new immigrants that will enhance students' knowledge of global issues such as migration and transnational identity (Battistioni et al., 2009).

A global civil society includes global solidarity where individuals gain the skills to address issues at home and abroad because they understand that many challenges such as racism, economic inequality, and sexism are all connected and must be addressed everywhere (Battistioni et al., 2009). Therefore, domestic alternative spring breaks can be likened to global citizenship by helping students "be local" and "think and act globally" despite the location of the service (Battistioni et al., 2009, p. 105). Furthermore, as higher education budgets continue to be reduced, providing students with experiences that are cost effective can make domestic alternative spring break trips a more favorable choice.

### **Alumni and the Long-Term Effect of Service-Learning**

There are volumes of research that has been conducted regarding the effect of college on students, yet the majority of the research is focused on what occurs between the beginning and completion of college (Astin, 1998; Berger, 2000; Kuh, 1999; Pascarella, 1984). Limited research has been attentive to college's long-term influence on everyday behaviors of alumni (Astin et al., 2006; Butin, 2010; Johnson, 2004). All students who begin their collegiate career at a higher education institution can be considered as potential alumni members and future citizens. The challenge is that students arrive at institutions with varying experiences regarding service and civic affairs. As institutions are increasing the importance of service as a part of the student's collegiate experience, these service experiences also provide students an opportunity to understand and practice their roles as citizens (Johnson, 2004). It is imperative more than ever

for institutions to take the necessary action steps across their campuses to ensure the education their students obtain embraces preparation as a citizen at the core of their experience (Johnson, 2004; Powell, 2008). Although it is powerful to witness the increased numbers of students participating in service activities during the collegiate career, true success will be determined by the number of alumni who will continue to address the social issues of the day throughout their lifespan (Powell, 2008). The next sections will focus on collegiate alumni and the research that has focused on community service persistence, outcomes of service-learning, and financial and human capital giving.

### **Community Service Persistence and Outcomes of Service-Learning**

The research conducted by Powell (2008) surveyed 277 students at a Christian college who graduated between the years of 1996 and 2001. One main goal of Powell's (2008) research was to determine the effectiveness of the college's mission in regards to service and civic engagement. Powell (2008) wanted to learn if the institution had been effective in creating alumni who were caring citizens via curricular and co-curricular experiences. Some of the results that are pertinent to the current study are that 57% of the alumni indicated within the last 12 months they had volunteered zero to four times. On another question, there were over half (54%) who responded in disagreement that their college had equipped them to handle the trials they would face as citizens in a diverse society. There were (47%) who responded to another question in disagreement that their college did not help them to become "less judgmental of others and their place in life" (Powell, 2008, p. 53). Some implications for practice that support the current research include the inclusion "of service in scholarship, spiritual formation, public relations, involvement with alumni, and even commencement speakers" (Powell, 2008, p. 62). Regarding alumni, the suggestion was made to incorporate a service experience as part of an existing

alumni mentoring program which would allow current students and alumni of the institution to participate together (Powell, 2008).

Research conducted by Johnson (2004) looked at whether or not there was a relationship between particular collegiate experiences and an alumni member's participation behaviors within their community. Johnson's (2004) work was instrumental because it looked at the relationship between a student's participation in collegiate experiences and continuing participation in their communities five years and beyond which extended the previous work of Astin, Sax and Avalos (1999). The study included the Appalachian College Association which is comprised of 31 institutions and involved 7,083 alumni members that represented members from cohorts that graduated between 1974-76, 1984-86, and 1994-96. Therefore, the alumni in this study had been graduated between eight and 30 years. The two experiences Johnson (2004) chose to investigate were "perceived contributions of college to developing intellectual and personal skills, and collegiate participation in community activities" (p. 172). The study found that there is a stronger relationship between an alumni's behavior and their participation in collegiate activities compared to precollege variables. Hence, Johnson (2004) states that what happens during a student's collegiate experience does matter. Furthermore, Johnson (2004) suggests that institutions who want their students to be active in community activities after graduation should follow Nora et al.'s (1996) recommendation which is to encourage students to be involved in organizational activities.

### **Alumni Civic Efforts and Benefits**

Higher education institutions recognize that college is only one step in the student's lifelong development process (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003). Hence, a variety of efforts have been established for students to remain civically involved as alumni. The Graduation

Pledge of Social and Environmental Responsibility was created in 1987 by seniors at Humboldt State University. The pledge challenges alumni to be committed in advancing social and environmental responsibility wherever they choose to work. The pledge has reached over 200,000 and over 100 institutions world-wide. A number of institutions have also added a focus on service in their alumni clubs located across the country. This inclusion of service sends a clear message to alumni that their institution supports their ongoing involvement with service in the community. Stanford University created the Visiting Mentor Program which asked alumni members to visit the campus as “mentors” by speaking to students about their community and public service accomplishments. The Visiting Mentor Program is supported by the Alumni Association and Haas Center which provides opportunities for student service. These are some examples of how higher education institutions can encourage alumni to continue a commitment to community during other phases of their life (Colby et al., 2003).

Citizen Alum was created in 2011 as a way to help institutions begin reimagining how they viewed the role of their alumni (Citizen Alum, n.d.). Instead of viewing alumni as “donors”, the idea of Citizen Alum is to view them as “doers” as well. Citizen Alum believes, “Alums are allies in education—crucial partners in building multigenerational communities of active citizenship and active learning” (Citizen Alum, n.d.). The initial 30 institutions are involved in the process of sharing, listening, and exchanging ideas on how to involve alumni through all stages of life. Citizen Alum was officially launched in January 2012 at the White House meeting, “For Democracy’s Future—Education Reclaims Our Civic Mission” which was also when *A Crucible Moment* was released. All of these movements are examples of how various entities are supportive in keeping alumni connected and involved in their communities for the long-term.

In their work, Astin, Sax and Avalos (1999) suggested that higher education institutions should be interested in the idea that participation in service as an undergraduate could in fact increase the probability that alumni will monetarily give back to their alma mater. The researchers proposed there could be a substantial self-interest by institutions to encourage their students to participate in service experiences as a part of their collegiate experience.

Henning's (2012) work supports the suggestion by Astin et al. (1999) that student engagement should be leveraged by institutions for student *and* institutional success. The general idea Henning (2012) shared was that many engaged students end up becoming engaged alumni. In a previous student affairs role, Henning (2012) and his team were trying to calculate the best way to connect with their alumni for funding of new projects. One result they found was that students involved with Greek organizations gave more to the institution than students who were not involved in Greek organizations. The point Henning (2012) was trying to make is that if institutions can track their alumni who were engaged students then the institution could possibly benefit from alumni in a financial and human resource capacity. In this way, the student's collegiate success provides a winning combination for the student and institution.

### **Summary**

The support for service-learning and civic engagement is at an all-time high because they have become a part of the strategic agendas for almost all of the national higher education associations (Saltmarsh, 2005). Concurrently, higher education is being asked to recommit to the service aspect of its mission, and a large number of college students remain interested in community service that leads to changes in social and political structures (Association, 2012). Despite some students being withdrawn from the political scene, students desire to have additional significant experiences that provide them an avenue to dialogue and address social

issues (Kiesa et al., 2007). Higher education has an extraordinary opportunity to make the most of these students' desire, interest and dedication towards these social issue concerns. Higher education can maximize these engagement opportunities for students by ensuring they are focused and intentional which in turn will impact student success as well as institutional success (Henning, 2012). In *A Crucible Moment* the authors emphasize that community service and democratic engagement do not always mean the same thing, nor do they always operate in the same manner. However, "service can be, and often is, the first step toward a more fully developed set of civic capacities and commitments—not the least of which is working with others to co-create more vibrant communities to address significant national needs and to promote economic and social stability" (Henning, 2012, p. 6).

As discussed earlier, most of the research that looks at the effect of various college experiences is focused on the student's experience *during* their collegiate career (Astin, 1998; Berger 2000; Kuh, 1999; Pascarella, 1984). There has been limited research focusing on the longitudinal and long-term impact of these various college experiences *after* students graduate (Astin et al., 20006; Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Astin & Sax, 1998; Bowman et al., 2010; Johnson, 2004; Powell, 2008; Tomkovick et al., 2008). The research is even more limited when it comes to the long-term effect on alumni who have participated in alternative spring break trips.

Further research is needed to examine the trajectories of alumni members who participated in these alternative spring break experiences, and how these ASB experiences may have played a potential role in their civic and personal lives. Through a semi-structured interview, participants were asked about their ASB experience(s) and what they learned about the community, social issues, themselves, and others. Additional questions inquired about the participant's current involvement with their community as well as the community service

involvement the participants have had since their graduation three to nine years ago. The answers to these questions are important because they provide educators with concrete data to support and enhance their understanding regarding the long-term effects service-learning experiences such as ASB experiences can have on students. Providing alumni members the opportunity to share their stories is essential, since it allows for more in-depth data to be gathered that may not have otherwise transpired through a survey. This qualitative research also provided another opportunity for alumni who participated in domestic ASB experiences to reflect on how the alternative spring break experience may have played a role in their later civic behaviors and attitudes.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological procedures that were implemented to guide this qualitative research study. The first section provides an overview of the research design followed by the research question and interview questions. Subsequent sections will examine threats to validity, assumptions, participants, data collection, and data analysis. Concluding sections consist of the scope and delimitations followed by a summary.

### **Research Design**

The overall purpose of this research study was to understand the perceived role the domestic co-curricular ASB experience may have had on students' later civic behaviors and attitudes three to nine years after the experience. Numerous research studies have consistently pointed to the need for longitudinal and long-term research that focuses on various college experiences and their impact on students as alumni (Astin et al., 2006; Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Astin & Sax, 1998; Bowman et al., 2010; Johnson, 2004; Powell, 2008; Tomkovick, 2008). In particular, Warchal and Ruiz (2004) point out the scarce amount of longitudinal data regarding the civic outcomes of service oriented experiences, including outcomes specific to service-learning. Although there have been a few qualitative research studies (Garbuio, 1999; Ivory, 1997; Jones et al., 2012, 2009; McElhaney, 1998; Niehaus, 2012; Rhoads & Neururer, 1998) focusing on short-term experiences and alternative break experiences, there have not been any research studies to date that specifically focus on domestic, co-curricular alternative spring break experiences and the perception students have regarding the ASB experience and the potential role it has played in their later civic behaviors and attitudes.

A constructivist framework along with a basic interpretive qualitative research methodology was used to guide the study. Constructivism provided the avenue to understand

how participants make meaning of their experiences, which is a key focus of this research (Charmaz, 2000). Constructivism is also dependent on an ontological perspective which supports the existence of multiple realities. Additionally, by utilizing constructivism, it signifies that there is a relationship between the participants and the researcher which allows participants to share their stories from their own perspective (Charmaz, 2000). Qualitative research was used for several reasons. First, a need exists for a detailed and multifaceted understanding (Creswell, 2007) of how participants perceive the ASB experience has influenced their civic behaviors and attitudes three to nine years later. To gain this extensive detail, time was needed to interview participants which gave them an opportunity to authentically share their stories without any pre-existing outcomes or theories imposed on the data they shared (Creswell, 2007). The goal was to allow the data to surface and tell its own story through the emergence of descriptive and conceptual categories. The Active Citizen Continuum (discussed further in the next section) was used as the conceptual framework to help guide the data collection and analysis processes. Second, qualitative research led to a richer, more in-depth understanding of what was happening to these participants at a particular moment in time regarding their ASB experience and the meanings participants have made of this experience three to nine years later (Patton, 2002). Geertz (1973), along with Denzin and Lincoln (1994), referred to this as “thick description,” which helps to emphasize the details and meanings of what is being studied.

A basic qualitative study approach was used for this study (Merriam, 2002). The basic qualitative study approach is used when the researcher wants to understand how participants make meaning of a particular situation or phenomenon. In this way, the researcher is responsible for clarifying the meaning by using inductive strategies to produce an informative outcome that is reflective of the participant’s experience. Basic qualitative studies possess the fundamental

features of qualitative research, which include eliciting understanding and meaning, using fieldwork, using an inductive orientation to analysis, and providing richly described findings (Merriam, 1998). However, the basic qualitative study is not focused on studying a single unit, bounded system, or culture, nor is it focused on creating a grounded theory. Instead, this form of study “simply seeks to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved” (Merriam, 1998, p. 11). Additionally, the basic qualitative approach utilizes techniques from the other methods such as ethnography, case study, grounded theory, and action research; however, it does not claim that it is any of these other methods.

### **Conceptual Model**

Break Away’s Active Citizen Continuum was chosen as the conceptual model to guide this research study. As discussed in Chapter 2, Break Away utilizes The Active Citizen Continuum (see Figure 1) as a part of its educational training for participation in the ASB trips, and it serves as the developmental model on which students are educated. The four phases of the continuum are (a) member, (b) volunteer, (c) conscientious citizen, and (d) active citizen. In the final phase, called active citizen, the individual chooses to make the community a priority in the values and life choices he or she makes in his or her life.

The prior research discussed in Chapter 2 points to the significant life changes that ASB experiences can make in students’ lives in the short term, although the research is limited in regards to the long-term effect of the ASB experience. Therefore, this research sought to understand the potential role that the ASB experiences may or may not have had on students’ later civic behaviors and attitudes three to nine years after the experience based solely on their perception. By framing lifelong active citizenship as a developmental process across one’s lifespan, the Active Citizen Continuum provided a framework to help describe and understand

how a student's ASB experience may be a contributing factor to students becoming active citizens. The results of this research is not generalizable to all schools that conduct ASB trips; instead the intent of the findings is to advance the current literature about ASB experiences and the long-term influences students perceived that it has had on their civic behaviors and attitudes.

### **Institutional Review Board**

This research was submitted to East Carolina University's Institutional Research Board (IRB) for approval. Once approval was received from IRB, I followed the protocol listed in the section below called *Participants*. The research participants who chose to participate in this research study were at a minimal risk. The risks and benefits to the participants is fully covered in the participant consent form (see Appendix A).

### **Research Question**

The principal research question for this study was:

What is the perceived role (if any) of the domestic co-curricular alternative spring break (ASB) experience on participants' later civic behaviors and attitudes?

The goal for this research was to provide another opportunity for participants to reflect on their ASB experience three to nine years later after the ASB trip. The interview questions that were asked of the participants are located in Appendix B.

### **Threats to Validity**

Maxwell's (1996) work recognized five specific threats that could impact the validity of qualitative research: descriptive validity, interpretive validity, theory validity, researcher bias, and reactivity. *Descriptive validity* is a major challenge for qualitative researchers since it is their responsibility to ensure that all of the data has been recorded correctly. As Lewis (2009) noted, "what an individual fails to record while collecting data often is as important as what is

collected” (p. 9). The primary avenues that researchers can use to assist in this process are tape or digital recorders, video recorders, or Skype (face to face interviews conducted via computer screens). For this research study, all interviews were digitally recorded via the telephone and one was captured via Skype. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim. I also kept hand written notes on a hard copy of the interview questions for each participant as I was interviewing them. These hard copy interview questions were used as a reference throughout the research process.

*Interpretative validity* pertains to fully and correctly understanding the observation the participant is trying to share (Lewis, 2009). Questions should be open-ended, which allows participants to elaborate on their observations (Lewis, 2009). Furthermore, the questions should not be designed to solicit or lead the participant to share a specific answer (Lewis, 2009). The research questions for this research study were designed to avoid the threat of interpretative validity.

The premise of *theory validity* means the researcher shares all of the reported data rather than just sharing the data that fits the theoretical or conceptual model used in the research (Lewis, 2009). The data results were written in the form of narrative thematic summaries based on the participant interviews which may or may not support the conceptual model used in this research. *Researcher bias* means that each researcher brings some form of bias to the research study and therefore must take the appropriate steps to lessen its threat to the validity of the research (Lewis, 2009). Likewise, Creswell (1994) suggests that “the biases, values, and judgment of the researcher become stated explicitly in the research report.” (p. 147). Therefore, it is important to share that my interest in this research stemmed from several past experiences. The first experience occurred when I participated in an alternative spring break trip in 1995 as a master’s student at the University of South Carolina-Columbia (USC-Columbia). I served as a

student organizer of the trip as well as a participant. Additionally, one of my first qualitative research projects as a doctoral student focused on the developmental impact of alternative break trips on students who had participated in two or more alternative break trips. As a part of this qualitative research project, I discovered that the USC-Columbia trip in which I had participated was featured in a journal article by Rhoads and Neururer (1998) titled “Alternative Spring Break: Learning through Community Service.” This work is instrumental in the research regarding alternative spring breaks, service, and service-learning. From 2001-2004, I served as the director of the Center for Leadership Education and Service (CLES) at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington. During this time, the center was charged with increasing the number of alternative break trips held in the spring and fall. As a staff member, I advised and participated in several of those trips. CLES was a member of Break Away at the time, and this prior exposure to Break Away has been useful throughout this research process. I am an advocate of the Break Away model (discussed in Chapter 2) because it provides a specific structure for the ASB trip experience to help insure the experience is beneficial rather than harmful for all stakeholders involved in the experience. Eleven years have passed since I was directly involved in the alternative break work with students and community partners at CLES. I have a bias towards the belief that participation in ASB trips can result in numerous positive outcomes for students. This bias towards the ASB trips producing positive outcomes for participants is based on prior research as well as my personal experience as an ASB participant, and the positive outcomes shared by students who participated in the ASB trips at UNCW as well as my first qualitative research project in my doctoral studies that included interviewing students from another institution who participated in ASB trips.

My research bias was minimized by adhering to the protocols discussed in the research design and the data analysis section discussed in this chapter. Further analytic rigor was achieved by utilizing two coders who have a higher education background. Using two coders ensured objectivity and clarification was present as a part of the coding process. Additional meetings were also conducted with the methodologist of this research study to discuss the findings and to help minimize the presence of any bias. This extra step provided a more rigorous analysis to the data since the methodologist provided an objective review of the findings. I also kept a log during the research process to document any other biases and assumptions that I was not currently aware of but that occurred as a part of the research process.

The last threat to validity is *reactivity*, which refers to the researcher and the affect that his or her presence has on the research in regards to the environment or individuals being studied (Lewis, 2009). It is impossible to fully control the threat of reactivity; rather, it is important for the researcher to have a keen sense of awareness that it is happening (Lewis, 2009). For instance, some of the participants may not have told the full truth, or participants may have told the researcher what they thought the researcher wanted to hear (Lewis, 2009). Some of this was controlled with the terms of confidentiality which was provided in the consent form as a part of the interview protocol procedures. The participants were also assigned a pseudonym name to protect their identity. I reviewed with each participant that the purpose of the interview was to gather information about their ASB experience in order to understand how their ASB trip may have played a role in their later civic behaviors and attitudes.

### **Assumptions**

The trustworthiness of qualitative research encompasses the four assumptions of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative

research is based on an interpretive form of conclusions, which indicates a need to have measures in place to confirm that what is being observed, reported, and interpreted can be believed and applied. Credibility, dependability, and confirmability are the three assumptions that will pertain to this research study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasize that these four assumption procedures are not *the* way to guide the qualitative research process; instead, they are only *one* way to guide the qualitative research process.

Credibility involves various activities such as triangulation, sustained engagement to help build trust and relationships, persistent observation, peer-debriefing, and member checks. Engagement and building trust through the interviews was the primary credible activity used to build the appropriate conditions for credible research. Achieving dependability and confirmability is primarily achieved by using audit trails. The value of the audit trail is that readers of the research should be able to substantiate the findings of the study by following the researcher's trail (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The audit trail for this research was created by accounting for how data was collected, how categories and themes were created, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry process. This information was kept in a research journal (as previously discussed) comprised of the various thoughts, questions, ideas, and decisions that were made during the data collection and the data analysis process.

### **Participants**

The following selection process was implemented to narrow the potential number of participants to be interviewed.

### **Recruitment**

In January of 2013, I contacted the director of Break Away to inform her of the research study I would be conducting and requested her support at that time. This support was in the form

of information about the Break Away affiliated schools that met the list of criteria (see below) and the provision of introductions and correspondence between her, me, and the selected institutions. She agreed to support the research by providing any necessary data and correspondence. The Break Away staff was able to narrow the approximately 150 member institutions of Break Away to a final list of 17 member institutions that met the specific criteria (see Institution Selection section below). Break Away provided a letter of support (see Appendix C), and the director also provided an email introduction to the staff members who coordinate the ASB trips (see the next section) after the research proposal was approved. The letter for institution permission is located in Appendix D. The emails that were sent to Break Away, participating schools, and participants are located in Appendix E.

### **Institution Selection**

A criterion sampling strategy was used to narrow the list of approximately 150 higher education institutions that were members of Break Away to a list of 17 institutions that met the specific criteria shared below (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The institutions varied by characteristics such as size, type, and geographic location. The size and type of the institution was based on the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. The geographic location was based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Each school met the following criteria:

- A member of Break Away for 10 or more years
- ASB program utilizes the eight quality components of ASB developed by Break Away
- ASB program utilizes Break Away Active Citizen Continuum as part of the ASB education for students
- ASB program conducts reflection exercises before, during and after the ASB trip

- ASB program focuses on helping students understand the root causes of social problems and how they can "act" as change agents
- ASB program has ability to find alumni who have participated in their ASB trips and have been alumni for three to nine years (students would have participated in an ASB trip during at least one spring semester during the years 2005 to 2011 which would put them at being three to nine years from the experience because participants were interviewed in the spring/summer of 2014)
- The institution has received the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement (2006, 2008 or 2010)
- The institution is a member of Campus Compact

From the list of 17 institutions, maximum variation sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was utilized to “increase the likelihood that the findings will reflect differences or different perspectives—an ideal in qualitative research” as shared by Creswell (2007, p. 126). Maximum variation sampling also allowed similar patterns to be recognized that were found across the variations, which in this case are the institutions (Patton & Cochran, 2002). In order to gain this maximum variation, a mix of institutional type (public and private), size (small, medium, and large), and geographic location (northeast, south, and mid-west) was utilized. Of the seventeen institutions, eight were private, and nine were public. In regards to geographic region, the northeast had a total of four institutions, two small private schools and two large public schools. The south had a total of five institutions, three private (one small and one medium) and two large public institutions. The mid-west had a total of eight institutions, two small private schools and six large public schools. Based on these characteristics of type, size, and geographic location, I chose to work with the schools located in the South because it included a mix of public and

private schools that was true for all three regions, and the South was the only region that included a medium sized institution, whereas the other two regions did not. For this research study, it was not be feasible to research all three geographic locations. Therefore, the southern region with five institutions was chosen since it had a mix of public and private, and it contained the three different school sizes (small, medium, and large). The original five southern institutions provided a total of 26 alumni member names/emails, and this yielded four participant interviews. Therefore, the alternate list of 12 institutions was utilized, and there were five institutions that chose to participate. These five institutions provided a total of 168 alumni member names/emails, and this yielded an additional 11 participant interviews.

### **Participating Institutions**

The seven institutions that participated in this research included a mix of different geographic locations, size and public/private. Three were located in the North East, two were located in the Mid-West, and two were located in the South. There were two small private institutions, one medium public institution, and four large public institutions. When the research proposal was submitted to IRB in June 2014, all institutions were members of Campus Compact and had the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement. Institution A and institution B are small private institutions with student populations of 2,450 and 2,600 respectively. Institution C is a medium sized public institution with a student population of 6,082. Institution D, institution E, institution F, and institution G are large public institutions with student populations of 30,256; 33,000; 40,255 and 43,426 respectively. The seven institutions represent seven different states which include (a) Connecticut, (b) Florida, (c) Texas, (d) Michigan, (e) Missouri, (f) Pennsylvania, and (g) Vermont.

Each of the seven institutions were asked to provide a list of alumni member names (with email addresses) who participated in domestic ASB trips during at least one of the spring semesters between 2005 to 2011 and graduated in the spring semester during the years between 2008 and 2011.

### **Participant Selection**

All of the students who were interviewed met the following criteria:

- Participated in a domestic ASB trip during the spring semester between 2005 and 2011 (these students may have participated in multiple ASB trips during their collegiate career).
- Participated in a Break Away Alternative Break Citizenship school, a Break Away Site Leader Retreat, or their institution's own program training based on Break Away curriculum (contains 8 quality components of an ASB trip mentioned earlier).
- Graduated from institutions that have been members of Break Away (10+ years), and Campus Compact.
- Graduated from institutions during the spring of 2008 to 2011. This means the students would have been graduating seniors during the spring semester between 2008 and 2011.
- Directors of the ASB trip program at the students' institutions have been in place between 6-10 years which helps with their familiarity with Break Away and the process of soliciting students to participate in the research.
- The students' institutions have received the Carnegie Classification for Civic Engagement (2006, 2008 or 2010).
- The institution is a member of Campus Compact

Since the participants' institutions were members of Break Away, the participants were exposed to the eight quality components of an ASB trip and the Active Citizen Continuum, participated in reflection exercises before, during and after the ASB trip, and received education to better understand the root causes of social problems and how they can "act" as change agents to solve them. Once a student agreed to participate in the study, a participant consent form (see Appendix A) was sent via email to each student. Participants were requested to complete the participant consent form (see Appendix A) prior to the phone interview and return it to the researcher. Additionally, participants were asked to begin remembering and reflecting on their ASB experiences since it occurred three to nine years ago.

### **Data Collection**

Creswell (2007) suggested four key data collection techniques in qualitative research, observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials. For this research, conducting interviews was the primary data collection method used. As a part of the interview research protocol, there are eight procedures that Creswell (2007) recommends researchers consider. Table 3 lists these eight procedures along with the action steps that were taken for each one. Further discussion for each of the eight procedures is listed below.

**Semi-structured interviews.** For this research study it was important to design interview questions that were open-ended in order to obtain in-depth data from the participants. The format for the interviews were semi-structured, which entailed utilizing the interview question protocol (see Appendix E) that included the questions that were asked of each participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Although I had a guide to follow, the semi-structured format allowed for any additional trajectories regarding ASB experiences to occur in the interview. The semi- structured interview format also helped to ensure that reliable, comparable

Table 3

*Creswell's (2007) Recommended Interview Procedures*

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Recommended Interview Procedure	Interview Action Utilized in Research
Purposeful Sampling (determine participants)	Criterion Sampling
Type of Interview	Semi-Structured Interviews
Recording Procedures	Digitally recorded and/or Skype Interviews
Interview Protocol Design	Interview Question Protocol (see Appendix E)
Obtain Interview Consent	Sent via email prior to Interviews
Pilot Testing (to refine procedures/questions)	Used Two Pilot Interviews and Researcher (I) was interviewed
Location for Interviews	Conducted interviews from my home office and interviewees were located in quiet location
Keep Interview on Track and Finish within Allotted Time	Interviews lasted no more than 90 minutes

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qualitative data was gathered from the interviews. Furthermore, the semi-structured interview format allowed questions to be formulated ahead of time. This enabled the researcher to be organized and prepared before the interviews were conducted with each participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

**Recording, interview protocol design, and consent.** All interviews were recorded using a digital recorder except for one interview that was captured via Skype audio. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim. For the interview protocol design, an interview form with questions was developed and followed as each interview was being recorded. Hand written notes were used as a method to cross-check the interview data afterwards and as a way for me to keep the interview focused and moving at an appropriate pace. Interview consent (see Appendix A) was obtained from each participant via email prior to each participant's interview, and participants were reminded about the signed the consent form before the interview began. As a part of the interview protocol, each participant was reminded about the purpose of the research, given an overview of our time together, reminded that the information they share is confidential, given time to ask questions, and provided contact information in case they had further questions or wanted to follow-up with me after the interview. Participants were also told they could decline to participate in the research at any point without penalty. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym which was used to protect their identity (Creswell, 2007). The interview question protocol can be found in Appendix E, and the research interview protocol is in Appendix F.

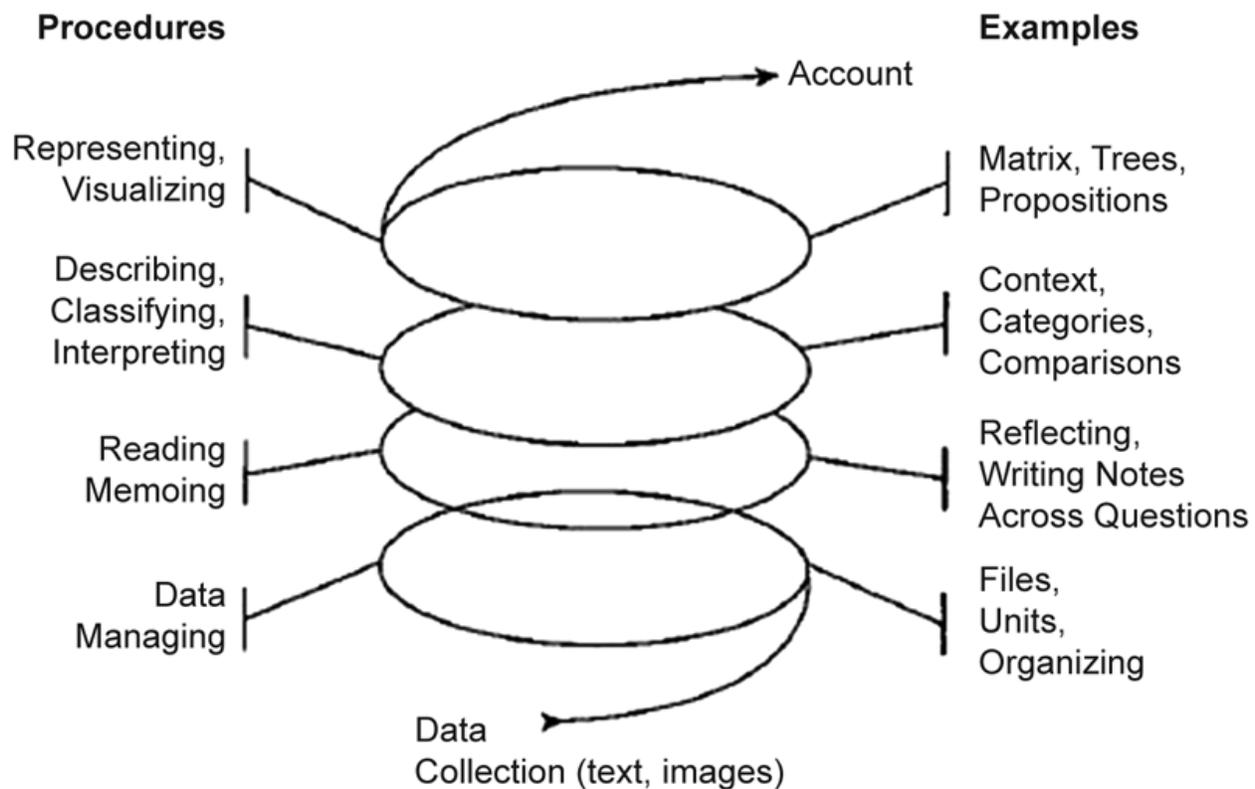
**Pilot interviews, interview location, and interview time.** Three pilot interviews were conducted in order to test the interview protocol. The first interview was with me as the interviewee which gave me the opportunity to make any necessary changes to the questions. The next two interviews were conducted with students who participated in multiple ASB experiences

while I served as the Director of CLES at UNCW. Pilot interviewing allowed me to establish the clarity and understandability of the interview protocol and whether or not any changes needed to be made. It also confirmed whether or not the interviews could be completed within seventy-five minutes. The interviews were located in spaces that were quiet and where little to no interruption could occur (Creswell, 2007). I called participants and digitally record each interview as it was conducted. Participants were encouraged to be in a quiet location for the interviews such as their home or work office. During the interviews, I maintained the focus on the interviewee in order to gather their perspectives about the ASB experience in a non-biased manner. The interviews were held within a sixty-minute to ninety-minute allotment.

### **Data Analysis**

This research utilized Creswell's (2007) Data Analysis Spiral (p. 151) (see Figure 2) along with strategies Yin (2009) recommends as a guide to analyzing the data. Creswell's (2007) Data Analysis Spiral visually demonstrates how the researcher will interact with the data in an analytical circular manner rather than in a static linear manner. In this way, the researcher begins with a set of data and moves around in a circular direction, creating a spiral, while touching several aspects of analysis until the end of the spiral process is completed which results in a final account or narrative (Creswell, 2007).

**First loop.** The first loop in the spiral process is data management, which is composed of files, units, and organizing. For this research, all documents were created and stored on my laptop computer, and backed up on a memory stick. The second loop involves interacting with the data through reading and memoing. Agar (1980) recommended that researchers review the



**Source:** Creswell (2007)

*Figure 2.* Data analysis spiral.

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full interview transcripts multiple times first before splitting the interviews into different parts. As I read each interview, I made memo notes (key thoughts and ideas) to myself in the margins, and I did this for my field notes as well (Creswell, 2007). The utilization of memoing and journaling in this research study is discussed in the next section.

**Second loop.** During the second loop, some researchers may consider moving forward with creating a small number of categories (about 10) which capture the larger themes that emerged from the data review at this point (Creswell, 2007). Also in the second loop the researcher will create the codes or categories, as mentioned above, in order for the data to be sorted in a meaningful manner. I followed Creswell's (2007) recommendation which involves the implementation of a "lean coding" (p. 152) process. The use of pre-existing codes is not to hinder an analysis, rather it is a method to help organize the data, and Creswell (2007) cautions researchers to be open to the addition of supplementary codes. Creswell (2007) also recommends viewing each theme as a "family" (p. 153) that has its own children (subthemes), and grandchildren (sub-subthemes). Based on this information, I created a provisional list of descriptive codes (codebook) that included codes for each interview question.

The descriptive codes were created primarily from the two pilot interviews, and additional codes were added based on my experience with ASB as a participant and administrator, and some codes were added based on a few of the first interviews conducted. The data were coded by data chunks rather than line by line. Descriptive coding allows data to be coded by assessing the main ideas that are present.

Then each section of the interview that was highlighted yellow was assigned a theme and sub-theme. Then each interview's yellow highlighted data was copied into an Excel spreadsheet that had the Alumni number along with the alumni member's comment. The use of Excel

allowed the data to be sorted into different formats as needed by theme and sub-theme. The next step involved tallying the number of alumni in each sub-theme for each theme. Then I worked with two coders who have a background in qualitative research and higher education. Two trained coders were incorporated in the research to increase objectivity, reliability, and lessen potential bias. The researcher and two coders reviewed and coded two transcripts separately. The coders were asked to read the entire interview first before they began coding it. The coders were also asked to use the list of descriptive codes if at all possible and to make notes of any other additional codes that may need to be added or discussed. Once everyone finished coding the interviews, I met with the two coders to review the coded data to determine similarities and differences (Creswell, 2009).

**Third loop.** The third loop is “the heart of qualitative analysis” (Creswell, 2007, p. 151) which pertains to the description, classification, and interpretation of the data. My role was to create meaning from the data and attempt to formulate a better understanding of what transpired for these students three to nine years after the ASB experience in regards to their civic and personal lives. This work included work with two coders and the methodologist.

After the meeting, I continued coding the remainder of the interviews with the current code book while adding any additional codes along the way. Once I coded all of the interviews, I went through all of the interviews a second and third time based on additional changes that were made. At this point and throughout the entire coding process, I would refer back to the literature which aided me in understanding what the participants were sharing as well as ideas for words and terminology to be used as a part of the coding process and the final theme and sub-theme names. The words and terminology I used for the codes, themes and sub-themes were influenced by my own experience and literature readings.

A second meeting was held with Coder 1 to further discuss the coding process. It was determined that the data gathered for questions 6 and 7 could be placed into a table format. The results were Tables 5 and 6. Table 4 includes the number of break trips per format (spring, fall, winter and weekend). Table 5 includes the type of service trip, the number of trips and the location of the trip.

Each data portion was given a code along with the interview number and question number which would allow it to be sorted as needed. The data that was coded was highlighted yellow for each interview transcript. Then all of the data highlighted yellow were entered into an Excel spreadsheet.

The codebook went through several reiterations as different codes emerged. The number of codes I was working with was rather high (50+), therefore I decided to create a diagram of the codes to help me visually see how these codes could be laid out and possibly reduced. It was during this process that I realized I did not have behavior or attitude categories which were a key focus in the research question. By creating a diagram, this provided another opportunity to see how some of these descriptive codes could either be changed or merged together to better reflect the data. I also created a document that provided an explanation of each of the descriptive codes and examples of what could be included with each code. This forced me to think about what information was being included in each of these descriptive codes and whether or not it was the most effective code to use.

The final coding steps involved work with the research study's methodologist. The set of 50+ codes was sent to the Methodologist along with two transcribed interviews (same interviews as coders). After she coded those two interviews we discussed her feedback. Together we determined that a number of the original codes although interesting were not pertinent to the

Table 4

*Alternative Break Trip Format and Number*

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Trip Format	Number
Spring Break	24
Fall Break	1
Winter Break	2
Weekend	3

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Table 5

*Types of Service Trips, Number of Trips by Service and Location of Service Trip*


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Type of Service Trip	Number of Trips by Type of Service	Location of Service Trip
Boys and Girls Club	2	New York/Chicago, IL
Catholic Charities	2	Atlanta, GA/Nashville, TN
Disaster Relief	4	New Orleans (three times) and Texas
Education	2	Detroit, MI/Illinois
Environmental	6	Florida (three times) Texas/Utah/Virginia
Habitat for Humanity	1	Biloxi, MS
HIV/AIDS	3	New York City/New Orleans/Washington, DC
Homelessness/Poverty	2	Atlanta, GA (two times)
Housing Rehabilitation	2	New Orleans/West Virginia
Joblessness	2	Atlanta, GA (two times)
LGBT Issues	1	Detroit, MI
Medical	2	Honduras/Maryland
Native American	1	Florida
Women's Issues	3	Detroit, MI/Washington, DC (two times)

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research question and those codes were deleted. The next step was to create a list of themes based on the codes. Once an initial list of themes was created, two more interviews were sent to the methodologist for her to code. It was determined that if the list of themes was comprehensive and included what she saw in the second set of interviews then I could proceed with the next steps of the research process. If the list of themes was not comprehensive then further reviews of interviews would take place as well as discussion around the themes.

The methodologist found the list of themes to be comprehensive and the next step was to cluster all of themes by narrowing the final list to a smaller number of themes along with sub-themes. Afterwards, all of the highlighted yellow data for each interview was assigned a theme and sub-theme. The data were copied into an Excel spreadsheet and placed into the appropriate theme sheet and marked with the appropriate sub-theme, Alumni number and with the alumni member's comments. The use of Excel allowed the data to be sorted by various criteria such as pseudonym, specific words, themes and sub-themes. The final themes and sub-themes (see Table 6) were the result of working with the methodologist, two coders, and multiple reviews of the codes and data while referring back to the literature. The five themes were: (a) continued service (b) performance of ASB, (c) personal development gains, (d) relationships, and (e) social justice. The final themes are alphabetized instead of being listed in any specific order, and the sub-themes are in no particular order.

Additional information about the 15 participants is located in Appendix G and Appendix H. Included in Appendix G is the graduation date for each Alumni member, the number of alternative break experiences they have participated in and the type of trip, year of trip, location of trip, service focus of the trip and the number of years removed from the ASB trip experience.

Table 6

*Final Themes and Sub-Themes*

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Themes	Sub-themes
Continued Service	Service oriented career Incorporating service into life
Performance of ASB	Positive experience Gratitude and appreciation Impact of ASB on participant's life Increased willingness to serve Earlier participation in ASB Impacted career choice Work-life integration
Personal development gains	Making a difference Increased skills and self-awareness Exposure and broadening Increased metacognitive skill development Reflection
Relationships	Sense of comradery Friendship Morality of care Morality of justice Increased comfort with and/or exposure to diversity
Social Justice	Privilege Responsible citizenship Helping others Social issues Increased understanding of the community Sense of personalizing

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Included in Appendix H is a brief profile for each of the 15 alumni members that include details about the ASB trips they took, their role on the trip and their current career.

**Fourth loop.** The final loop in the spiral is representing and visualizing which signifies how the researcher chooses to showcase the data. Examples include the use of tables, hierarchical tree diagrams, and hypotheses, propositions or metaphors. Tables and trees provide a visual representation to compare and contrast the data, whereas hypotheses, propositions or metaphors are ways to explain the data by using words. As noted throughout this research study, a number of tables have been created to showcase the data in various formats. These tables were considered part of the data and were analyzed as well.

**Analyzing strategies.** Researchers are advised by Yin (2009) to be fully aware of the strategies of analyzing data before they start collecting the data to avoid any stalling that could occur at this point in the research process. Yin's (2009) four strategies include relying on theoretical propositions, developing a case description, using qualitative and quantitative data, and reviewing rival explanations. Of the four strategies, the three that pertained to this research were theoretical propositions, reviewing rival explanations, and developing a case description. I utilized Break Away's Active Citizen Continuum as the conceptual model to guide the analysis and organization of the research data. This conceptual model also helped me to review rival explanations. As a part of the rival explanation strategy, I looked for evidence throughout the data collection process that could be seen as rival explanations or additional influences (Yin, 2009) and ruled them out by arguments that are supported by the data (Suter, 2012). According to Yin (2009), the case description strategy can be used as a way for the researcher to organize the data in a chapter by chapter format. Once the data was analyzed, it was then organized in a section by section format for each theme.

**Memoing and journaling.** Memoing helps to chronicle the research journey and provides an avenue for the researcher to connect and be immersed with the data at a deeper level that may not be achieved otherwise (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008). I kept memos about my research throughout the process. These were primarily in the form of correspondence between my dissertation chair and methodologist. These memos allowed me to formulate my ideas and to explore different trajectories the research could take whether it was determining the qualitative approach to select or finalizing the research question. These memos have provided a chronological log to review especially when revisiting why certain decisions were made during the course of the dissertation proposal stage. I utilized memoing throughout the entire research process. One of the significant contributions of memoing is that it encourages researchers to initiate and maintain productivity throughout the entire research process (Birks et al., 2008).

Memoing can also be a useful strategy in analyzing the data in order for meaning to be extrapolated from the data and subsequently expressed in conceptual terms (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). A question that is helpful to keep in mind during the data analysis stage is, “What is actually happening in the data?” (Glaser, 1978, p. 57). Memos provide a safe place for researchers to explore their ideas throughout the research process. Furthermore, the memoing process helps the researcher overcome the “analytic paralysis” which means the researcher has a difficult time going from the data collection phase to the analysis stage of the research process because there is a fear of making mistakes (Clarke, 2005, p. 84). According to Birks et al. (2008), memoing can be considered comparable to journaling although journaling tends to have a more emotional or affective component to it. For this research study, I kept a research journal as well. The research journal was primarily used after I conducted each interview to record my thoughts, feelings, ideas about what transpired during the interview. The research journal

recorded the personal challenges, discoveries, and reflective moments that transpired for me throughout the research process. Memoing and journaling helped to safeguard the transparency of this research study process, and it uncovered any biases that may have existed. They were also considered part of the data for this research study and were consulted throughout the coding and data analyzation processes.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of this research included students who participated in ASB trips through their institutions that are members of Break Away. A number of institutions that conduct ASB trips are not members of Break Away. The connection to Break Away was chosen because it an organization that supports the alternative spring break trip efforts on campuses across the United States. Furthermore, part of Break Away's mission is to develop citizens who are committed to becoming lifelong active citizens; hence Break Away's mission and active citizen continuum best supported the current research study since creating lifelong active citizens is incorporated into the student's ASB trip experience.

A delimitation of this research limitation was regulating the number of participants interviewed at institutions due to the time constraints involved with the interviewing, transcription, and subsequent data analysis. Therefore the decision was made to interview participants whose institutions were members of Break Away, which is an organization that supports higher education institutions that sponsor alternative break trips. The second delimitation to the study was to narrow the number of Break Away institutions by focusing on specific characteristics of colleges and universities such as size, type, and geographic location. This was accomplished by utilizing the Carnegie Classification system (Carnegie Invites Institutions to Apply for 2015 Community Engagement Classification (2013); Carnegie Report,

2006) the U.S. Census Bureau data (U.S. Census Bureau Announces 2010 Census Population Counts, 2010; U.S. Bureau of Statistics, 2012; Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2013).

## **Summary**

The overall purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative research study was to understand the potential role (if any) the domestic ASB experience may have had on participants' later civic behaviors and attitudes. Specifically, this research examined the potential role that ASB experiences that occurred three to nine years ago have had on participants' later civic and personal lives.

The participants were selected by working with the director of Break Away and purposive and maximum variation sampling was utilized. All of the necessary steps were undertaken with East Carolina University's IRB office to ensure the human subjects were protected in this study. I applied Creswell's (2007) Recommended Interview Procedures, Yin's (2009) sources of evidence for data preparation, and Creswell's (2007) Data Analysis Spiral to ensure the research design, data gathering, and data analysis were done appropriately. All of the data were coded with the assistance of two trained coders and methodologist. Afterwards, I described, interpreted, and classified the data. Additional meetings were also held with the methodologist to ensure objectivity and minimize any bias in the findings. Chapter 4 will share the findings from this research study, and Chapter 5 will present and overview and discussion of the findings.

## **CHAPTER 4: OVERVIEW AND FINDINGS**

### **Overview and Findings**

This qualitative research study captured the stories of 15 participants and their alternative spring break (ASB) experiences. The purpose of this research was to explore the potential role that the domestic co-curricular ASB trip may have played in the participants' later civic behaviors and attitudes. Alternative break trips involve a group of students (usually 10-12) who decide to participate in community service during an official break during the academic calendar year (fall, winter, spring and/or weekend). The students spend time together learning about the social issues and work closely with a local non-profit organization located domestically or abroad. Each trip is focused on different social issues such as homelessness, education reform, health education, and the environment. These break trips provide an opportunity for students to reflect and think critically about the various social issues found in the communities they serve (Break Away, n.d.).

#### **Overview**

A total of 17 institutions were invited to participate in the research (included original list of five institutions and the alternate list of 12 institutions), and seven institutions agreed to participate. From these seven institutions, a total of 15 participants agreed to participate in the research study. Originally, the research used six years post-graduation as the criteria to obtain participants to interview. This meant the participants would have had to graduate in the spring of 2008 and completed an ASB trip in the spring of 2008. This criteria did not yield enough participant responses, therefore the year of graduation and participation in an ASB trip were expanded. The 15 participants took an ASB trip during the spring between 2005 and 2011 and graduated during the spring semester between 2008 and 2011.

The seven institutions that participated in this research included a mix of different geographic locations, size and public/private. There were three located in the North East, two were located in the Mid-West, and two were located in the South. There were two small private institutions, one medium public institution, and four large public institutions. When the research proposal was submitted to IRB in June 2014, all institutions were members of Campus Compact and had the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement. Institution A and institution B are small private institutions with student populations of 2,450 and 2,600 respectively. Institution C is a medium sized public institution with a student population of 6,082. Institution D, institution E, institution F, and institution G are large public institutions with student populations of 30,256; 33,000; 40,255 and 43,426 respectively. The seven institutions represent seven different states which include (a) Connecticut, (b) Florida, (c) Texas, (d) Michigan, (e) Missouri, (f) Pennsylvania, and (g) Vermont.

Participants were asked to answer 13 questions during the course of the interview. Once all of the interview data was transcribed, I began analyzing the data. The first step was to create a provisional list of descriptive codes. The descriptive codes were created primarily from the two pilot interviews I conducted before starting interviews with the ASB participants. Additional codes were added based on my experience with ASB trips as a participant and administrator, and some codes were added based on a few of the first interviews conducted.

Break Away's Active Citizen Continuum was the conceptual framework utilized, and the research question was:

What is the potential role (if any) of the domestic co-curricular alternative spring break (ASB) experience on participants' later civic behaviors and attitudes?

## **Findings**

There were five themes that emerged from the research: (a) continued service, (b) performance of ASB, (c) personal development gains, (d) relationships, and (e) social justice. The five identified themes and sub-themes were presented in Table 6 in Chapter 3. The final themes will be discussed in alphabetical order; however the sub-themes are not discussed in any particular order and will be discussed as the first sub-theme, second sub-theme, etc. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the words and terminology I used for the codes, themes and sub-themes were influenced by my own experience and literature readings. Although participants may not have used the exact terminology as expressed in the themes and sub-themes, the words were selected because it aligned with prior research found in the literature.

### **Continued Service**

Continued service is the first theme and encompassed two sub-themes: (a) service-oriented career, and (b) incorporating service into life. This theme highlights participant comments regarding service-oriented careers and how participants were trying to incorporate service into their lives. Of the 15 participants, 12 were involved in a career that was service-oriented (see Appendix I). Five participants were focused on careers in health care including two medical students, one physician's assistant student, one nursing school applicant, and one individual serving with a primary care association. Additional service-oriented careers included work for a social service group, the National Democratic Institute, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and a food bank. Two other participants identified their roles as director of diversity for an independent high school and coordinator of alternative break programs. The three remaining participants, who were not involved in service-oriented careers, self-identified

roles in journalism, restaurant operations, and design. Two of the participants served in AmeriCorps, one served in Teach for America and one served in the Peace Corps.

**Service-oriented career.** The first sub-theme of continued service is service-oriented career; it refers to participants who articulated thoughts regarding selecting a service-oriented career. Ten participants made comments related to this sub-theme. As a medical student, Teresa has assisted with running a free medical clinic for her community. Dorothy said she was “subconsciously” inspired by ASB to hold an environmental education position as well as an AmeriCorps role after graduation.

Deborah said that through her ASB experiences she recognized her desire to work directly with people as a part of her career. She said, “I realized I wanted to spend 40 hours a week helping other people. I wanted my career to be one where I can get that feeling every day and get paid (laughter).” Ashley noted that through her ASB experience she did not want to go the regular route of medical school; therefore, she looked for a better fit, which was physician’s assistant school. At the time of her interview, Phyllis had been back from her service in the Peace Corps for two months. She discussed how well ASB had prepared her for her work in the country of Lesotho.

Amy discussed her exposure to AmeriCorps volunteers on her trip and how this impacted her decision to participate in AmeriCorps and make service a significant part of her life. Similarly, Louise served as a teacher in the Teach for America program based on her interest in working with underserved populations. At the time of her interview, she was pursuing medical school and indicated a desire to continue working in an underserved community upon graduation.

**Incorporating service into life.** The second sub-theme of continued service is incorporating service into life, and there were 10 participants who expressed an interest in continuing to incorporate service into their lives as a result of ASB, although a number of them noted that they still did not know what this might involve. Over half of these participants indicated that scheduling time to participate in service posed a challenge for them. Of these participants, one was enrolled in medical school and the other one in physician's assistant school. Both of these individuals expressed how their schedules were too full with the demands of school (e.g., studying, exams) and how it would be "impossible" to fit service into their current schedules.

Four participants were involved in service-oriented careers but still had a desire to participate in additional service. A number of participants also mentioned the challenge of having moved frequently over the past several years which made it more difficult to get involved with the community through service.

Ashley discussed a website called Volunteer Match that she had utilized when she moved to new areas. The site allows organizations to list volunteer opportunities in the area, and individuals can filter the list by the day of the week, a specific timeframe, and their availability. Laura mentioned the benefits of being a college student and the access students have to various opportunities including community service. She expanded further by saying:

There are tons and tons of people getting paid to establish resources and programs for you. And so I think as a college student, you take for granted that life in the real world doesn't work like that. Like, if you want to get involved in something, it's not as easy as just walking into somebody's office like a classroom or dorm room. That you have to

have the skill set or this drive and the time to really reach out and accomplish it on your own. And so I think that that is something that's difficult for a lot of people.

Although the majority of participants did not express a concern about reaching out to community organizations, Teresa acknowledged that she did not feel confident enough to venture out and find a community service project in which she could participate. As a physician's assistant student, Ashley discussed how she could easily cite being busy with school and having limited time as reasons for not currently being involved in service. She admitted, however, "I am going to be busy for the rest of my life and I do need to figure out ways to volunteer in a busy lifestyle." Similar to Laura, she noted how ASB puts like-minded people together who have similar schedules and time to participate intensely in service, which is not common once individuals are out of school.

Nearly half of the participants acknowledged the uniqueness of the ASB experience and how it was hard to recapture that through other community service endeavors. For example, one participant had had two weeks of free time in spring 2014 and tried to find an international service-oriented trip but said it was too expensive. The majority of participants expressed an interest in participating in an ASB-type experience now as an older adult. Currently, Break Away is considering expanding its scope to include ASB trips for adults.

Phyllis mentioned how important she felt it was to help participants continue to be involved in service when they returned. She said, "I remember after the trips we tried to do some sort of local volunteering in the community near our institution that was related to that social justice issue to provide an opportunity to stay involved with that issue." Craig, one of the medical students, discussed his interest in contacting the same service site he participated in as an undergraduate ASB participant to see if they could bring a group of students to conduct

service there again. He mentioned working with his alma mater or his church group to offer this experience.

Susan said that providing service on a person-to-person level would be of interest to her since she did not receive these types of interactions in her everyday job even though it is a service-oriented position. Betty suggested that community service would be another way for her to become more engaged with her community and to work on new issues separate from the ones she addresses in her service-oriented career.

Of the three participants who were involved in non-service-oriented careers, Jeffrey mentioned being involved in donating to charities and participating in charitable fund-raising events (see Appendix I). Susan indicated that she had just started volunteering again. She said she wished she had been more involved. With regards to her ASB experience, she said, "I just wonder if it's like oh that was nice. I did that now I don't have to do that anymore." Margaret noted that she serves as the co-head of the Community Action Day for her alma mater and has been in this position for the past five years.

Ruby serves as an alternative break coordinator; she confirmed that there are alumni members who would like to participate in an alternative break as adults. She stated:

So how do you, especially with the trend of a lot of students going into post-secondary education and those being less available, how do we either make those available or find other ways in which to engage and still encourage people to work towards that active citizenship when they're in a different life capacity compared to undergraduate?

Furthermore, Ruby discussed the importance of helping students determine ways in which service can be a part of their careers and instill in them the idea that service should be a part of their lifelong decision-making process.

## **Performance of ASB**

The performance of the alternative spring break experience is the third theme and incorporated the following seven sub-themes: (a) positive experience, (b) gratitude and appreciation, (c) impact of ASB on participant's life, (d) increased willingness to serve, (e) earlier participation in ASB, (f) impact on career choice, and (g) work-life integration.

**Positive experience.** The first sub-theme for performance of ASB reflects a positive sub-theme which captures positive comments shared by participants regarding different aspects of their ASB experience, such as the service they provided, interactions with community members, increased awareness of various social issues, and the ASB experience overall. Ten participants referred to the specific social issue that was the focus on their ASB trip in sharing their positive comments about the experience. By cleaning polluted sea waters to help sea turtles or working with women in a shelter, participants commented on developing more educated and less biased views related to these social issues. Dorothy said that she was now "okay" with paying national park entrance fees because she knew that these fees were directly helping the parks.

Three participants shared positive comments about the long-term impact the ASB experience had had on their lives. Susan said, "It's like the effect of the ASB experience has been on my mind in some capacity for a very long time so I mean in general it's just...added to my worldview and obviously my work (as a designer)." Craig discussed the sustained, positive impact of the ASB experience on his life:

I hope to one day to donate a little here and there or whatever to my alma mater and you know one day get a little bit more money or what not and donate it specifically to the ASB so other students can experience it as well.

Two participants discussed the value of ASB experiences for students. Deborah expressed her desire for ASB trips to be a requirement for college students in order to introduce them to environments that may be new and unfamiliar. Laura also expressed support for the ASB experience and said that she thought it was one of the best forms of experiential education. Laura self-identified as an educator and said that she realizes the value of experiential education opportunities from the viewpoint of a participant and now as an educator. She further noted how successful these experiences can be “in providing long lasting impacts on people’s views and perspectives.”

Laura acknowledged that one of the main reasons she wanted to participate in this current research study was to affirm the value and impact of experiences such as ASB and advocate for appropriate funding and resources for continuation of ASB programs. She said, “I think that the programs (ASB trips) provide a valuable experience for students. And that it’s an experience that students take advantage of that could be absolutely transformative.”

**Gratitude and appreciation.** Gratitude and appreciation was the second sub-theme related to performance of ASB; four participants expressed a sense of gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity to participate in an ASB experience. Teresa said that she was grateful for ASB trips because they introduced participants to important social issues such as climate change.

Two participants said that when they looked back on their collegiate experiences in terms of their ASB trips they had no regrets. The decision to participate in ASB was the right one for them. Betty said that she was grateful that her institution provided such meaningful experiences for students, experiences that “...can open their eyes to the world around them.” Louise expressed appreciation for ASB trips because these opportunities provided alternatives to the

“typical spring break” trip filled with partying and drinking. She stated, the ASB trip “...made me a better person in every way.”

**Impact of ASB on participant’s life.** The impact of ASB on a participant’s life is the third sub-theme for the performance of ASB, and it was identified by 13 participants. This sub-theme describes the various types of impacts the ASB experience had on a participant’s life, whether large or small. The sub-theme also describes the various ways in which the experience impacted participant behaviors and attitudes. Of the 13 participants who commented on this sub-theme, 11 reported a significantly high level of impact of the ASB experience on their lives while two reported lower impact levels.

Teresa said that prior to the experience she had no expectations of community service; Jeffrey indicated that the initial ASB did not cause him to engage in more service. However, he later reported that reflecting on his ASB experience through this research study made him consider engaging in additional service activities because these reflections “kind of reinvigorates those ideas.”

Of the 11 participants who indicated that ASB had significantly influenced their lives, two focused on the idea of ASB serving as a catalyst or spark that could have both immediate and future impacts. Ruby said:

Alternative breaks are that catalyst, that spark that says, ‘Hey, here’s a thought from experience, look how rewarding it was, look how much you learned about yourself and others, what are you going to do to keep that as part of your life?’ And when you do keep that as part of your life and make...and follow that passion or get more involved in other ways, it is then I think that you become more of a change agent.

A number of participants shared similar comments. Doris said:

Oh man...it would be way different. I mean I would not have been on SERVE. I would not have, I don't think I would have done AmeriCorps. I don't know what I'd be doing. I, I can't even imagine. It helped me become who I am today. I can't even imagine what I'd be like otherwise.

After graduation, Phyllis served as a Peace Corp volunteer. With respect to her ASB experience she said, "I feel like I would have missed out on an incredible opportunity since not many college students can say they worked on these social justice issues that are really important in America."

Three participants discussed how immersive the ASB experience was and how as participants they learned about making a "positive sustainable change." Susan stated:

I don't know that anything could ever replicate the ASB experience. I mean it's just, it was a very, very powerful very immersive volunteer trip, and I just, I don't know. It was just on a different scale.

Betty suggested that after an ASB experience, volunteering may not seem as meaningful for some participants because they become accustomed to being more engaged with the community organization and its members, and this type of meaningful interaction is what they are seeking. Laura discussed how her ASB experience was something she remembered "very acutely" even though it was six or seven years later. She said she still talks about it today because of the impact it had on her perspective of life.

Ruby emphasized the life skills she learned from her ASB experiences. She noted that she most likely would have learned these life skills later in life but the ASB experience expedited her learning which may have changed her worldview. Several participants portrayed the ASB

experience as significant to them but did not categorize it as a life altering or life changing experience.

**Increased willingness to serve.** An increased willingness to serve is the fourth sub-theme of performance of ASB. It refers to individual perceptions that participating in an ASB experience increased participants' willingness to engage in future service activities. Six participants expressed this sentiment.

Teresa said the ASB experience made her more receptive to the possibility of participating in community service in the future. Similarly, Craig suggested that ASB encouraged him to want to do more volunteering which ultimately led him to participate in a service trip to Honduras as a medical student. He said, "If I could do it again, I'd do it every year if I had the chance." Jeffrey said the experience opened his eyes to be more willing to help those in need. Phyllis indicated that she gained a great deal from her ASB experience but wanted more. She explained:

I wanted to have a more engaged and longer experience with service so I wanted to completely devote myself to a social justice or certain social justice issues and to serve for an extended amount of time to make sure I was actually making positive and sustainable difference in the community I was working in.

Subsequent to her ASB experience, Phyllis served in the Peace Corps program for two years.

Amy said she liked the idea that volunteering with others could provide rich bonding experiences among participants, and this encouraged her to continue service because she knew she would be with like-minded people who incorporated service into their lives.

**Earlier participation in ASB.** Earlier participation in ASB is the fifth sub-theme for performance of ASB, and it depicts a desire by participants to have participated in the ASB

experience earlier in their academic careers. Four participants made specific comments regarding this sub-theme. None of these individuals participated in an ASB trip as early as a freshman. Instead, one participant took her first trip as a sophomore (international), one as a junior, and two as seniors.

Craig, who participated in his only undergraduate ASB trip as a senior, attributed his experiences as a motivation to participate in an ASB trip to Honduras that was organized as a part of his medical school experience. Dorothy participated in a trip during her senior year and said she wished she had experienced more of the different types of trips by getting involved with the ASB trips earlier as a freshman or sophomore. Deborah participated in two alternative break trips between her junior and senior years and participated in several weekend break trips. She indicated that she wished she had started in her freshman year in order to have participated in the program all four years in addition to her involvement in other volunteer efforts and a global volunteering group. Louise participated in an international ASB trip during her sophomore year and a domestic ASB trip during her senior year. In describing her experiences she said:

I wish this was starting even earlier. You know I would have loved to do something like this in middle school or high school, you know? Like I said, the earlier you start community service and the earlier you start investing people in the community, the more likely you are to continue that service.

**Impacted career choice.** The sixth sub-theme for performance of ASB is impacted career choice. It describes participant career choices that were positively influenced the ASB experience; six participants contributed to this sub-theme. Doris said she knew she wanted to help others as a part of her career, and she attributed her decision to participate in AmeriCorps upon graduation to her participation in an ASB trip. Phyllis completed three ASB trips and one

weekend break trip and said she felt the break trips had a direct impact on her decision to serve in the Peace Corps. For her, the trips confirmed her interest in the Peace Corps as well as her ability to be successful.

Laura recalled a vivid memory from her ASB experience that confirmed her career choice of education. As an ASB participant, Laura and her fellow participants played games with children in an after-school program. During their visit to the after-school program, one little girl “attached herself,” according to Laura. The little girl appeared sad when Laura and her group left for the day. For Laura, this incident reinforced her “anger and frustration over these large disparities” which, in turn, strengthened her desire to pursue education in order to be an individual who “shows up” for children.

Amy served in AmeriCorps after graduation and noted that her experience was uniquely influenced by AmeriCorps staff members because these staff members were specifically involved with her trip’s service site. Through this experience, she was able to really understand what service in AmeriCorps involved. Ruby said she changed her career path because her attempts to be admitted to a physician’s assistant program were unsuccessful, and her passion laid elsewhere. According to Ruby, she was contacted by her alma mater regarding a community service position in another state which ultimately led to her current position as the coordinator of alternative break trips for her alma mater. She said,

Well they (ASB trips) certainly changed my career path. They have again that humanizing aspect, again, I kind of said this, but I think it does connect. I think in my personal conversations that I don’t just want to stand for the status quo. I want to take on different perspectives and learn different perspectives and bring those to different conversations I’m having.

Louise attributed her career as a medical student and her commitment to working in impoverished and underserved areas to her involvement in ASB. Her two ASB experiences included a trip to Louisiana to help rebuild after Hurricane Katrina and an international trip to Nicaragua that was part of a third world educational experience.

**Work-life integration.** The final sub-theme for performance of ASB is work-life integration. It encapsulates participants who expressed difficulties separating their personal and professional lives. Alumni participants Doris, Phyllis, Betty and Amy contributed to this sub-theme. Doris said, “I’m having a hard time separating my personal life from my professional life.” Phyllis served as a Peace Corp volunteer and expressed how challenging it was to have boundaries between one’s professional and personal life since the work was all day every day of the week. Betty and Amy had similar thoughts. Amy expressed it by saying:

My personal life for me is so integrated into like my work because it is just what I enjoy and it is just what I feel is important. But it doesn’t really feel like a choice to me. It feels natural, if that makes sense.

### **Personal Development Gains**

Personal development gains are the second theme and encompassed the following five sub-themes: (a) making a difference, (b) increased skills and self-awareness, (c) exposure and broadening, (d) increased metacognitive skill development, and (e) reflection.

**Making a difference.** The first sub-theme for personal development gains was self-efficacy which describes participant realizations that they could make a difference. Eleven students identified some aspect of self-efficacy, including five who recognized that they could make a difference as an individual or as part of a group. Two of these participants mentioned that through ASB they realized how one person can make a difference. To support this claim, Jeffrey

said, “I can lead some sort of progress or make some situations better by just donating nothing but my time basically.”

Ruby noted that the members of her group became so overwhelmed by the social issue and its implications that they started questioning how they could individually make a difference. In response, Ruby challenged these students to find causes they were most passionate about since she felt there were enough people to tackle the issues. Likewise, Laura said that she realized she was not alone in wanting to make a difference; there were others who were passionate about making a difference as well. Doris and Ashley described the importance of taking personal initiative to get involved with service and the community. Ashley stated:

I think where people fall through is they wait for other people to say ‘why don’t you do this with me’ and that opportunity isn’t going to always present itself and a lot of times you have to be the one to step up and make it happen.

A number of participants mentioned learning to stand up for what they believed in and becoming a better advocate by participating in the ASB experience. With regard to advocacy, Ruby said:

I feel like I have a capacity in which to kind of shift or allow for an opportunity to give a different perspective to potentially shift someone’s prospective. Not to say change their mind, but to just allow them to think through a different lens.

**Increased skills and self-awareness.** The second sub-theme for personal development gains was increased skills and self-awareness; 14 participants commented on this sub-theme. Examples of increased skills and self-awareness involved ways in which ASB helped participants gain self-confidence, develop leadership skills, identify career opportunities, and learn more about their personality and character traits. Five participants mentioned an increase in their self-confidence as a result of participating in the ASB trip. Participants made gains in self-

confidence by leading others. One also mentioned an increase in self-confidence related to using tools to do home repairs.

Three participants (Doris, Margaret, and Phyllis) served as co-trip leaders, which gave them more experience in leading groups of people and consequently resulted in greater self-confidence. One participant said the opportunity of interacting with diverse people also increased her level of confidence.

Four participants (Dorothy, Doris, Margaret, and Ashley) specifically mentioned how their leadership skills grew as a result of the ASB trip. Two of these participants served as co-trip leaders and one served as the sole trip leader. These four participants also discussed elements of leadership that were enhanced, such as using different leadership styles, learning about group dynamics, being responsible, and taking initiative. Margaret said she realized she enjoyed doing the actual service work, whereas Ashley preferred to organize and lead the service project as well as participate in it.

In terms of career, participants described how the ASB experience confirmed their career interests or exposed them to other information they needed as they continued to explore career interests. Betty and Ruby indicated that the ASB trip reinforced the career directions they were pursuing including public health for one and social services for the other. Ruby expressed a desire to work in underserved areas and realized that she would need to learn more about the services and agencies that operate in those areas. Doris said, "I think that being on the leadership team (for ASB trips) definitely helped me prepare for my career more than anything I've ever done before." This individual now works with an agency that provides services for Lower East side residents in New York through social services, the arts, and health care.

In terms of personality and character traits, three participants mentioned learning to become more flexible since the details of ASB trips often change. Other personality and character traits mentioned by participants included confirming their values, becoming a better and more empathetic listener, and getting in touch with one's sensitive side.

**Exposure and broadening.** Exposure and broadening was the third sub-theme of increased skills and self-awareness. This sub-theme describes the ways in which participants were exposed to new people, places, cultures, and social issues and thereby broadened their worldviews; seven participant experiences reflected this sub-theme.

Ruby suggested that ASB experiences provided opportunities for participants to connect with the “best parts” of others because everyone is engaged together for a common cause. Doris proposed that ASB allows individuals to view their experiences or challenges differently than they normally would and to value others' perspectives. On her ASB trip, Betty worked on rebuilding a home. During this experience, she had the opportunity to interact with one of the service recipients. Betty said that through discussions she realized the service recipient had had a very different upbringing from her. He (the service recipient) was 18 or 19 years old and already had two children. Describing the interaction she said:

It was hard for me to imagine someone younger than me being responsible for two kids, and it was great to see that he was spending his time volunteering because this was an organization that helped him get on his feet.

Dorothy, whose trip was to a national park in Utah, said the experience exposed her group to two cultures: the culture of Utah and the culture of Mormons. Louise discussed the value of participating in a cultural immersion experience. She suggested that others need to experience cultures that are different from what they are used to in order to inspire change and become

agents of change. She said, “It [ASB] opened my eyes to new people and cultures, made me more accepting of differences, made me understand differences, and I wouldn’t have been able to do that had these trips not been offered.”

Dorothy maintained that exposing others to different social issues was critical since it opens up new possibilities for individuals. Ruby encouraged others to discover the social issue they were most passionate about in order to “move forward on that and go for it all the way to try to rectify these issues.” Laura explained that through her participation in ASB she now prioritizes opportunities to gain exposure to new experiences and places in life that may not be comfortable. She said she would not have done this otherwise but experienced the value of learning through others’ experiences.

**Increased metacognitive skill development.** The fourth sub-theme that emerged for personal development gains was increased metacognitive skill development, which refers to a higher level of thinking that allows an individual to understand both what they know and what they do not know. Five participants shared insights that reflected this sub-theme.

Craig reported that he had had an ASB experience that was focused on the environment. As a result of this experience, he realized that he and his wife did not emphasize recycling nor did their families. He said he was resolved to make a change in behavior. Susan said, “I mean it was a huge eye opener just even that these things [issues] exist and that you know you have to choose to make the time to dedicate yourself to them.” Her service trip was focused on serving the homeless by preparing them for employment with job readiness skills (e.g., resume writing) and serving them food.

Phyllis worked with the homeless in Washington, DC, and said she had no idea that homelessness was such a large issue in the nation’s capital. Laura participated in a different trip

to Washington, DC, in which she and her group served in soup kitchens and learned about services for individuals living with HIV/AIDS. She said she had no idea of the challenges that a large number of people were experiencing. Betty said she knew issues existed but had “zero awareness of them” and did not possess an in-depth knowledge of the issues and barriers that existed for progress to be made. She stated:

I think AB breaks in general really opened my eyes to social justice and how every person can play a role in that and what role they can or...or...or should be and how it's sort of up to the person and how you feel.

Laura indicated that she had some knowledge about social issues prior to the trip and definitely had more knowledge than her peers. Her ASB trip was focused on women, politics, and children. Laura said, “It was very humbling for me to go down and see all of this and find out some of these things that are happening that I didn't know or wasn't aware of.” For example, she came to realize that a large number of homeless individuals also have some form of mental health issue. She shared additional concerns as a result of her experience, “What is that to be said about people who have no interests or sort of operate with a blind eye and go about their day-to-day? So, I experienced a little of despair actually after I came back.”

**Reflection.** Reflection was the fifth sub-theme for personal development gains. It pertains to participant comments regarding the role of reflection in the ASB experience as well as ASB reflections as a part of this current research study. Five participants discussed reflection, three in relation to the ASB experience and two as part of this research study. The three participants who discussed reflection as a part of the ASB experience mentioned the value of having daily reflections to process their experiences each day. Margaret noted that her group reflected by sharing two positives (two roses) and one negative (thorn) about the day. The group

discussed these thorns (negatives) and devised ways to change them into positives. Laura suggested that reflection was an essential component of the ASB experience because it allowed the group to discuss their insights and feelings throughout the trip. Ruby further contended that reflecting with others was a unique experience, especially with individuals she did not know very well. She said:

But I think that when you can connect your service experiences with your education about the social issue or about social issues in general, because oftentimes I think alternative breaks have cultural competency or they talk about active citizen continuum and stuff. So when you connect those and then actually give a frame in which you can think on what you're learning and doing through reflection, that's when you really hit that sweet spot of okay, all these components need to be part of my life in general and how am I going to make that part of my life and then how am I going to bring that to others as well and then become that change agent.

Phyllis and Betty both mentioned reflection as a part of this current research study and expressed thanks to have had another opportunity to reflect on their ASB experiences. Phyllis inferred that people who asked her and her group about their ASB experience usually did not want to know what they critically thought about it or how it may have impacted them. Betty said that her ASB memories were something she had not thought about in some time, and she enjoyed the opportunity to relive the experiences.

## **Relationships**

Relationships was the fourth theme and included the following five sub-themes: (a) sense of comradery, (b) friendships, (c) morality of care, (d) morality of justice, and (e) increased comfort with and/or exposure to diversity. Participants were asked to share what they learned

about the students, staff, and community members with whom they worked and served at the service sites. The majority of participants focused on the other participants who served with them from their school and the individuals who were the recipients of their service at the sites.

Individuals who participated in environmental break trips reported having even more time with their colleagues since there were fewer individuals to interact with, given that the focus was on helping, restoring, and/or cleaning sea life. Whereas those who participated in trips focused on working with individuals such as those impacted by HIV/AIDS, homelessness or in a particular community such as the Boys and Girls Clubs are working more directly with the adults and children. Therefore, they may have less time to spend with their colleagues during the actual service time allotted.

**Sense of comradery.** The first sub-theme of relationships was a sense of comradery among participants. This sub-theme encompasses the feeling of trust and a bond created by individuals who engage in a shared goal or experience. Participants expressed an understanding that individuals did not have to be best friends with everyone in the group to experience their support. Twelve of the fifteen participants mentioned experiencing some form of comradery. Specifically, participants commented on how valuable it was to know that their peers had similar interests in community service and that everyone made an intentional choice to participate in the break trip. Participants suggested that the special bond and trust that was created was based on the common goal to serve together during a break trip. Phyllis said:

I guess as a whole what I learned from the other students was that there are other people my age...there are other people who are just as passionate about service and social justice as I was. And it was really inspiring to connect with other students who wanted to, you

know, wanted to make some sort of positive change that they could and where they could and were willing to explore new types of issues in different parts of the country.

**Friendship.** The second sub-theme of relationships was friendship. There were six participants who mentioned friendship as an important component of their break trip experience. This sub-theme focused solely on the friendships made between participants on the trip. Some participants attended break trips with friends they already knew, whereas others met new friends as a result of their break trip participation. A number of participants noted that they were still in contact with these lifelong friends and expressed the instrumental role these individuals have played in their lives since the break trip. Susan commented:

You know, Diane is my best friend. She has been for a decade now and, you know, that's obviously something and an experience we shared together which was a very big deal and then the two or three people from there that I'm still friends with. I mean they're really an important part of my life so I guess that would honestly be the biggest thing is I wouldn't know those friends.

A few participants also served as co-leaders with the person they now call a lifelong friend. Dorothy shared, "My friendship with my co-leader has been really important in my personal life, and she is definitely one of my best friends, and I think that (ASB trip) really solidified our friendship well."

**Morality of care.** Morality of care was the third sub-theme of relationships, and it describes how participants focused on relationships with service recipients and were responsive to their welfare. Participants were able to easily recollect moments with service recipients and their interactions while the service was being conducted. There were five participants who

identified situations that reflected morality of care. Phyllis remembered her experience of working with the elderly and having opportunities to enjoy valuable conversations with them.

She said:

But I feel like I remember just having really good conversations with the elderly in these nursing homes. I learned a lot about their lives. They had so much to share. I feel like that was the importance of the communication and really valuing the conversations and what you could learn from people who have so much history. That's what my take away from that trip was.

A number of participants also interacted with children through the Boys and Girls Club or through other educational environments. Doris discussed in detail how her group's service involved serving food restaurant-style rather than cafeteria-style, which is typical of most soup kitchens. She continued:

I think that's part of why the restaurant was set up like that, because it was recognizing that people should be filled with dignity and a soup kitchen might strip away some dignity from a person who's already struggling and doesn't feel like they are seen. So, to have the people come in and sit down at a table and you come, we serve you, we would be like the servers, the waiters and waitresses and we would go and take their order, see what they wanted, serve them water, you know, and treat them like a normal customer.

Teresa and Jeffrey discussed how it made an impression on them to see the willingness of their colleagues to spend time serving others on their spring break, and it allowed them to see a different side of their friends which could be along the lines of morality of care towards others. Susan shared how complex it was to build these relationships with others especially in order to be effective.

**Morality of justice.** The fourth sub-theme of relationships was morality of justice, which refers to the importance of treating others the way you would want to be treated and includes a sense of equality and reciprocity. There were six participants who discussed the importance of showing respect to service recipients. Margaret mentioned people's pride and the importance of understanding that there are "right and wrong ways" of helping others. She said:

I learned that even though people may be down and out they still have pride. And they don't necessarily need all types of help. For example, the NY trip guy (volunteer coordinator) was really hesitant even though he was a black man we were also black people. He was really hesitant about us coming into their space and I completely understand it. So people have pride and there are right and wrong ways of helping. And we have to be cautious of that because in helping other people we want them to be comfortable...we want them to be like um...pause...like completely feel, feel okay about the experience even after it's over.

Participants frequently remarked that we are all human beings and because of this we should not treat others differently. Doris commented, "I learned that what people need the most is to be treated with respect." In describing her experience with the Boys and Girls Club she said, "...even if their faces are different, everybody deserves the same amount of respect." Teresa communicated the importance of not judging those who are receiving the service. Rather, the importance was in seeing them as equal humans. Louise noted that as human beings, "...We're all the same and kind of searching for the same thing." Another participant said, "And you know, we all cherish the same thing, we all, you know, we all love, we all want comfort, we all want happiness, and we all want to live in prosperity."

**Increased comfort with and/or exposure to diversity.** The sixth sub-theme of relationships was increased comfort with and/or exposure to diversity. This sub-theme encompasses being exposed to different people whether it is other participants on the trip or the service recipients and how this experience increased their knowledge and understanding of others. Fourteen participants described experiences that reflected the theme of diversity.

Only one respondent discussed diversity in terms of service recipients; this conversation focused on the commonalities that all human beings have such as love and wanting happiness and comfort. The remaining participants commented on their fellow participants and what they learned by being with a group of people for a week. Several individuals described their group composition as an interesting mix of people of different majors and ages as well as different career and academic interests. According to Jeffrey, the ASB allows individuals to learn how to work with different personalities while learning to go with the flow and to put others' needs before their own. A number of participants discussed the value of connecting with others who were different from them and the benefits of stepping outside of their comfort zone. Craig said, "You don't have to look the same or have the same music or religion interest in order to work together towards a common goal." Similarly, Deborah commented:

So there were all different levels of students. So there were freshmen. There was a girl who was in a master's program, I believe, in education. And there were varying races. There was a Polish guy who spoke with the language and was deeply entrenched in the culture. There was Black, White, Indian, and varying levels of understanding about inequalities in education and even cultural issues that we could face going to a new environment.

From her training as co-trip leader, Doris emphasized the importance of learning that everyone's opinion matters. She said:

I guess the most important thing I took out of that was that like everyone's opinion matters. And everybody has to feel comfortable with what we're doing in regards to the service and we talked about it a lot. And so you learn how to communicate effectively and communicate your own ideas so that other people understand what you are talking about. But you know it's important in that environment that everybody is on board you know that everybody understands what's happening and that everybody feels comfortable with what's happening. And I feel like that was a good lesson at that moment in time.

Another aspect of diversity was learning about how other people approach service as well as their motivations for serving. Dorothy discussed the different ways in which participants approached the ASB trip and how understanding participant expectations for the trip were valuable. She noted that some participants were there to focus on the service while others treated it more like a vacation and wanted to spend time with their friends. She indicated that others still tried to have it both ways. Participants also talked about how everyone's experiences were completely different and to "not assume that people are all similar to me." A few participants noted that it was interesting to see people they did know in ways other than just in class. According to participants, the trip let them see how others participated in service and to learn more about them as individuals. With regard to motivation for participation in service, Phyllis said:

I guess I was maybe naïve in thinking that everyone on the trip was there because they wanted to learn about HIV and AIDS and they really wanted to make a difference but I

think as I got to know people on the team I realized like, you know, that not everyone's like at the same level of passion and interest that I'm at and also that's okay.

Betty stated, "To think that two people can take completely different paths and end up in the same place on the same spring break. I mean that's just crazy to me." She discussed the importance of remembering that everyone has a story to share and learning from others. She stated:

I think the best or the favorite thing I've learned about others and I know this may sound a little cliché but everybody has their story. My favorite thing and I've said this a couple of times, my favorite thing about these trips are the people that I go on them with. I LOVE connecting with these students. I mean they're inspiring. They're so cool. They have such insight and everyone has their own story about what motivated them to do this or that and um it's really I've just loved connecting and hearing those stories from people. And I'm trying to think of a more like concrete example from one of those two trips but I'm sort of struggling at the moment. But yeah you know it can be easy to lose sight that everyone has their own story and everyone has different motivations and so it's really great to be able to hear and learn what those are. That two people can take completely different paths and end up in the same place on the same spring break. I mean that's just crazy to me.

### **Social Justice**

Social justice was the fifth and final theme and was comprised of six sub-themes: (a) privilege, (b) responsible citizenship, (c) helping others, (d) social issues, (e) increased understanding of the community, and (f) sense of personalizing.

**Privilege.** The first sub-theme of social justice was privilege. According to participants, the experience of a break trip exposes individuals to situations and issues that involve some aspect of privilege, and the trips provide opportunities for individuals to increase their awareness and understanding of privilege. Some examples of privilege on these trips include socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and access to education, jobs, and housing. There were three participants who made references to privilege (Deborah, Doris and Margaret). Deborah reported that she grew up with no form of privilege. Yet, she realized while working during the break experience that she had a form of privilege that she had never previously considered—that of being a college student. She said:

I'm not used to having any privilege. I mean of course I was always like smart, and I did well at things I tried. But in terms of being a woman, being low SES (socioeconomic status) and a minority, and being from an urban place, I realized that on that trip that going to the University of ABC has put me in a category where people could look at me in a way that I had been looking at other people for a long time.

Doris discussed the story of serving as a co-leader for a trip that was conducted in an area of Chicago that was impoverished and predominately inhabited by African Americans. One of the participants was a “wealthy white woman” who shared the last name of one of the kids. The participant came to the realization that their common last name was most likely the result of her family owning slaves. Doris explained:

And you know the impact that had on her (the participant) was huge and you know seeing someone go through that you know really days after meeting them that's a really kind of powerful experience. I mean more powerful for her but just to see how it impacts people in different ways. It's just kind of amazing.

**Responsible citizenship.** Responsible citizenship was the second sub-theme of social justice. It describes the sense that individuals consider questions of a greater or common good, think about the importance of values or long-term goals beyond their own self-interest, and take personal responsibility for their commitments and actions. Eleven participants made reference to responsible citizenship. Deborah commented specifically about responsible citizenship related to an ASB trip. She and her co-leader made sure participants understood that they were not going to the service location to solve the community's problem in just one week, rather they were going to make the most of the time they had each day onsite. She said:

We just told them to like be patient and to understand you know everything that we learned about education and how some students are set to fail considering how they have a lot of stuff going on at home and all of that and to just do what we can while we have those moments with the kids.

There were various responses related to responsible citizenship and what it meant or looked like for the different participants. Doris said that being aware of social issues was critical; being willing to connect with service recipients was demonstrated by showing respect and sharing time with them. Doris stated:

I think that most people care but I don't think they're aware. So you know you have to kind of be your own platform by talking with your family members, your friends, or with classmates or co-workers you know about the things you've seen and what you believe is important and you know you can influence the way other people view things.

Margaret indicated that she had a keen awareness of social issues because she had previously participated in service efforts towards those issues, and she chose to participate in the ASB trip because she knew these social issues existed. Therefore, she was not sure that the alternative

break furthered her understanding of social issues but instead, “it just kind of reinforced the fact that social programs and non-profit organizations are definitely necessary to help residents in big cities gain or have access to services that many people take for granted.”

According to Betty, trainings with Break Away compelled her even further to think about what it means to be an active citizen. She realized she could not be an active citizen with every social issue because there are too many. Instead, she chose to focus her energy: “it’s a matter of picking something that really means something to you and doing what you can.” This same participant said that she felt the ASB experience allowed her to experience what it meant to really “immerse in the community and the issue” and to remain invested in it as best as possible. She further stated:

With the break trips when we go into a community we go in with a sense that we’re helping the community. We’re there to support them. We’re not in there to do something for them... You’re there to work alongside them and do what you can to support them.

Two participants came to the realization that doing service work for five days was not going to solve the issue at hand it; rather, it was a way to educate people and to encourage them to consider how they would continue to serve beyond the experience. Amy shared:

But I would say that ultimately the alternative spring breaks that I went on like kind of awakened me to social issues and civic justice and civic responsibility. And so I would say I take more personal time to understand those social issues, especially ones that I am working towards now.

Ruby discussed Break Away’s active citizen continuum which helped her to understand the various social issues and their root causes in order to help make positive change. She viewed

ASB as the catalyst to get her started but it was not necessarily where she could learn everything she needed to know with regard to root causes of social issues, especially those that were the focus of each trip.

Ruby said that she wished all of her students would choose a career in social services because she felt a life of volunteerism was too hard to sustain. Instead of volunteering, she suggested that participating in a career that offers a way to engage with social issues and to be a change agent was a wonderful alternative.

Conversely, Louise said she always knew she wanted to dedicate herself to working in poor areas. She stated:

And so [the] volunteering that I do is still working with underserved areas, low income areas, that's where I see the biggest need for volunteering and so that's where I dedicate my time doing my civic duty because I believe that's where the greatest need is.

**Helping others.** Helping others was the third sub-theme of social justice. Six participants referenced helping others as integral to their experiences. Jeffrey noted that the focus of his trip was to support the environment which included tending to the ecosystems of sea turtles. Another participant said that she realized she could not do everything by participating in numerous social issues. It was, however, important to her to be involved with something that was beneficial and positive for others and to continue doing it.

According to Susan, organizations always need help from volunteers. She said, "I think it's just such a good example that if you're willing to help, and if you are willing to be there then there are people who can use you." Phyllis indicated that she was not passionate at first about working with the elderly, but in hindsight, she said it helped her to better understand how

isolated people in a nursing home can feel and “how they need contact, life, excitement so that definitely spinned (*sic*) my perspective on that issue.”

Ruby served as a co-leader of a trip that worked with a drug rehabilitation center. She described how the ASB participants were uncomfortable when they were in contact with the drug rehabilitation clients as if they were “unwilling or unprepared” to converse with them. Whereas, Ruby thought if they were doing a different project such as a community garden then the participants would probably not have had as hard of a time asking questions about the city and community. The ASB participants sat with the drug rehabilitation clients during a session focused on helping clients learn about a medicine that they could use to aid someone from overdosing. Ruby stated:

And so I saw in our reflection that the participants acknowledged they were uncomfortable before, but they realized that they were just people and that they were actually intelligent and that they were honored to kind of be there to you know learn more about what those clients might fear if for example they were with a friend that had overdosed...So I think that the transition as going from an ‘us versus them’ to a ‘we’re all human and we’re all learning together, and it doesn’t have to be an us versus them.’

**Social issues.** Social issues was the fourth sub-theme of social justice. All 15 participants identified social issues as an integral part of their ASB experience and described what they had learned about social issues in general as well as specific social issues that were the focus of their ASB trips. Six participants discussed the importance of being educated about social issue(s). For example, Jeffrey said that he felt his trip was more meaningful once the service providers shared information about why the turtles were becoming endangered and how the service of building

nests was valuable and much needed. With regard to being educated about social issues, Betty said:

I've learned before snap judging an issue or something, I've learned to think about it again and to (a) educate myself and (b) put a face to it like I mentioned before with the things that I think are so crucial to really understanding an issue.

Laura discussed how she grew up in a lower socio-economic, blue collar environment. Although she knew some aspect of poverty, what she did not realize about the social issue of poverty is that it could go deeper and cause a great deal of strife.

She said:

No really after, it was as I was graduating; after the trip. Then I had personally seen really deep, deep poverty and AIDS/HIV and homelessness. You know, I grew up in a lower socio/economic status, like class, you know, blue collar. So that was my experience, but I was shielded from really deep poverty and the strife that comes with that. I never really had too much exposure from my personal life from my family to drugs and drug addiction and the impacts of that. And so aside from reading about them in books and talking about them from a theoretical in class and seeing things in the news and learning from a detached position, I had been fortunate not to experience those things in a very real way in my life. And so after the trip I started thinking about, you know, how can I possibly talk about symbolism in a classroom when there are people that don't have a bed to sleep in?

Ruby described how gaining knowledge about social issues provided her an opportunity to become more engaged with social issues that were controversial.

She stated:

And I think for the New York (HIV/AIDS focus) and the Baltimore (public health focus) trip I learned a lot about risk reduction and what that looks like and what it means to be engaged in an issue that might be controversial, and how enhancing knowledge allows you to engage more in a controversial issue because you understand more of the background behind it.

She pointed to the value of the *triangle of service* which is composed of education, reflection, and direct service. She stated, “You take one of those away and it’s in the blacking (inoperable), but when you really bring all three (together), it’s totally different.”

Participants also discussed the value of pre-trip education in preparing to engage with social issues. For example, prior to their trip, one group took time to understand some of the barriers and challenges that families and children involved in the Boys and Girls club were facing. Similarly, Phyllis mentioned the importance of developing cultural sensitivity before working with refugees who were coming from around the world to settle in the United States. She said it was essential for her group to have appropriate training and knowledge surrounding the social issues to be better prepared for their service experience. She said, “I guess as a whole I feel like I learned that when you approach social justice issues you have to have that information. You have to have that background so you can’t just jump into a social justice issue and experience it.”

Approximately two-thirds of participants shared specific stories and information about the social issues that were the focus of their ASB experiences. Many of the participants expressed astonishment and bewilderment that what they experienced was real or had just happened. For example, Deborah discussed her experience of volunteering at a soup kitchen in Chicago:

The lines were really long and the people they just looked so out of it. They looked really out of it. And I've seen people who lived under bridges and stuff but to see so many people in a line for food that looked like they were really hungry that was...that was something.

Louise indicated that she understood the value of feeding the homeless but thought it would be more powerful if others had experienced what it was like to *be* homeless. She said, "Even if it's just for a day and knowing that this is not real, this is just a day, but I think it gives you a better understanding and more empathy."

Doris described her experience of staying at the Boys and Girls Club in an impoverished area of Chicago. While there, staff members of the Boys and Girls Club encouraged participants to keep some lights on and to move their cars further away. Despite reassurances from staff members that they would be safe, Doris expressed her thoughts out loud, "But it was just like the realization of like these kids you know sleep across the street every night you know? What are they thinking when they go to bed?"

Ashley participated in a trip designed around environmental issues. Her group ended up helping Native American community members clean a garage that was associated with a children's school and had a museum display. She said:

I had no idea there were still tribes in the U.S. that were still trying to be recognized who believe that their ancestries are different than the recognized tribes in the U.S., and so it comes down to them not really getting funding or support through organizations that are set up to assist the Native American tribes that are recognized. So, they struggle a lot in that community in the panhandle area of Florida. There is a lot of poverty there.

Ashley also completed an ASB trip that was focused on clean-up efforts following the BP oil spill in 2010. Based on this experience, Ashley said she learned that the media's portrayal of the spill has significant financial implications for the community by negatively impacting the community's tourism industry. She reported that community members consistently described the spill as, "Well you know it's not that bad anymore. Well, we don't think it is but the worst part of the oil spill is no one is coming here so we're all losing our jobs."

Three participants discussed their experiences related to the social issue of HIV/AIDS. Phyllis explained that through this experience, she learned the importance of nutritious meals and a balanced diet for individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Betty said that she thought people had moved past the stigma of HIV/AIDS but realized through this experience that the stigma was still there and how these individuals needed continual support and care. Ruby said that she learned about the history of HIV/AIDS during her ASB trip to New York and felt that the education she received could be utilized in cities across the United States even though the demographics of cities are different. Her take-away message was that all cities should focus on safety, resources, and accessibility for individuals living with HIV/AIDS.

Phyllis talked about being inspired by the refugees who left their "really poor and conflict ridden" countries but were still able to have positive attitudes. Phyllis also witnessed homelessness in Washington, DC, and expressed concern that there were not enough social services for individuals, a situation which seemed to bother her. She said she wanted to learn more about it.

Louise spoke about her 2011 ASB trip that focused on rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina, which hit the gulf coast in 2005. She said she was shocked that as recently as 2014, at the time of her interview, the rebuilding efforts were still happening. She said:

It was six years later that I went, and I was shocked. This was six years later and I never...I would never have imagined what I saw. You know, I was expecting houses to be rebuilt. I was expecting people to be back in their homes. And you know, we drove around the city and people were living in these huge empty apartment complexes. I mean they were not livable. There was broken glass. There was no electricity. Yeah, and it's been you know six years, I was not expecting to see that at all. It was not a livable city. There was no one there. It was kind of like a ghost town six years later.

Laura explained that the focus of her trip was inequality regarding health care and access to health care. Additionally, her group explored issues regarding sexual assault, domestic violence, the objectification of women via the media, and socio-economic differences. Since there were multiple issues addressed on this ASB trip, she suggested that participants were impacted in different ways. She said, "It was very obvious as the week went on that people in many ways had very personal, individual connections to why they found themselves on this trip."

Five participants described the interconnectedness and complexity of social issues that were observed on their ASB trips. Based on her service experience in a women's shelter, Teresa commented on how the issues of mental health, poverty, and substance abuse were interrelated:

And so, I see a lot of mental health and substance abuse and you know history of sexual assaults and the people in women's shelter, and it's sad, and makes me want to help find the cause of the fact, help I guess. It's a sad reality that a lot of the problems like mental health and poverty all of those go together and you know; we just can't help the poor without helping them to get to the therapist so it's a combination of causes.

Louise said that she learned how a disaster such as Hurricane Katrina could impact the ecosystem as well as how recovery efforts could be affected by politics at the local, state, and

national levels. Ruby described how overwhelming it was to learn about the complexity of a social issue that was interconnected to other social issues. As an example, she described the economic impact of crime in a community: “So the connectedness of crime and lack of, for example, like supermarkets that might not want to bring their business into a community because of crime and what have you.”

For her ASB experience, Susan worked in Atlanta to help homeless men and women find work by assisting them with their resumes and by providing clothing and other support. She said that she quickly realized the complexity of the process:

It’s often like a very arduous, slow process and engagement where someone will come for a while and then you won’t hear from them for six months and then maybe they’ll come back, and it takes a lot of fortitude and empathy and just it’s, it’s not simple. It’s not an easy thing.

Two participants discussed the difference between environmental and social service trips. While Jeffrey recognized that helping humans was probably more important, he said that he saw firsthand the value of helping sea turtles safely have their babies. Craig, who went to a different location to help sea turtles, made a similar comment:

They (the turtles) can’t really say, “Hey, our waters are polluted. Hey, you know I can’t maneuver around this netting and these broken rafts so that I can lay eggs on the sand so that my offspring will make it afterwards or whatever.”

Ashley noted that it can be easier to see the impact of an environmental service trip as compared to one based on social issues because the latter involve issues that are frequently more complicated. For her ASB experience, Ashley and her group focused on the environment and helping the clean-up efforts after the BP oil spill. She suggested that her group had a tangible

impact on planting oyster beds which seemed like a much quicker result as compared to addressing issues surrounding the clean-up efforts of a community garage for the Native American group. Ashley said she realized the issues of poverty and the politics tied to being recognized as a Native American tribe were social issues that would have to be addressed over time rather than being solved in a week.

Two participants mentioned the sustainability of service. One participant said her group talked about what it meant to serve and questioned whether or not it was beneficial to go on a trip to conduct service and then not see the service recipients again. Craig related his ASB experience to his current life. He described the messiness outside of the hospital he works for as a medical student:

I always ask myself about sustainability issues like okay if I do this [clean-up] one time what's going to happen two weeks later when it looks the same? How can we find ways to prevent this? Do we need more trashcans outside in this area? Do we need to hire more people to deal with the trash? I mean what's going on?

**Increased understanding of community and national problems.** An increased understanding of community and national problems was the fifth sub-theme associated with social issues. Twelve participants described the experience of developing a greater understanding of what it means to be involved with a community and recognizing the scope of these social issues in a community and across the nation. Craig frequently revisited how the concept of community had declined. He said:

I think that's the problem with our county. I can't speak for other countries but a lot of people in the US; we live for us (chuckle). I mean that's how we you know market this country, smart phones you know getting things you need at a push of a button you know

that's how we live. I think the whole idea of community is starting to dwindle and because of that that's why we have these issues like environment, health, and education. Furthermore, Craig suggested that if community could be strengthened then a number of these issues could be resolved. He said, "I think a lot of us just feel isolated you know? I really hardly know my neighbors."

Margaret discussed the amount of organization that is involved in coordinating service efforts especially since she had coordinated an annual service day for her high school alma mater. Susan discussed the challenges of involving service recipients in various components of the actual service, such as a job readiness program. Amy said her group focused on giving back and identifying the ways in which the organizations needed their help. She said that the members of her group felt it was their civic duty and responsibility to give back.

Participants also discussed how service in these communities provided group members with a different picture and understanding of that community. Ashley participated in the experience in which team members cleaned up after the BP oil spill; she said she had already been following the story before she arrived. She shared how experiencing the situation firsthand was very different from how the media portrayed it. In fact, Ashley suggested that the media was doing more harm than good in reporting the story. Phyllis said that she learned Atlanta had another side to it rather than just the "touristy side." Specifically, she observed members of refugee communities who lived primarily in lower income areas.

Three participants said they focused on immersing and investing themselves in the communities and learning from their community partners. Betty said, "ASB taught me to immerse [myself] in the community and the issue and all that but I really always want to be invested into it as best as I can be." She explained how she and her peers were trained to see their

roles as supporting and working with the community rather than doing something for them. Betty also discussed how essential it was for the community to “take a stake” in the service.

Laura said, “But I think the trip has impacted my understanding of what it means to invest yourself in a community more than just inhabit the community and live there.” Ruby commented on the important role of community partners since they have a better understanding of community needs. She said she also learned about community and what it means to be a community, how to engage the community, how to ensure community members have a voice, and how to turn their voice into action.

**Sense of personalizing.** The sixth sub-theme for social issues was a sense of personalizing which describes the ways in which participants were able to personalize the social issue(s) based on their interactions with other participants and service recipients throughout their ASB experience. Six participants identified a sense of personalizing through this experience. Teresa noted that her experience with the individuals in the women’s shelter in Washington, DC gave her new insights. She said:

So, one person I can remember quite clearly was she, I don’t trust 100% what she told me, but she said she was a doctor for midgets but she had a breakdown and had some schizophrenia episodes, and she now couldn’t sustain her life on her own. And she ended up being in the women’s shelter.

Betty discussed her interest in health care. With regard to HIV/AIDS, she said that she did not previously have a face to put to the disease until she went on the ASB trip. The value of the ASB trip to advance her understanding of HIV/AIDS was evident when she said “Being able to put a face with these names and knowing how much these health issues affect not just these individuals health but their daily life too.” Phyllis discussed a different HIV/AIDS trip and how

recipients of the meals they served were very grateful for what she and her group had done for them. Ruby described how her group's interaction with the members of a drug rehabilitation center changed as participants learned more about the members of the center. She said that she saw participants transition from a mentality that set them apart from the center's members to a mentality where they understood that despite their differences they were all human beings.

### **Additional Data**

There are other aspects of the data results to consider including the participant's ethnicity and age, the academic year classification (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) of the participant when they took their ASB trip, the social issues represented (see Table 5), the role the participant held on the ASB trip, and the pursuit of advanced education.

There were six ethnicities represented among the 15 participants. The list of ethnicities is listed here with the corresponding number of participants: White (9), Black, African American or Negro (2), Korean (1), Japanese (1), Korean, Transracial Adoptee/Mixed Heritage (1), and White *and* Black, African American or Negro (1). The age range of the participants was between 24-29 years, and the corresponding number of participants was as follows: 24 years (1), 25 years (3), 26 years (3), 27 (0), 28 (6), and 29 (2).

In regards to their academic year classification (APPENDIX G), there was only one participant who participated in an ASB her freshman year, there were four participants in both the sophomore and junior years who participated in an ASB and six participants who participated in ASB their senior year. Based on the year in which their first ASB trip was held, there were four participants for 2008 (Craig, Jeffrey, Dorothy and Laura) and 2009 (Margaret, Betty, Ruby and Louise). Therefore, participants were removed 6 years and 5 years respectively from their ASB experience since the interviews for this research were conducted mid-2014. Teresa,

Deborah and Phyllis took their ASB trip in 2007 and were removed 7 years from their experience. The participants who were removed the longest for their ASB experience were Susan and Doris. Susan had her one and only ASB trip in 2006 which was 8 years ago, and Doris had her first trip of multiple trips in 2005 which was 9 years ago. Amy and Ashley have been removed the shortest time of 4 years (2010) and 3 (2011) years respectively.

There were approximately 14 various social issues that these participant's ASB experiences represented. The environment was the social issue that the majority of these participants' experienced. These six participants focused on environmental issues such as cleaning a national park, conservation clean-up such as the BP oil spill, Hurricane Katrina, and helping the sea turtles. Disaster relief, women's issues, and HIV/AIDS were the next largest groups that had three participants each who worked with these three social issues. The remaining social issues either had two participants or one participant that experienced the social issue on their alternative break experience. For two participants the issues included homelessness/poverty, joblessness, housing rehabilitation, boys/girls clubs, education, medical and work with Catholic Charities. Social issues that had one participant included Habitat for Humanity, LGBT, Native Americans and third world education. The majority of these ASB trips were conducted in New Orleans, Washington, DC, Florida and Atlanta, Georgia.

The participants in this research held different roles on the ASB trips. There were 12 who were participants on the trip. Dorothy was the trip leader for her ASB experience, and Margaret and Susan were co-trip leaders for their ASB experience, and these roles were held during their one and only ASB trip. Dorothy, Betty, Amy and Ruby were the only four participants who served as trip leaders. There were 7 participants who served as co-trip leaders and they were

Craig, Deborah, Doris, Margaret, Susan, Phyllis and Ruby. Phyllis served as a co-trip leader three times and Ruby served as a co-trip leader two times.

There were eight participants who pursued advanced education beyond their undergraduate degree. There are six who are currently pursuing a degree and two who have already completed an advanced degree. Three of the six are pursuing a medical degree (Teresa, Craig, and Louise), one is in nursing school (Deborah), another is in a physician's assistant program (Ashley) and the final one is in a social work program (Ruby). Phyllis completed her master degree in international development, and Betty completed her master degree in public health and epidemiology. Astin, Sax, and Avalos (1999) noted that some of the long-term effects of service-learning and service programs for participants include increased socially responsibility, greater empowerment, increased involved in community, and increased commitment to education.

Chapter 4 shared the five themes that resulted from the research including (a) relationships, (b) social justice, (c) personal development gains, (d) performance of ASB, and (e) continued service. The chapter also included a discussion of the major sub-themes for each theme. Each of the themes was illuminated by the personal accounts of the participants and what they experienced on their ASB trip(s). Other aspects of the data were presented as well including the academic year classification (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) of the participant when they took their ASB trip, the social issues represented, and the role the participant had on the ASB trip.

Chapter 5 will focus on a discussion of the findings. Following a discussion of the findings, implications for research and theory, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

### **Discussion**

The goal of this qualitative research study was to advance the current body of knowledge regarding alternative spring break experiences and how this form of service-learning experience may play a potential role in participants' later civic behaviors and attitudes. Specifically, this research explored the potential role that domestic co-curricular ASB experiences have had on participants' later civic behaviors and attitudes three to nine years post-participation. The central research question that guided this study was:

What is the perceived role (if any) of the domestic co-curricular alternative spring break (ASB) experience on participants' later civic behaviors and attitudes?

The Active Citizen Continuum served as the conceptual model to guide this research. The four phases of this continuum are (a) member, (b) volunteer, (c) conscientious citizen, and (d) active citizen. In the final phase, the individual chooses to make the community a priority in the values and life choices made in his or her life (i.e., active citizen). The Active Citizen Continuum provided a framework to demonstrate how a participant's ASB experience may have influenced his or her path towards active citizenship.

This research study employed a basic qualitative approach as well as an inductive strategy in which data were collected from 15 former ASB participants through individual interviews; these individuals represented ASB programs from seven different higher education institutions in the United States (Merriam, 2009). This research utilized Creswell's (2007) Data Analysis Spiral (see Figure 2) as well as recommended strategies from Yin (2009) to guide the data analysis process.

## **Implications of the Findings**

The following five themes emerged from the research: (a) continued service, (b) performance of ASB, (c) personal development gains, (d) relationships, and (e) social justice. The five identified themes and sub-themes were presented in Table 6 in Chapter 3. Identified themes and sub-themes can be seen in Table 4. Findings from this study suggest that co-curricular domestic ASB trips can play an important role in participants' later civic behaviors and attitudes. Prominent themes and a discussion of their connection to the research literature will be discussed in Chapter 5 as well as implications for research and theory, implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

### **Continued Service**

A number of participants discussed being “influenced” by ASB to choose a service-oriented career or to work with people in some capacity as a part of their career. One participant mentioned how she was introduced to AmeriCorps through ASB, which eventually led her to a position with AmeriCorps. Jones and Abes (2004) noted that ASB trips allow participants to experience changes in their career plans and other goals (interpersonal theme) and to become more open-minded towards new experiences, ideas, and people (cognitive theme) (McElhaney, 1998; Niehaus, 2012).

Warchal and Ruiz (2004) determined that individuals who have been involved in community service or service-learning had a stronger chance of selecting a career related to their areas of service and often received an employment offer from the service site because of their service experience. Participants also expressed an interest in continuing to incorporate service into their lives as a result of ASB. This was an encouraging finding of the research, although

over half of these participants indicated that scheduling time to participate in service posed a significant challenge for them.

This finding is consistent with Johnson (2004), who described how student participation in collegiate experiences could result in continuing participation in their communities eight to 30 years after graduation. Johnson noted that there was a stronger relationship between an alumnus's behavior and his or her participation in collegiate activities as compared to precollege variables. This strongly suggests that what happens in college does matter. To promote greater community involvement post-graduation, Nora et al. (1996) recommended that institutions encourage students to be involved in organizational activities while in college. Astin et al. (1999) found that students who participated in six or more hours of community service in college doubled their chances of being involved in service as an alumni member. Supporting students to navigate service opportunities and to continue their service involvement following an ASB experience needs to be considered and explored with students during their tenure at the institution as well as post-graduation.

### **Performance of ASB**

Nearly all of the participants indicated that ASB has had a significant impact on their behaviors and attitudes. These results are strongly supported by McElhaney (1998), who described student experiences with ASB trips as one of the most powerful experiences students can have in their collegiate careers. Furthermore, the enduring impact that students described was consistent with findings by Jones and Abes (2004), who demonstrated the positive effects of ASB experiences in helping students develop a cohesive identity and become committed to socially responsible work and service.

## **Personal Development Gains**

Several participants discussed the ways in which ASB enhanced their self-confidence by giving them opportunities to lead others as a group leader, interact with others different from themselves, and gain new skills. This is consistent with the findings of Vogelsang and Astin (2000), who described an enhanced positive impact on leadership outcomes through service activities like ASB.

Similar to findings by Jones and Abes (2004), several participants noted that the ASB trip confirmed their career interests or provided additional information which would help them explore their career interests. Participants discussed other intra- and interpersonal gains as a result of ASB, including being more flexible, becoming a better listener, confirming their values, and getting in touch with their sensitive side. These gains are well-supported in the research literature (Astin & Sax, 1998; Densmore, 2000; Eyer & Giles, 1999; Harper & Quaye, 2009; Jones et al., 2009; Kezar, 2002; Markus, Howard, & King, 1993; Rhoades & Neururer, 1998). Service-learning experiences have also been shown to facilitate a cohesive identity which can lead to an assured commitment by students to perform work and service that is socially responsible (Jones & Abes, 2004).

This research was premised on the idea that the ASB trips in which these individuals participated involved reflection before, during, and after the trip, since this is an integral part of the Break Away training model as well as one of the nine High Impact Practices. Furthermore, multiple researchers agree that reflection supports students' ability to apply experiential knowledge in a personal way (Jones & Abes, 2004; Peterson, 2009; Rama & Battistoni, 2001). Since reflection is a defining characteristic of the ASB experience, it was surprising that only three participants identified reflection as a valuable part of their ASB experience. However,

multiple participants expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to reflect on their experience through this current research.

### **Relationships**

The relationship sub-theme that seemed to best describe participant experiences with ASB was increased comfort with and/or exposure to diversity. Study participants described encounters with fellow students on the trip as well as service recipients and discussed how the ASB experience enhanced their knowledge and understanding of others. This sub-theme is consistent with the findings of previous studies in which investigators identified gains in understanding and tolerance of differences in regards to others (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones & Hill, 2001; Sax & Astin, 1997).

Participants noted that ASB allows individuals to learn how to work with others who are different from themselves; differences included personality, culture, race, religion, and socioeconomic status. Others suggested that ASB allowed them to “go with the flow” and to put other’s needs before their own. As reflected in the research literature, several participants indicated that they valued the opportunity to connect with individuals who were different from themselves and benefitted from stepping outside of their comfort zones (McElhaney, 1998). According to Jones et al. (2009), participation in ASB allows students to cross “contextual, developmental, social, and cultural borders on the trip in ways that rarely occurred on campus” (p. 35).

Participants also commented on how valuable it was to know that their peers had similar interests in community service and that everyone had made an intentional choice to participate in the break trip. Participants suggested that the special bond and trust that was created was based on the common goal to serve together during a break trip. Prior research supports the value of

service-learning in fostering a sense of self as well as developing an increased sense of efficacy, compassion, and empathy towards others (Jones & Abes, 2004; Jones & Hill, 2001). ASB experiences also aid participants in expanded relations between self and others (Jones & Abes, 2004; Rhoads & Neururer, 1998). Previous researchers have described the ways in which ASB can help individuals develop an enhanced understanding and greater tolerance/acceptance of diversity, all necessary components to relationship building (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones & Hill, 2001; McElhaney, 1998; Sax & Astin, 1997).

Finally, morality of care and morality of justice is important to note since it focuses on those individuals served by the service trip. Morality of care is looking out for the welfare of others, whereas morality of justice is focused on the rights and fairness towards others (Goodman, 2011). If one uses the morality of care as their form of moral reasoning, then the individual believes that those who have been mistreated goes against his or her moral code (Goodman, 2011). If someone uses the morality of justice as their form of moral reasoning, then the person believes in utilizing logical rules or principles and when these are violated the person sees it as unjust which could include equal rights or equal opportunity (Goodman, 2011). A number of the participants reflected this morality of care and morality of justice when they discussed treating others as you would want to be treated and realizing how unjust many of the situations they witnessed were. Understanding one's own morality in relation to others is an imperative part of the alternative break experience, especially if the intent is for participants to continue serving.

### **Social Justice**

The sub-theme of social issues was the only sub-theme in the research study that was discussed by all 15 participants. This was not surprising considering the consensus in the

research literature that alternative breaks are an increasingly popular service-learning format which focuses on various social issues (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004; Break Away, n.d.; Ivory, 1997; Jones et al., 2012).

Nearly half of the participants discussed the value of pre-trip education in preparing them to engage with social issues. The value of pre-immersion preparation is consistent with the findings of previous research studies. For example, Jones and Abes (2004) noted that one of the learning and developmental gains for individuals who participate in a service-learning experience is an increased awareness of the social issues involved with the experience.

Consistent with the service literature, two-thirds of the participants in this current study were able to articulate stories and share information about the social issues they experienced on their ASB trip. The remaining participants were able to discuss the complexity of the social issues and identify the many ways in which social issues were interconnected (Niehaus, 2012). Eyler, Gyles, and Braxton (1997) suggested that interaction with service recipients frequently changes the way students think about social issues. Through their stories, several participants were able to express how they, as social change agents, could respond to social injustices in their communities by drawing upon lessons from their ASB service-learning experiences (Mitchell, 2008).

A few participants made comments about perceived differences between ASB trips that were focused on environmental issues versus human social issues; these individuals seemed to undervalue the environmental trip because they did see it as directly impacting human beings. These participants further suggested that environmental trips resulted in quicker, more tangible results. What they failed to recognize, however, was that “clearing oyster beds” or “cleaning community space for Native American Indians” were more than just activities. Engaging in

environmental service projects ultimately addresses complex issues that have very real implications for human beings, such as setting environmental regulations or establishing space for individuals to be officially recognized as a tribe. Participants' comments reflected the critical need for appropriate pre-trip education/reflection to ensure that meaningful learning occurs (Piacitelli, Barwich, Doerr, Porter, & Sumka, 2013). Consistent with the research literature, participants also described pre-trip education as a way to normalize participant expectations for the experience (Piacitelli et al., 2013).

Participants described the experience of developing a greater understanding of what it means to be involved in community and recognized the scope of these social issues at both the local and national levels. Eyler et al. (1997) observed, "when students are directly involved with people experiencing the social problems they are usually studying or agencies working with these problems, they change the way they think about these issues" (p. 13). Rhoads and Neururer (1998) noted that through ASB experiences, participants learn more about themselves, their connection to community, and social responsibility, all strong developmental indicators for traditional aged students. Finally, by utilizing critical service-learning instead of traditional service-learning models, systems of power can be deconstructed, which experts suggest begins the process of "dismantling" existing inequalities (Mitchell, 2008).

Some of the participants noted that they could not solve the problems associated with social issues in a week; however there was value in doing what they could while they were at the service sites. Others discussed the importance of connecting with service recipients by spending time together and sharing what they learned post-trip with friends and family. Astin, Sax, and Avalos (1999) noted that some of the long-term effects of service-learning and service programs

for participants include increased social responsibility, greater empowerment, increased involvement in community, and increased commitment to education.

### **Implications for Research and Theory**

The intent of this research study was to expand the existing knowledge regarding ASB service-learning experiences and the potential role, if any; these experiences may play in a participant's later civic behaviors and attitudes. While significant research efforts have been made regarding the impact of diverse college experiences on students *during* their collegiate career, less is known about impacts *after* collegiate careers (Astin, 1998; Berger 2000; Kuh, 1999; Pascarella, 1984). Previous studies have called for additional longitudinal research on college experiences and their impacts on students as alumni (Astin et al., 1999; Astin et al., 2006; Astin & Sax, 1998; Bowman et al., 2010; Bringle & Steinberg, 2010; Johnson, 2004; Powell, 2008; Tomkovick, 2008). Further, there is limited qualitative research focusing on the influence of service-learning experiences on alumni. Finally, the lack of research on service-learning and its long-term outcomes is especially notable in an era of increased accountability and assessment related to accreditation in higher education.

The results of this current research suggest that ASB experiences can play a role in participants' civic behaviors and attitudes three to nine years post-graduation as compared to previous assessments of three to six years. Additionally, this study is the first one to focus solely on domestic co-curricular ASB trips that were one-week in length. All of the participants interviewed for this research had completed a domestic ASB trip between 2005 and 2011.

Furthermore, this research study utilized a long-term time frame similar to three prior studies that used a six or seven year time frame, including Fenzel and Peyrot (2005), Kiely, (2005), and Volgesang and Astin (2005). The importance of domestic rather than international

ASB experiences was multifold. While there is value to international experiences, domestic ASB trips are usually less expensive and participants can have valuable cross-cultural experiences closer to home (Barbour, 2006; Jacoby, 2009). Additionally, being a member of a global civil society involves citizens being able to address social issues that are similar at home and abroad by supporting students to “be local” and “think and act globally” no matter where they live (Battistioni et al., 2009, p. 105).

This research utilized Break Away’s Active Citizen Continuum as the conceptual model to guide the study. I saw the Active Citizen Continuum as a way to frame active citizenship as a developmental process across one’s lifespan. In this way, the Active Citizen Continuum provided a framework to help describe and understand how a student’s ASB experience may be a contributing factor for participants to become an active citizen.

One way to organize this study’s data was to consider where participants would be placed along the Active Citizen Continuum based on interview data. The assumption was that if participants were located in the Active Citizen phase then the ASB experience may have played a role in the participants’ later civic behaviors and attitudes. On the Active Citizen Continuum, the active citizen phase describes individuals who choose to make the community a priority in their values and life choices; choosing one’s career could be considered an important expression of values and life choices.

Placing these students on the Active Citizen Continuum was a challenge since descriptions for each phase were limited. However, assigning participants to the Active Citizen phase based solely on being involved with a service-oriented career helped to facilitate the process. Twelve of the 15 participants were currently in a service-oriented career, including participants who were enrolled in a health profession (medicine, physician’s assistant, nursing).

In additions to their career choice they had been involved with some form of community service during their tenure since graduations. By contrast, one participant (Teresa) in this group may not be considered an active citizen even though she was in a service-oriented career. Teresa indicated her preference for working with a group of peers in the community and not having the confidence to search out service opportunities outside of those that are already organized; Payne (2000) referred to this as affiliation preference. Therefore, Teresa would most likely be considered a volunteer on the Active Citizen Continuum.

Of the three participants who were not in service-oriented careers, it is conceivable that Margaret could be considered an Active Citizen. She has served as the co-head of her high school's Community Action Day for the past five years which involves working with 12 non-profit organizations throughout the year for a large one day service event. In doing so, she has made a deliberate decision to make the community a priority as expressed by her values and the life choices she has made.

Other considerations included whether or not participants had been involved in service since they graduated and whether or not they were currently involved in service (see Appendix I). If it was positive for both areas, then the individual would be considered to be an active citizen. All of the active citizens (Craig, Deborah, Doris, Margaret, Phyllis, and Ruby) in this study had been active in service since graduation and were currently involved in service, with the exception of Deborah, who obtained a master's degree in social work and had finished classes for a joint PhD program in sociology and social work. Deborah indicated that she had chosen these two academic areas to find solutions to the social issues she was passionate about. In her PhD program, she served as an advocate for underrepresented students, including international student concerns. Most recently, Deborah was working on nursing pre-requisites to begin an

accelerated nursing program. Based on her statements, Deborah demonstrated an advanced developmental level regarding her knowledge and understanding of social issues. She would most likely be somewhere between Payne and Scott's (1993) experimentation and assimilation stages.

### **Implications for Practice**

It is anticipated that implications for practice regarding this research will be most pertinent to educators who oversee, organize, and implement ASB trips or other forms of alternative break trips (weekend, fall, winter). Although, educators who oversee other forms of programming with a service-learning format as well as other forms of co-curricular programming may also find this research useful. Senior college or university administrators may also benefit from this research by ensuring the appropriate support mechanisms are in place to sustain alternative break trips as co-curricular experiences for students. Other stakeholders may include higher education alumni organizations that collect and maintain key contact information for alumni members. The following topics that emerged from this research could also be of interest to key stakeholders such as programming educators, faculty, senior administrators and/or those interested in alternative break trips and service-learning. The topics include: (a) assisting and supporting participants to continue service, (b) essential ASB components (c) earlier participation in ASB programs, and (d) tracking alumni numbers. These topics are not listed in any particular order, nor do they constitute an exhaustive list.

### **Assisting and Supporting Participants to Continue Service**

Break Away discusses the post-break transformation process which includes helping students getting connected to other service activities in the community, helping student with re-entry via reflection, providing continuing education, and being challenged to continue making

life choices to benefit the community (Break Away, n.d.). Several participants discussed the challenge of continuing service in their lives post-graduation. Barriers included (a) being too busy with further education, (b) careers, (c) concerns about the time commitment, and (d) balancing community service with other commitments. Several participants expressed a desire to be involved in additional service activities but lacked the knowledge or experience of balancing multiple commitments in their busy schedules. This could represent a potential shortcoming of ASB programs, which should be able to guide participants in identifying “next steps” for sustained involvement in community service.

Many ASB programs already work with participants after the ASB trip to continue service efforts and become involved with organizations that are focused on specific social issues of interest while in college. However, further steps should to be taken to share with participants how other ASB participants have continued their service as alumni, since the findings of this research clearly show that individuals have continued their service activities as many as three to nine years post-graduation.

To connect current students and alumni, institutions could host guest panels and/or videotape alumni members’ stories about how they have stayed involved in their communities. As noted in the research literature, participants are still moving through developmental stages years after collegiate experiences such as ASB (Mezirow, 1991). Even though individuals may arrive at the active citizen stage, they may not stay there. Being engaged as an active citizen should be seen as a life-long process rather than a destination. Just as students transition into college, they will transition into other communities post-graduation and throughout their lifetime. Laura suggested that it was easier to get involved in the community while in college because all the necessary resources are in place, which is not necessarily the case once students

graduate. Ashley mentioned the value of Volunteer Match, which allows individuals to locate volunteer opportunities around the country. Similar websites include United We Serve, Volunteer.gov, and Points of Light. As part of the debriefing process of an ASB trip, organizers could include a discussion focused on “next steps” for remaining involved. Additionally, ASB planners could use social media to reinforce the message of sustained involvement (e.g., websites, texts, tweets).

Organizers could also schedule one-on-one appointments with participants post-ASB trip to further discuss their community service/social issues interests and map out how they can continue this involvement throughout their collegiate careers and beyond. In these meetings, students could be given contact information for alumni who have similar interests or who reside in the same community as the participant. ASB programs could also help participants stay connected by meeting periodically to conduct further service in the community and/or to socialize and continue discussions about the social issue(s) related to the original ASB trip.

Multiple participants expressed a desire of being involved with an ASB trip post-graduation. Shortly after graduation, individuals frequently have more flexibility in scheduling and fewer commitments to participate in an alumni ASB trip. Break Away is currently exploring the possibility of alumni ASB trips to promote ongoing community service. Some institutions, like North Carolina State University, have taken the lead in this arena (ASB Alumni, n.d.)

Alumni ASB trips would allow like-minded individuals to commit themselves to ongoing service involvement post-graduation. This would represent an unprecedented opportunity for alumni to build stronger connections to their alma mater. While beyond the scope of this current investigation, alumni ASB experiences could potentially result in increased alumni giving in general or monetary support for ASB trips in particular (Henning, 2012).

## **Essential ASB Program Components**

Reflection and analysis of these data led to advanced insights regarding essential components of an ASB trip; these insights may inform the process of growth along the Active Citizen Continuum. If practitioners were to emphasize social issues education, privilege, reflection, and relationships as the essential components of an ASB experience, these topics could easily translate into the five key themes of relationships, social justice, personal development gains, performance of ASB, and continued service. For ASB trips to be deemed “successful,” there are several key outcomes that all practitioners would want participants to experience. As this current research suggests, these outcomes would highlight the essential topics of social issues education, privilege, reflection, and relationships. There needs to be a strategic method by which practitioners can maximize ASB experiences for participants in relation to their civic behaviors and attitudes

Based on the findings of this research, social issues education was being met; however, there were a few participants who came to the experience already having been exposed to these issues and feeling that they already knew what was needed. What they failed to recognize is that social issues education is vast; participation in an ASB trip provides only a “glimpse” into any given social issue. Individuals need to challenge their assumptions and be encouraged to further explore social issues beyond their initial experiences.

Participants seemed to underestimate the roles of power and organizational structures in discussing their experiences with various social issues. According to Mitchell (2008), a critical service-learning pedagogy names the differential access to power experienced by students, faculty, and community members, and encourages analysis, dialogue, and discussion of those power dynamics. These discussions seemed to be lacking for some of the participants in the

current investigation. Therefore, it is critical for ASB programs to educate students about access to social power and the role of power (or the lack of power) in determining who receives service and what services are provided. Furthermore, conversations must occur in the classroom and community regarding why systems of inequality exist and why assistance from outsiders is needed to provide services for the community (Peterson, 2009).

Some of the participants discussed the limited use of reflection on their ASB trips. While it is important for participants to have time to reflect inwardly, experiences that challenge core beliefs of group members will inevitably rise to the surface. Researchers suggest that there is value in having multiple forms of reflection such as group reflection and written reflection through individual and/or group journals (Ash & Clayton, 2009, 2004; Rhoads & Neururer, 1998).

It is appropriate for practitioners to be open with participants about what they desire for the participants to experience throughout the ASB trips, and participants may be interested to know what researchers have said about personal development gains related to service activities. Reflection activities would be strengthened through service-learning measures and/or pre- and post-assessment tools. These measures and assessments would help participants and practitioners develop a better understanding of student experiences with ASB and what progress was made towards ASB learning outcomes.

Jones and Abes (2004) noted that students who participated in continuous reflection were able to reframe and transform their thoughts regarding themselves, others, and the community organization with which they worked. Additionally, Peterson (2009) pointed to the use of reflection through dialogue or in writing as a way to simultaneously strengthen a student's conviction to make a difference in the community and to augment prosocial thinking.

Relationships are a final area to consider as an essential part of the ASB experience. The impact of relationships with peers and service recipients can be significant. Reflection needs to involve discussions about these relationships and what individuals learn about themselves in relation to others. In “Crossing High Street,” Jones and Hill (2001) documented how instrumental relationship building was to developing a student’s sense of self. Additionally, relationships fostered an increasing sense of efficacy and an expansion of empathy and compassion (Jones & Hill, 2001).

This specific research study provided an additional opportunity for students to reflect on their ASB experience several years after-the-fact. Based on the literature review presented in Chapter 2, there are no previous studies that have identified post-ASB interviews as a means of reflection. There may be value in further examining and testing the interview protocol used in this research as a method of reflection and as a way to encourage community service post-graduation.

For example, Craig mentioned said that reflecting on and discussing his previous ASB experience made him think more about how he might be able to serve his community now. Opportunities to engage for ASB participants in enhanced reflection may involve including alumni in research, inviting alumni back to campus as guest speakers and mentors, and sending them communications through social media or postal mail that encourages them to remain connected with their communities and which lists some reflection questions for them to consider at this stage of their lives.

### **Earlier Participation in ASB Programs**

There were six participants in this study who participated in their first ASB trip as seniors; only one participant participated in an ASB trip as a freshman. Four participants

indicated that they wished they had participated in the ASB experience much earlier in their collegiate careers. It is possible that these students would have experienced advanced developmental outcomes sooner had they been involved with ASB trips at an earlier point in time. Practitioners need to determine how they can reach potential ASB participants earlier in their collegiate careers, possibly through mailings prior to arrival on campus or through freshman orientation. There could also be value in higher education working with high schools regarding student development through community service.

### **Tracking Alumni Members**

One of the challenges experienced in conducting this current this research was collecting active email addresses of alumni members from the various institutions. Institutions do not have universal methods for keeping track of alumni members, which poses significant obstacles to researchers and fund raisers alike. It is essential that offices across campus work closely with their alumni offices to ensure that updated data are maintained for alumni members. Social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn may prove useful in updating alumni profiles and maintaining strong university-alumni ties.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The results of this current research have made a contribution to the literature by expanding upon the limited research focused on longitudinal and long-term impacts of various college experiences *post-graduation* (Astin et al., 1999; Astin et al.; 2006; Astin & Sax, 1998; Bowman et al., 2010; Johnson, 2004; Powell, 2008; Tomkovick, 2008). Furthermore, research which focuses on the long-term effect of domestic alternative spring break trips on alumni is extremely limited. Based on the findings of the current student, there are several recommendations for future research. These include: (a) replicating the study, (b) adding a

quantitative aspect, (c) extending the study to other populations, (d) involving students of different ages, (e) comparing different alternative break formats, (f) conducting studies with multiple interviews, (g) pursuing questions related to student participation in and timeliness of ASB trips, and (h) focusing on theory development. The most important theme for these recommendations is not necessarily that one recommendation is more important than another, rather it is the idea that further research must continue to be conducted in this arena because participants have valuable stories to share from which researchers and higher education institutions can learn. It is valuable for educators in higher education to understand the long-term *and* longitudinal implications of service-learning experiences such as ASB on its alumni members. These tie back to one of the roles higher education institutions can play and have played in society, which is encouraging their students and alumni members to be involved with their communities. This involvement in the community may come through the alumni members' career choices and/or their choices to become involved in specific social issues and/or specific organizations that work towards a specific cause. The point is to better understand how ASB trips and other service-learning programs can contribute to a student's development not only during but *after* their collegiate experience.

### **Replicating the Study**

Since this type of study has not previously been conducted, it needs to be replicated to see if similar findings would result from a different study. Researchers are encouraged to explore the experiences of individuals and institutions using the same selection criteria as well as different variables of interest. Some of these differences could include gender, ethnicity, institutions who are members of Break Away and/or Campus Compact vs. institutions that are

not members, and an institution's size. Researchers may also consider extending the time between a participant's ASB experience and when the interview is conducted.

### **Adding a Quantitative Aspect**

There are a number of research scales that can be used to add a quantitative aspect to research being conducted on service-learning experiences such as ASB trips (Bringle, 2004). As related to this current research study, it would have been interesting to administer the Community Service Involvement Preference Inventory (CSIPI) to see whether participants viewed their involvement in service as exploration, affiliation, experimentation, or assimilation. Alternatively, participants could have been asked to select where they would place themselves on Break Away's Active Citizen Continuum before they participated in an ASB experience and where they saw themselves at the point of the interview.

### **Extending the Study to Other Populations**

Criterion sampling was used to identify participants for this research. Originally, I thought there would be a larger response rate that would include more males. However, the response rate was lower than expected, and only two males in this responded to the invitation to participate. Males continue to be underrepresented in research on service activities (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2011). Therefore, future researchers should target male students who have participated in ASB trips. Another population to consider would be graduate students. Currently there is not research regarding alternative break trips and graduate students. One area researchers could is where graduate students are in their development as active citizens compared to undergraduate students.

### **Involving Students of Different Ages**

This research involved students who were traditional aged at the time of their ASB participation. Future research could compare the ASB experiences of traditional aged students to non-traditional aged students or focus solely on the experiences of non-traditional-aged students. There may be developmental and experiential differences that would lead to different outcomes. While there was a diversity of ethnic backgrounds of participants in this current study, future researchers may benefit from exploring similarities and differences in ASB trip experiences based on specific demographic characteristics such as ethnicity.

### **Comparing Different Alternative Break Formats (fall, weekend, winter and spring).**

Since the inception of ASB trips, various “break” formats have been created, including fall break, winter break, and weekend break trips. Future researchers may be interested in exploring differences in impact based on these varying formats. The vast majority of research to date has been focused on traditional ASB trips. Since other formats have increased in number, there would be value in conducting research based solely on one of these alternative break trip formats such as fall or weekend because they are typically shorter and/or comparing break trip formats in terms of short-term and longitudinal long-term implications for participants.

### **Conducting Studies with Multiple Interviews**

There could be considerable value in conducting more longitudinal studies of ASB participants. This would include conducting interviews pre, during and post the ASB trip as well as conducting multiple interviews post-graduation. For example, there would be value in interviewing this same group of participants five and ten years and compare the data gathered to the data from this research study. Institutions of higher education would benefit greatly from research that explores the role of service-learning experiences such ASB trips and other co-

curricular activities on participants' lives post-graduation. There is value in better understanding the long-term impacts/influences of these co-curricular activities in the lives of alumni members.

Based on the findings of this current research, more than two-thirds of participants experienced a sense of comradery, increased their comfort with and/or exposure to diversity, developed an enhanced understanding of the community and social issues, making a difference, experienced personal growth and development, and described their experiences as positive ones that either led them to service-oriented careers or encouraged them to incorporate service into their lives

### **Pursuing Questions Related to Student Participation in and Timeliness of ASB Trips.**

Future researchers are encouraged to pursue questions related to student participation in ASB. As previously discussed, there were several participants in this study who waited until their senior year to participate in an ASB. Researchers might consider the developmental impact of participating in ASB as freshmen as compared to seniors. Protocols might also include questions about awareness of service opportunities by these participants and how they learned about ASB trips.

### **Focusing on Theory Development**

Although break trips have existed for over 25 years, further research is needed particularly in the form of theory development. Currently, there is not a theory specifically designed with regard to a participant's development based on his or her participation in one or multiple co-curricular alternative spring break trip. However, there are a number of student development and service-learning theories that could be applicable to this current research and future research which will be discussed. This was a challenge for the current research study since there was not one specific theory or a "best" theory from which to choose as the framework from

which to view this research focusing on ASB experiences. Thus, future research should focus on creating a more concrete theoretical base from which alternative break research can operate and make further advancements.

Part of the challenge in creating a theory is taking into account a student's development in the long-term post-graduation. Fenzel and Peyrot's (2005) work suggested that future researchers look at the constructivist and developmental aspect of participants' understandings, service behaviors, attitudes and beliefs and the role that service and service-learning may have played towards that development. A future theory also needs to take into account where students are in their current development trajectory, how their development progresses as they participate in various co-curricular programs such as ASB trips, and the long-term implications on participants' civic behaviors and attitudes. Furthermore, what are the common traits of these ASB programs that propel students forward in their personal development gains? In regards to this research, what is it about these ASB programs that may or may not be propel students to become active citizens in the long-term?

As this research has shown, the act of students participating in an ASB trip may or may not play a role in that student becoming an active citizen. For some students, participation in one ASB could be a transformational experience that does propel them to become an active citizen whereas for some students, it may take multiple ASB experiences to impact his or her development towards becoming an active citizen. And for other students, the ASB experience may be deemed as not transformational at all. The theory of transformative learning stems from Mezirow's (1991, 1997, 2000) work, and other researchers who have incorporated Mezirow's work into their ASB research include Kiely (2004, 2005), Jones et al. (2012), and Niehaus (2012). It is also critical for future researchers to consider the role that diverse variables may

play in propelling students towards becoming active citizens whether these variables may be pre-trip, during-trip and/or post-trip.

Educators understand that students come to the collegiate experience at different points developmentally and with diverse backgrounds. Some students have had a number of community service experiences before arriving to campus, whereas other students will participate in his or her first community service experience during college. Consequently, there are a multitude of variables that a student brings to his or her ASB experience that do play a role towards their development in becoming an active citizen. Niehaus' (2012) work is some of the most advanced ASB research to date that looked at some of these variables and could be used towards the creation of a comprehensive theory for future ASB research. Her research method was quantitative, and she created the National Survey of Alternative Breaks that was completed by 2,187 students. Niehaus (2012) utilized a modified version of Astin's (1991) Inputs-Environments-Outcomes (IEO) that she created to include multi-levels. Astin's (1991) model supported the idea that looking solely at outcomes cannot be the only factor to take into account regarding the effectiveness of collegiate programming. Instead, the IEO also takes into consideration the talents and skills students bring to their collegiate experience as well as the impact of their collegiate environment. She made modifications to the IEO for her research because the focus on inputs and outputs did not take into account *why* the differences may have occurred (Niehaus, 2012).

There would also be value in a mixed-method research study that utilized quantitative methods via a survey similar to Niehaus' (2012) National Survey of Alternative Breaks along with the qualitative aspect of interviewing participants similar to this research study. Furthermore, an initial alternative break theory could be modified and advanced by following a

specific co-hort of students over time to understand more deeply the potential role these ASB experiences may have on participant's lives in the long-term. This mixed-method would require more time and participation from the participants, but it would garner a more comprehensive view of the ASB experience in relation to the long-term impact/role it has played in the participants' life specifically towards becoming an active citizen.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this research was to advance the current body of knowledge regarding domestic co-curricular alternative spring break experiences and how this form of service-learning may play a potential role in participants' later civic behaviors and attitudes. Consistent with previous research studies, the findings of this current study indicated that ASB experiences can result in multiple developmental gains for students. Specifically, findings showed that ASB experiences played an important role in informing participant career choices and vocational interests. Notably, these findings were based on the ASB experiences of 15 participants who participated in these service activities three to nine years prior to the study. Study results support the contention that collegiate experiences such as an ASB trip can propel students towards becoming an active citizen. These results point to several implications for practice and future research that needs to be considered as institutions of higher education continue to play a vital role in the development of responsible citizens. Based on the overwhelmingly positive responses by study participants about their ASB experience years after-the-fact, higher education institutions should explore ways to increase the number of opportunities to involve more students and alumni in these developmentally-rich learning experiences. Higher education administrators may also want to consider strategies that would support alumni members' active citizenship development while at the same time enhancing alumni-institution relationships.

As the research illuminated, further work needs to be done to support alumni to continue their service interests within their communities as they move to different cities and as they navigate life changes such as advanced education, growing families and careers. Institutions need to work with their ASB alumni to advance and support their community by providing service opportunities post-graduation which some institutions are already doing. This area of alumni and service needs to be further explored and developed. Students who have been involved with ASB experiences have had the opportunity to be involved with a university-community partnership that allowed them to understand what it means to be an agent of change while working in a non-hierarchical relationship which is critical for a democratic society (Jacoby & Mutascio, 2010; Long, 2002; Zlotowski, Longo, & Williams, 2006). Since more students are becoming increasingly involved with and aware of their communities, the line between higher education and community is diminishing and will become nonexistent (Peterson, 2009). As this research study has indicated, the majority of students who participate in ASB experience want to continue serving their communities; hence it provides encouragement for the countless number of social issues that exist to be dismantled by the over 72,000 collegiate students who participate in these ASB trips each year.

Future generations will continue to be faced with a myriad of social issues domestically and internationally. As of now, many students want and expect to be involved in service as a part of their collegiate experience. Institutions can no longer focus on job readiness as its sole purpose, instead higher education must continue creating students who will be tomorrow's citizens that have the ability to apply and utilize their knowledge and skills gained as a student to work with their communities to solve its problems and needs (Bacow et al., 2011). It is incumbent upon higher education to ensure that students capitalize on engagement experiences such as ASB trips

to increase both student and institutional success (Henning, 2012). In order to create a citizenry that has the ability to solve current social issues, higher education needs to institutionalize ASB trips as one of the leading service-learning experiences that can be a catalyst for active citizen development in students' lives. Experiences such as ASB can provide an opportunity for students to be a part of the activities and initiatives that will address some of the core reasons for social issues, and if not, then the student's involvement could continue the "us-them" dynamic that is trying to be undone (Mitchell, 2008). As this and other research suggests, becoming an active citizen is a life-long developmental process that is continually changing. Therefore, it is critical for educators and administrators to ensure their ASB program includes this perspective in order to create a citizenry that is committed to being involved with their community over time.

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## APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

East Carolina University



### **Informed Consent to Participate in Research**

Information to consider before taking part in research that has no more than minimal risk.

Title of Research Study: Alternative Spring Breaks and Students' Civic and Personal Lives  
Principal Investigator: Shelly Hoover-Plonk  
Institution/Department or Division: East Carolina University/Higher, Adult, and Counselor Education  
Address: 213 Ragsdale Building , MailStop: 121, Greenville, NC 27858  
Telephone #: 919-920-8811 (Investigator)

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Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) study problems in society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems and the human condition. Our goal is to try to find ways to improve the lives of you and others. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

#### **Why is this research being done?**

The purpose of this research is to explore the potential role that the domestic ASB experience has had on students' later civic and personal lives. The decision to take part in this research is yours to make. By doing this research, we hope to learn how students' participation in ASB experiences may have played a role in the decisions they have made regarding their civic and personal lives.

#### **Why am I being invited to take part in this research?**

You are being invited to take part in this research because the principal investigator worked with Break Away to identify institutions that would have access to alumni who participated in ASB trips three to nine years ago. Your institution was willing to work with me as a part of this research study. If you volunteer to take part in this research, you will be one of about 20-25 people to do so nationally.

#### **Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?**

You will be asked to reflect about your ASB experiences. If you think conducting an interview with the principal investigator could be potentially too emotional, you may want to consider not participating in this research.

#### **What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?**

You can choose not to participate.

#### **Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?**

The research procedures will be conducted from my home office in Raleigh, NC. If you reside in NC, I will make all attempts to interview you in person. Otherwise, I will audio record our interview via Skype or the phone. If you are willing and have access to Skype, we can see each other while conducting the interview. You will need to be located in a quiet location such as your home or work office. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is 75 minutes in one setting between the months of June through November 2014.

**What will I be asked to do?**

You are being asked to do the following:

- Complete these consent form and return to me
- Once I receive your consent form, I will send an email with potential days/times for us to conduct the interview (up to 75 minutes)
- You will be asked no more than 20 interview questions. I will audio record the interview and take notes as needed during the interview. Once the interview has been transcribed, I will send a short summary for you to review and confirm. Changes will be made if needed.
- The audio recordings of the interview will be kept in my home office through the completion of my dissertation. After this point, the files will be deleted.

**What possible harms or discomforts might I experience if I take part in the research?**

There are possible risks (the chance of harm) when taking part in this research. The primary discomfort that occur, as mentioned above, may be increased emotions or feelings that will be recollected while remember about the ASB experience.

**What are the possible benefits I may experience from taking part in this research?**

We do not know if you will get any benefits by taking part in this study. This research might help us learn more about the potential role that ASB experiences may play in students' later civic and personal lives. There may be no personal benefit from your participation but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

**Will I be paid for taking part in this research?**

We will not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

**What will it cost me to take part in this research?**

It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

**Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?**

To do this research, ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates human research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the North Carolina Department of Health, and the Office for Human Research Protections.
- The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) and its staff, who have responsibility for overseeing your welfare during this research, and other ECU staff who oversee this research.
- People designated by Vidant Medical Center and Vidant Health;
- Additionally, the following people and/or organizations may be given access to your personal health information and they are:

**How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?**

The information you share will be confidential and will be kept secured on my laptop and backed up on a memory stick which will be kept in my home office. It will be kept through the completion of my doctoral program. At that point, all recordings will be deleted. Participants will be identified as Student 1, Student 2 etc. to protect their identity.

**What if I decide I do not want to continue in this research?**

If you decide you no longer want to be in this research after it has already started, you may stop at any time. You will not be penalized or criticized for stopping. You will not lose any benefits that you should normally receive.

**Who should I contact if I have questions?**

The people conducting this study will be available to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator at **919-920-8811**. (days, between **9:00am and 7:00pm**).

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) at phone number 252-744-2914 (days, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director of the ORIC, at 252-744-1971.

**I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?**

The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

- I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
- I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

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<b>Participant's Name (PRINT)</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
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**Demographic Information:**  
\_\_\_\_\_Age      \_\_\_\_\_Gender

**Ethnicity (please check all that apply)**

White    Black, African American, or Negro    American Indian or Alaska Native    Asian Indian  
 Chinese    Filipino    Japanese    Korean    Vietnamese    Other Asian  
 Native Hawaiian    Guamanian or Chamorro    Samoan    Other Pacific    Other

**Person Obtaining Informed Consent:** I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above, and answered all of the person’s questions about the research.

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<b>Person Obtaining Consent (PRINT)</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
Principal Investigator		

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTION PROTOCOL

Feel free to ask me at any point to re-read a question or to explain the question further if needed. Thanks for sharing your ASB experiences with me.

### Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about your *domestic* ASB experience(s).
2. Part of the ASB experience involves working with various forms of a *community*. One form of community was the group of students and staff that you were a part of from your school. A second form of community was the group of people with whom you worked with/served at the service site. A final form of community could be considered the city in which your ASB trip was located.
  - a. What did you learn about the group of students and staff from your school?
  - b. What did you learn about the people with whom you worked with/served at the service site?
  - c. What did you learn about the city in which your ASB trip was located?
3. Part of the ASB experience involves working with various *social issues* such as homelessness and hunger, education, rural and urban poverty, disaster relief, environmental stewardship, health, and Native American issues.
  - a. What did you learn about social issues by participating in the ASB experience?
  - b. What did you learn about addressing these various social issues in the ASB experience?
4. How did your ASB experience(s) help you understand how you can “act” as a change agent on behalf of these various social issues?
5. What forms of community service have you been involved in since graduation (three to nine years ago) and now?
6. Is the community involvement you just shared what (ex. at the frequency level or focused on a social issue you care about) you had expected or wanted it to be after participating in the ASB experience? Why or why not?
7. What have you learned about *yourself* by participating in the ASB experience?
8. What have you learned about *others* by participating in the ASB experience?
9. How would your life be different if you had not participated in the ASB experience?
10. How has the ASB experience played a role in the choices you have made in your civic life?

1. How has the ASB experience played a role in the choices you have made in your personal life?
  
2. How has the ASB experience played a role in the choices you have made in your personal life?
  
13. Is there any additional information you would like to share with me in regards to your ASB trip experiences?

Thanks again for sharing your experiences with me today.

## **APPENDIX C: BREAK AWAY LETTER OF SUPPORT**

April 1, 2014

Mrs. Shelly Hoover-Plonk  
Doctoral Student, East Carolina University  
1749 Leigh Drive  
Raleigh, NC 27603

Dear Mrs. Plonk,

This letter signifies Break Away's support of your dissertation research being conducted as a part of your Ed.D. degree in Higher Education at East Carolina University (ECU). The title of your research project is: The potential role of Alternative Spring Break (ASB) experiences on students' later civic and personal lives.

As we have discussed, your research project will involve Break Away providing the contact information for the director(s)/program coordinator(s) who oversee the Alternative Spring Break (ASB) trip programs at the following member institutions: Elon University, Rice University, Rollins College, Florida State University, and Florida International University. I understand this research proposal must be submitted and approved by ECU's Institutional Review Board before it can be implemented.

Additionally, this research will include an email being sent from you to each of the director(s)/program coordinator(s) of these institutions explaining the purpose of your research and requesting their support. I will be copied on each of these emails. Each institution will be asked to provide the names and email addresses of students who participated in a domestic ASB trip during the spring of 2008, 2009, 2010 or 2011 and also graduated in 2008, 2009, 2010 or 2011. I understand that you will be conducting interviews with each of these students that will last up to seventy-five minutes.

We look forward to working with you on this research endeavor. Please let me know if we can provide you with any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ms. Jill Piacitelli  
Director

## APPENDIX D: INSTITUTION PERMISSION REQUEST TO CONTACT

### ALUMNI MEMBERS OF ASB TRIPS

Staff Person Name  
School Name  
Mailing Address  
City, State Zip

May 30, 2014

Dear Mr./Mrs.,

My name is Shelly Hoover-Plonk and I am working on my doctoral degree in the department of higher, adult, and counselor education at East Carolina University (ECU). As a part of this degree, I am required to conduct a research study in the form of a dissertation. My research will be looking at the potential role of alternative spring break (ASB) experiences on students' later civic behaviors and attitudes. This project must be submitted and approved by ECU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before it can be implemented. I am required to obtain your permission to conduct the research, and I am required to provide the IRB with a copy of your permission before IRB will review and/or approve the project.

If you decide to participate in the research study, I would like to request the names and emails of students who participated in your domestic ASB programs during the spring of 2008, 2009, 2010 or 2011 and who also graduated from your institution in the spring of 2008, 2009, 2010 or 2011. These participants will be asked to interview with me for up to seventy-five minutes in a semi-structured format regarding their ASB experience. A list of the interview questions is below. The interviews will be recorded via Skype (audio only) and/or digitally recorded then transcribed verbatim once the participant has signed a consent form. A summary of the interview will be sent to each participant for their review and any necessary changes or additions will be made. The student's participation in this research study is voluntary and they can terminate their participation in the research at any point without any penalty. The interview questions are attached as APPENDIX B for your reference.

Please sign this form (below), scan it and return to me via email by Tuesday, June 17. If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact me at [shellyplonk@gmail.com](mailto:shellyplonk@gmail.com) or 919-920-8811 (cell). Further questions or concerns may also be asked of my dissertation chair, Dr. David Siegel, at [siegeld@ecu.edu](mailto:siegeld@ecu.edu) or 252-328-2828 (office).

#### **School Contact Signature and Date:**

I have received and reviewed this letter of information for Shelly Hoover-Plonk's dissertation research and give permission for Shelly Hoover-Plonk to conduct this research with the student names and email addresses given by Elon University.

---

Signature

---

Date

**APPENDIX E: CORRESPONDENCE EMAILS SENT TO BREAK AWAY,  
PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS, AND PARTICIPANTS**

**Email #1:**

Email Subject Line:

From Shelly: ASB research proposal approved

Dear Director of Break Away,

Greetings! I am happy to let you know that my dissertation research study has been approved by East Carolina University's (ECU) Institutional Review Board (IRB). Thanks for your patience as we have worked through this process together.

The next step I will take is to send each school an email to officially ask them to participate in this research study and to provide a list of students that meet the specific criteria we have discussed. I will CC you on this email. The schools will be asked to return this information to me within two weeks if at all possible. I will attach an Excel spreadsheet that lists the information needed for the participants along with the participant permission request form which the participants will be sent.

I will keep you posted as to the responses I receive and will keep you updated on the research process as it progresses.

**Email #2:**

Email Subject Line:

From Shelly: Request and consent to participate in ASB research

CC: Director of Break Away

Dear Staff Member's Name,

Greetings! My name is Shelly Hoover-Plonk, and I am conducting my dissertation research at East Carolina University (ECU) in Greenville, NC. Ms. Jill Piacitelli reached out to you earlier regarding your interest in this research study on Alternative Spring Break (ASB) experiences.

Please review the attached consent form which explains the research further and the request for information from you regarding the participants of this research study. All I need from you at this time is to sign this consent form and return it to me by XXX. It must be included in my research proposal submission to ECU's Institutional Review Board. Once the research proposal has been approved, I will be back in touch with you.

Thanks in advance for your interest in this research.

Best regards,

Shelly Hoover-Plonk

**Email #3:**

Email Subject Line:

From Shelly: Request for ASB participant information

CC: Director of Break Away

Dear Staff Member's Name,

Greetings! I am happy to let you know that my dissertation research study has been approved by East Carolina University's (ECU) Institutional Review Board (IRB). Thanks for your patience as we have worked through this process together.

I am attaching the official request to again for your reviews. The other three attachments are the Excel spreadsheet, student permission request form, and student consent form. The Excel spreadsheet has the information needed for the participant names you will send me. Feel free to use this attached spreadsheet or one of your own. Please return the requested participant information to me within two weeks if at all possible. The student permission request form and student consent forms are being attached so you can see what students will receive from me.

I will keep you posted as to the responses I receive and will keep you updated on the research process as it progresses. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Best regards,  
Shelly Hoover-Plonk

**Email #4:**

Email Subject Line:

Will you share your Alternative Spring Break Experience story?--reply requested

CC: Participating Schools Contact Person

Dear Name of School Participants,

Good afternoon. My name is Shelly Hoover-Plonk, and I am a doctoral student at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC. I am conducting my dissertation research on alternative spring break (ASB) trips which is why I am reaching out to you. The focus of this research will be to understand the potential role (if any) that ASB experiences may have on students' later civic and personal lives.

I have been working closely with Break Away since 2013 to determine member institutions that met specific qualifications, and your alma mater XYZ is one of them. Mr./Mrs. XYZ provided me with a list of names and emails of students who had participated in a domestic ASB trip in the spring of 2008, 2009, 2010 or 2011 and graduated in May of 2008, 2009, 2010 or 2011 as well. This is how I received your name.

I hope you will be willing to let me interview you about your ASB experience. The details of this research are attached. Your participation is confidential, and the information you share will

contribute to the limited amount of long-term research regarding ASB experiences. We need to hear and learn from the voices of students like you who have participated in ASB experiences.

Please let me know if you have any questions. I would appreciate your reply to this email by June 2014 to let me know whether or not you are interested in this research study. Thanks for your consideration.

Best regards,  
Shelly Plonk

**Email #5:**

Email Subject Line:

From Shelly: Thanks and ASB research next steps

CC: Participating Schools Contact Person

Dear Name of School Participants,

I would like to thank all of you for agreeing to share your time with me in an interview regarding your Alternative Spring Break (ASB) experiences. The information you share will help to advance the knowledge base regarding ASB experiences as they continue to grow with more students participating each year.

The next steps for you are:

1. Review the attached consent form and return it to me with your signature which indicates your consent to participate in this research. You can scan the document and then return it to me via email or please send it to me in an envelope to: Shelly Hoover-Plonk, 1749 Leigh Drive, Raleigh, NC 27603. Please send this to me by XYZ.
2. Send me an email with the days and times that are best for an interview. We will need no more than 60-75 minutes of time together. These interviews can take place any day of the week and any time of the day between 9:00 am and 10:00pm. If a different time of day is needed, I can work with you. Please send me three days/times that work for you within the next two weeks.

Thanks again for your willingness to participate in this research. I look forward to working with you.

Best regards,  
Shelly Hoover-Plonk

**Email #6:**

Email Subject Line:

From Shelly: Thanks and ASB research alternate list

CC: Participating Schools Contact Person

Dear Name of School Participants,

I would like to thank all of you for agreeing to share your time with me in an interview regarding your Alternative Spring Break (ASB) experiences. At this time, there have been enough participants who responded prior to your response. However, your name will be placed on an alternate list in case one of the final participants is unable to participate in the research study at any point in time.

I will contact you once this research study has concluded. Thanks for your interest.

Best regards,  
Shelly Hoover-Plonk

**Email #7:**

Email Subject Line:

From Shelly: Thanks, ASB research study completed

CC: Participating Schools Contact Person

Dear Name of School Participants,

The Alternative Spring Break (ASB) experience research study has been completed. You were placed on an alternate list in case one of the final participants could not participate in the research study. As mentioned in my prior email, I wanted to notify you of the research study's completion. Thanks for your interest.

Best regards,  
Shelly Hoover-Plonk

**APPENDIX F: RESEARCH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**  
**(BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER INTERVIEW)**

**BEFORE INTERVIEW**

Before we begin the interview, there are a few items I want to remind you.

1. Thanks for your willingness to participate in this research study. The information you shared today will help to advance the body of knowledge regarding Alternative Spring Break (ASB) experiences. Specifically, this research study will be focusing on the potential role the domestic ASB experience has had on students' civic and personal lives. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Please let me know at any time if you want to withdraw from the research without penalty.
2. I want both of us to be as comfortable as possible during this interview process, therefore please let me know if I need to repeat a question or explain it further. Remember, there is no right or wrong answers; instead the point is to learn more about your ASB experience.
3. Please write down any notes or thoughts you may have as we go through the interview questions. I want to make sure you have the opportunity to share with me as much information as possible about your ASB experience.
4. Remember, I will be audio recording the interview via Skype or a digital recorder and taking my own hand written notes as well. The interview is being recorded so that the interview can be transcribed. A summary will be sent to you for verification.
5. Before we start the interview, do you have any questions? Okay, thank you. We will now begin the interview.

**CONDUCT INTERVIEW (refer to Interview Questions, APPENDIX B)**

**AFTER INTERVIEW**

Thanks for your time. Please let me share a few more items with you before we get off the phone.

1. The next step will be to send you a summary of the transcribed interview via email.
2. The results of this research study will be published and shared in various educational arenas.

Do you have any questions before we get off the phone?

Thanks again for your time and assistance with this research study.

**APPENDIX G: GRADUATION DATE, NUMBER OF ALTERNATIVE BREAK  
EXPERIENCES. LIST OF ALTERNATIVE BREAK EXPERIENCES AND NUMBER  
OF YEARS REMOVED FROM EXPERIENCE**

<b>Alumni #</b>	<b>Year Graduated</b>	<b>Number of Alternative Break experience(s)</b>	<b>List of Alternative Break experience(s)</b>	<b>Number of years removed from experience(s)</b>
Teresa	May 2008	2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ASB Trip/2007/Biloxi, MS/Habitat for Humanity</li> <li>2. ASB Trip/2008/Washington, DC/Women's Shelter</li> </ol>	<p>7 years 6 years</p>
Craig	May 2008	2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ASB Trip/2008/Miami, FL/Environmental with focus on turtles</li> <li>2. ASB Trip/2009/Honduras/Medical Focus (medical school trip)</li> </ol>	<p>6 years 5 years</p>
Jeffrey	May 2008	1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ASB Trip/2008/South Padre Island, TX/Environmental-building pens for endangered sea turtles</li> </ol>	6 years
Dorothy	May 2008	1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ASB Trip/2008/Zion National Park-Utah/Environmental focus</li> </ol>	6 years
Deborah	May 2008	3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ASB Trip/2007/Flatbush, NY/Boys &amp; Girls Club</li> <li>2. Weekend Break Trip-Fall 2007 (multiple times)/Detroit, MI/Girl's Home</li> <li>3. ASB Trip/2008/Illinois/Illinois SAT prep for students</li> </ol>	<p>7 years 7 years 6 years</p>
Doris	May 2008	3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ASB Trip/2005/Chicago, IL/Boys &amp; Girls Club</li> <li>2. ASB Trip/2006/Atlanta, GA/Homelessness/Job Readiness program</li> </ol>	<p>9 years 8 years 6 years</p>

			3. ASB Trip/2008/Detroit, MI/LGBT issues Junior year (2007) spent working with School Service Center conducting recruitment and outreach	
Margaret	May 2009	1	1. ASB Trip/2009/San Francisco, CA/Tutoring for afterschool program	5 years
Susan	May 2008 (ASB trip in 2006-soph. year, co-trip leader with A6)	1	1. ASB Trip/2006/Atlanta, GA/Homelessness/Job Readiness program	8 years
Ashley	May 2011	1	1. 1.Winter Break Trip (one week)/2011/Pensacola, FL/Environment-oil spill clean-up and Native American Indian reservation clean-up	3 years
Phyllis	May 2010	4	1. Weekend Break Trip/2007/New Orleans, LA/Hurricane restoration 2. ASB Trip/2008/Washington, DC/HIV-AIDS 3. ASB Trip/2009/Nashville, TN/Catholic Charities-Hispanic and elderly services 4. ASB Trip/2010/Atlanta, GA/Catholic Charities-Refugee settlement	7 years 6 years 5 years 4 years
Betty	May 2010 (no senior ASB but did have ASB in spring 2009, referred to by A10)	3	1. ASB Trip/2009/West Virginia/Housing rehabilitation program 2. Weekend Break Trip/2009/New Orleans, LA/HIV-AIDS community home 3. International ASB Trip/2010	5 years 5 years 4 years

Laura	May 2008	1	1. ASB Trip/2008/Washington, DC/Women, children, and politics	6 years
Amy	December 2011 (transfer student, ASB in 2010 and 2011)	2	1. ASB Trip/2010/Virginia/Environmental conservation 2. ASB Trip/2011/Florida/Environmental-oyster bed restoration	4 years 3 years
Ruby	May 2011	4	1. Winter Break Trip (one week-January)/2009 Galveston, TX/Disaster relief 2. Fall Break Trip (Friday thru Sunday)/2009/New York, NY/HIV-AIDS awareness and advocacy 3. ASB Trip/2010/New Orleans, LA/Disaster relief 4. ASB Trip/2011/Maryland/Public health	5 years 5 years 4 years 3 years
Louise	May 2011	2	1. ASB Trip/2009/Nicaragua/community immersion focus 2. ASB Trip/2011/New Orleans, LA/Hurricane restoration	5 years 3 years

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## **APPENDIX H: BRIEF PROFILES FOR ALUMNI MEMBERS**

### **Brief Profiles for Alumni Interviews**

#### **Teresa**

Teresa participated in two domestic ASB trips; one in her junior year (2007) and one in her senior year (2008). Her first trip was focused on Habitat for Humanity work and was located in Biloxi, MS. Her second trip was in Washington, DC and the service was at a women's shelter. She was a participant on both trips and is currently a medical student.

#### **Craig**

Craig participated in one domestic ASB trip as a senior (2008) and traveled to Miami, FL to conduct environmental service that was focused on removing trash for the sea turtles. Then in 2009 this individual participated in an international ASB trip as a medical student (medical school trip) to Honduras with a medical focus. He served as a participant on the first trip and as a co-trip leader on the second trip. He is currently a medical student.

#### **Jeffrey**

Jeffrey participated in one domestic ASB trip his senior year (2008) which was held in South Padre Island, TX. The focus of this trip was environmental and building pens for endangered sea turtles, and he served as a participant. He is currently a freelance journalist.

#### **Dorothy**

Dorothy participated in one domestic ASB trip during her senior year (2008) which was held in Utah at the Zion National Park with an environmental-park clean-up focus. She served as the sole trip leader for the trip. She is currently a Member Services Coordinator for Northwest Regional Primary Care Association, a nonprofit organization that supports community health centers and other clinics for low-income patients.

#### **Deborah**

Deborah participated in two domestic ASB trips; one in her junior year (2007) and one in her senior year (2008). The trip in her junior year was held in Flatbush, NY with the Boys and Girls Club, and the senior year trip was held in Illinois helping students prepare for the SAT exam. She also participated in several Weekend Break Trips in the fall of 2007 in with a girl's home in Detroit, MI. She currently works in data management and will be starting nursing school. She was a participant for the first ASB trip and the multiple Weekend Break trips and then served as a co-trip leader on the second ASB trip. She is currently working with data management at a university and was scheduled to begin nursing school in the fall of 2015.

#### **Doris**

Doris participated in three domestic ASB trips during her collegiate career. The first trip was in her freshman year (2005) with the Boys and Girls Club in Chicago, IL. The second trip was in her sophomore year (2006) with a homelessness/job readiness program in Atlanta, GA, and her third trip was in her senior year (2008) in Detroit, MI focusing LGBT issues. During her junior year, she worked with her school's service center working on recruitment and outreach regarding

alternative break programs. She served as a participant on the first trip, a co-trip leader on the second trip and a participant on the last trip (found out at last minute she could attend). She currently is employed with the program she served as an Americorp volunteer that assists residents with social services, arts, and health care programs.

### **Margaret**

Margaret participated in one domestic ASB trip her senior year (2009) with an afterschool tutoring program located in San Francisco, CA. She was a co-trip leader. She is currently an operations manager for a restaurant group.

### **Susan**

Susan participated in a domestic ASB trip to Atlanta, GA focused on homelessness/job readiness program in 2006 (sophomore year). She served as co-leader with Doris. She is a designer.

### **Ashley**

Ashley participated in a domestic ASB trip in her senior year (2011) to Pensacola, FL that was focused on the environment-oil spill clean-up and Native American Indian reservation clean-up. She was a participant on the trip. She started Physician Assistant school in June.

### **Phyllis**

Phyllis took three domestic ASB trips during her sophomore (2008), junior (2009) and senior (2010) years. The 2008 trip was focused on HIV-AIDS and held in Washington, DC. The junior trip worked with Catholic Charities and focused on services for the Hispanic and elderly populations in Nashville, TN. The senior trip in 2011 was in Atlanta, GA working with Catholic Charities and refugee resettlement. In her freshman year, she participated in a Weekend Break trip to New Orleans to work on hurricane restoration. She was a participant on the Weekend Break trip and served as a co-trip leader for the three ASB trips. She works for the National Democratic Institute.

### **Betty**

Betty did not have a senior ASB trip. She was referred to the researcher by Phyllis. She did participate in a domestic ASB trip during her junior year (2009) that worked with a housing rehabilitation program in West Virginia. In that same year, she participated in a Weekend Break trip that traveled to New Orleans to work with an HIV-AIDS community home. She also participated in an international ASB trip in her senior year (2010). She was a participant on the 2009 ASB trip and international ASB trip and served as co-trip leader for the Weekend Break trip. She works for the Center for Disease Control.

### **Laura**

Laura participated in a domestic ASB trip during her senior year (2008) to Washington, DC and the focus was on women, children, and politics. She was a participant on the trip. She serves as the director of diversity and the assistant director of admissions for a private high school.

### **Amy**

Amy was a transfer student who graduated in December 2011. Her first ASB trip was in her junior (2010) year and located in Virginia and focused on environmental conservation. The

second trip was in her senior year (2011) and focused on the environment by working on oyster bed restoration. She was a participant on the first trip and a trip leader for the second trip. She serves as a garden resource coordinator where she had worked in her Americorps position.

### **Ruby**

Ruby began her break experiences during her sophomore (2009) year with a Fall Break trip (Friday-Sunday) to New York, NY focused on HIV-AIDS awareness and advocacy, and a trip during Winter Break (one week) that was taken to Galveston, TX focused on disaster relief. She took two domestic ASB trips; one in her junior (2010) year and one in her senior (2011) year. The 2010 trip was held in New Orleans, LA and focused on disaster relief, and the 2011 trip was located in Maryland and focused on public health. She was a participant on the first trip, co-trip leader on the second and third trips and a trip leader for the last trip. She serves as a coordinator of alternative break trips and is pursuing her master of social work degree.

### **Louise**

Louise participated in a domestic ASB trip during her senior (2011) year in New Orleans, LA focused on hurricane restoration. During her sophomore (2009) year, she participated in an international ASB trip that was focused on community immersion in Nicaragua. She was a participant on both trips. She is a first-year medical student.

## APPENDIX I: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



**EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY**

**University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office**

4N-70 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682

600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834

Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** · [www.ecu.edu/irb](http://www.ecu.edu/irb)

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB  
To: [Rachelle Hoover-Plonk](#)  
CC: [David Siegel](#)  
Date: 6/11/2014  
[UMCIRB 14-000933](#)  
Re: The Potential Role of Alternative Spring Break Experiences (if any) on Students' Later Civic Behaviors and Attitudes

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 6/11/2014 to 6/10/2015. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category #6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Appendix D Emails	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Dissertation Proposal Hoover-Plonk May 2014	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Institutions Permission Request	Consent Forms
Interview Question Protocol	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Participant Consent Form	Consent Forms
Research Interview Protocol	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

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IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418

IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418



**EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY**  
**University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office**  
 4N-70 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682  
 600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834  
 Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** · [www.ecu.edu/irb](http://www.ecu.edu/irb)

Notification of Continuing Review Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB  
 To: [Rachelle Hoover-Plonk](#)  
 CC: [David Siegel](#)  
 Date: 4/23/2015  
[CR00002916](#)  
 Re: [UMCIRB 14-000933](#)  
 The Potential Role of Alternative Spring Break Experiences (if any) on Students' Later Civic Behaviors and Attitudes

The continuing review of your expedited study was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 4/23/2015 to 4/22/2016. This research study is eligible for review under expedited category # 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Document	Description
Appendix D Emails(0.02)	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Dissertation Proposal Hoover-Plonk August 2014(0.03)	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Institutions Permission Request(0.05)	Consent Forms
Interview Question Protocol(0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Participant Consent Form(0.04)	Consent Forms
Research Interview Protocol(0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

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IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418  
 IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418

