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Miami, Florida

AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVE BREAKS PROGRAMS  
ON STUDENTS' BEHAVIORAL AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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Walter J. Maldonado

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To: Dean Michael R. Heithaus  
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

This dissertation, written by Walter J. Maldonado, and entitled An Exploration of the Impact of Alternative Breaks Programs on Students' Behavioral and Skill Development, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

Emily Anderson, Committee Member

Rebekah Schulze, Committee Member

James P. Burns, Committee Member

Douglas L. Robertson, Major Professor

Date of Defense: June 6, 2023

The dissertation of Walter J. Maldonado is approved

Dean Michael R. Heithaus  
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

Andrés G. Gil  
Vice President for Research and Economic Development  
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2023

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

### AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVE BREAKS PROGRAMS ON STUDENTS' BEHAVIORAL AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

by

Walter J. Maldonado

Florida International University, 2023

Miami, Florida

Professor Douglas L. Robertson, Major Professor

This case study explored the impact of Alternative Breaks (AB) programs on participants' behavioral and skill development at Florida International University, a public metropolitan research university. The study included qualitative interviews and quantitative pre- and post-survey data to analyze participants' perspectives of their Alternative Breaks experience and how it influenced their behavioral and skill growth. A behavior is a deed or how "a person acts or conducts oneself, especially toward others or in response to a particular situation or stimulus" (The Britannica Dictionary, n.d.). A skill is "a person's capacity to perform a task as a result of education, practice, experience, or training" (The Britannica Dictionary, n.d.). The following two research questions guided the study: (a) What types of behavioral development do FIU students who participate in Alternative Breaks perceive from their participation in the program? and (b) How do FIU students who participate in AB describe the program's influence on the types of skills developed? The researcher linked the study's findings to Kolb's Experiential Learning theory. For Research Question One, four themes emerged: (a) helping others, (b) active citizenship and advocacy, (c) appreciation and sense of belonging, and (d) cultural sensitivity and respect. For Research Question Two, six themes emerged: (a) people skills,

(b) active listening and communication skills, (c) adaptability skills, (d) self-efficacy skills, (e) leadership skills, and (f) logistics and problem-solving skills. The outcomes of this study highlight how Alternative Breaks programs impact participants' behavioral and skill development.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Background

Many colleges and universities provide outside-the-classroom opportunities for students to engage and learn or enhance personal and professional behaviors and skills. A behavior is a deed or how "a person acts or conducts oneself, especially toward others or in response to a particular situation or stimulus" (The Britannica Dictionary, n.d.). It is also a quality, attribute, or characteristic belonging to an individual, such as cultural sensitivity, active citizenship, helping others, and having a sense of belonging (self, n.d.). A skill is "a person's capacity to perform a task as a result of education, practice, experience, or training" (The Britannica Dictionary, n.d.). Experiential learning settings assist college students in gaining outside-the-classroom hands-on experiences and developing behaviors and skills (Simons et al., 2012; Ileris, 2007; Spencer, 1985) through participation in opportunities such as fieldwork, internship, practicums, clinical experiences, study abroad, volunteering, and service-learning. For example, service-learning programs provide opportunities for student learning outside the classroom as they serve the community (Furco, 1996). Students can help those in need while applying classroom learning to positively change the community (Levesque-Bristol et al., 2010). It links academic and cognitive development with personal and interpersonal growth because it is a field-based experiential learning model that includes social contribution (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Alternative Breaks (AB) is a service-learning type that provides students with extracurricular opportunities, regardless of their major and classes, while allowing them to participate in hands-on service programs and tasks in the community (Break Away,

n.d.). College students coined the term alternative in Alternative Breaks to distinguish these experiences from traditional spring break travels. While some students spend their breaks out of town for leisure and resting purposes, alternative breaks typically involve a group of college students volunteering in a community far from home (Piacitelli, 2013). Alternative Breaks aims to allow participants to contribute hours and days of community services to areas that need a hand while positively influencing the lives of those who provide the service. One of AB programs' goals is to develop active citizens who, through their life choices, take informed measures toward appreciating and prioritizing their communities.

At the national level, Break Away, founded in 1991, is the parent organization of more than 200 Alternative Breaks chapters at colleges and universities across the country (Break Away, 2021). Michael Magevney and Laura Mann, who founded Break Away as a national non-profit organization, received support from then-Chancellor Joe B. Wyatt (Piacitelli, 2013). The two recent graduates were instrumental in developing a successful Alternative Breaks program at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. Their goal was to gather resources and practices from AB programs in the country and share their findings to assist other colleges and universities interested in starting their own AB chapters. As a result, Break Away became "a national organization dedicated to developing lifelong active citizenship through quality Alternative Breaks programs" (Piacitelli, 2013, p. 92). Furthermore, Break Away collaborates with peer non-profits, community partners, and higher education alliances to promote and advance best practices in student leadership, service, community impact, and social justice.

Alternative Breaks chapters serve more than 700 community organizations around the world (Break Away, 2021). Every Alternative Breaks site focuses on a social issue, and students join one depending on their topic of interest. The students further educate themselves and others about the social concern before participating in hands-on service work with community organizations that address the problem and needs (Break Away, 2021). The experience promotes students' compassion for those in need while preparing them to make informed decisions and take actions that benefit the greater good.

Alternative Breaks trips aim to enable participants to think critically about their place in the global society through service, activism, and leadership while exploring social, economic, political, and cultural significance issues.

Break Away encourages the following eight components of a quality Alternative Breaks program to facilitate its participants' learning: (a) vital direct service, (b) full engagement, (c) diversity and social justice, (d) orientation, (e) education, (f) training, and (g) reorientation (Break Away, 2021). Vital direct service involves developing Alternative Breaks trips that allow participants to experience hands-on opportunities in the community that needs help. They work directly with agencies that provide services to the community and know their struggles. Full engagement requires participants to align their values and behaviors to the Alternative Breaks trip. Programs must educate students and provide policies on alcohol, drug, and behavior issues that could potentially affect their on-site experience.

Regarding diversity and social justice, Alternative Breaks programs promote diversity and inclusion among its members and engage participants in discussions on how systems of power, privilege, and oppression work in the community they serve and how

they relate to the social issue at hand (Break Away, 2021). When it comes to orientation, students learn about the mission and objectives of the AB site. They also know about the host agency and the type of service they offer to the local community. Education involves developing perspectives that assist participants in comprehending the social issue's origins and consequences. It also ties students' real-life decisions and experiences to the problem.

Alternative Breaks programs establish and achieve educational objectives to offer participants context and awareness of the community they will serve. They also learn about the community members and their issues (Break Away, 2021). Training requires programs to provide participants sufficient training and the skills they will need to accomplish activities and projects during the trip. Participants should obtain life-long skills that will allow them to engage in their communities after they return home. Reflections enable participants to reflect individually and as a group on their experience while combining service, education, and community immersion components. Lastly, reorientation refers to the fact that when participants return from their Alternative Breaks trip, they apply what they learned through continuing education, service, activism, and philanthropy. It encourages students to take action on issues affecting their campus, local community, country, and the world.

Volunteering or community service usually requires participants to help people and organizations, such as Feed the Hunger, Habitat for Humanity, and beach cleanups, for a couple of hours. The primary emphasis is on the provided service. The beneficiaries of the activities are the serviced people and the community partners. On the other hand, the primary focus of service-learning programs is on the students' intentional learning and

the community partners. As a result, the students and community partners are indeed the primary beneficiaries of the activities. These activities promote addressing unmet needs, more sustainable community programs, academic learning, intellectual growth, a “personal sense of citizenship, and a deeper understanding of the structural causes of complex social issues” (University of Northern Iowa, 2021). Service-learning programs also include structured reflection to facilitate and stimulate meaningful student learning, discovery, and growth.

As mentioned before, reflection is an essential component of the Alternative Breaks experience. The ability to reflect distinguishes service-learning programs from volunteering. Students can reap the claimed learning benefits of the experience through the process of debriefing and sharing (Johnson, 2013) what they observed, lived, felt, and learned by interacting with the service community, their program, and their peers. Boud et al. (1996) define reflection as "a form of response of the learner to experience" (p. 32). After the experience, reflection becomes a processing phase for the students to relive, think about, and evaluate their experiences. It entails cognitive and affective actions in which students investigate their past experiences to get new insights and appreciations (Boud et al., 1996).

Boud et al. (1996) further point out that previous experiences influence learners' reactions to a new experience because they had guided how the learners view the world. Moreover, when students from various backgrounds collaborate, it becomes clear that one person's reaction to a given circumstance will differ from that of others. When combined with prior knowledge and sentiments, the newly acquired data can be cognitively and emotionally challenging. It leads to the realization that our old

perspectives are no longer consistent with new concepts and sentiments. It requires re-evaluation and previous knowledge modification to fit fresh images and to advance learning. Therefore, allocating space for reflection to allow students to talk about their accomplishments, issues, and times of bewilderment enables them to focus on their unique strengths and weaknesses. It also permits them to recognize their developed skills and those areas that may need more work. Lastly, reflections encourage students to develop critical thinking skills to analyze what they have learned. They invest in their learning and goals while allowing them to shape their education (Learningpool, 2018).

Florida International University founded its Alternative Breaks program in 1994. The Center for Leadership and Service under the Division of Academic and Student Affairs sponsors AB. The service-learning program provides projects for students to perform volunteer work during the spring, summer, winter, and weekend breaks. Students serve local, domestic, and international communities while focusing on a particular social issue, such as community development, education, the environment, homelessness, immigration, disadvantaged children, and women's issues (FIU Alternative Breaks, 2018). Students may participate in a weekend/express or 5 to 10 days trip. For the non-express sites, the program selects students several months before the trip. The participants meet periodically and raise most of the funds needed for their service-learning trip.

Therefore, participants commit to the program beyond the 5 to the 10-day duration of their service-learning trip. It often requires them to commit to an academic year. The journey starts with applying and attending an interview. Throughout the academic year, AB organizes site meetings and leadership training sessions that allow the selected participants to learn about their site's addressed social issue, the underlying

source of the crisis, and their role as responsible citizens. The sessions further expose students to personal and professional skills such as teamwork, collaboration, leadership, communication, civic engagement, and responsibility. Alternative Breaks students are also responsible for fundraising and organizing other tasks for their trips, such as lesson planning, booking, and logistics. Allowing the students to attend AB meetings, training sessions, fundraisers, and events months in advance prepares and leads them to develop a strong team that works together toward common goals.

### **Problem Statement**

Kolb (1984) defines experiential learning as learning by doing and applying what you learn to real-world applications. Students learn through various opportunities such as fieldwork, internship, practicums, clinical experiences, study abroad, international education, volunteering, and service-learning. Numerous studies have found positive associations between participating in experiential learning opportunities such as study abroad and students' cultural and intercultural sensitivity (Anderson et al. 2006; Rexeisen & Al-Khatib, 2009; Chi, 2013), cultural competence and awareness (Greatrex-White, 2008; Carley et al., 2011), self-efficacy (Milstein, 2005), collaboration skills (Solis et al., 2015), leadership skills and career aspirations (Geyer et al., 2017), and problem-solving skills (Chi, 2013). Other experiential learning opportunities, such as internships, practicums, clinical, and ROTC experiences, have positive influences on students' leadership, critical thinking, communication, and career development skills (Havard et al., 2010; Duncan et al., 2017; Chou et al., 2017; Cottrell, 2017).

Cultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, civic engagement, activism, social engagement, continued volunteering, compassion, and open-mindedness are some

examples of behaviors that an individual may possess or develop. Collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking, interpersonal, problem-solving, decision-making, time management, and leadership are some examples of skills someone may already have or further acquire.

A large number of studies focused on major or course-related service-learning demonstrate service-learning experiences' influence on students' behavioral development in areas such as civic, political, and service awareness (Weiler, 2013), social issue engagement (Lee et al., 2008), social justice awareness (Marts, 2016; Smith et al., 2014), diversity and cultural understanding (Batchelder & Root, 1994), global understanding (Marts, 2016), and self-efficacy (Simons & Cleary, 2006; Stewart, 2008; Weiler 2013). Numerous studies also attribute course-based service-learning opportunities to skill development, such as teamwork (Sabat et al., 2015; Suckarieh & Krupar, 2015; ChanLin et al., 2016), leadership (Simons et al., 2011; Wurr & Hamilton, 2012; Newman et al., 2007; Moely & Ilustre, 2014), critical thinking (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Strange, 2000) and problem-solving (Spears, 2018; Ebner et al., 2017; Davidson, 2012).

Much research has found positive associations between participating in Alternative Breaks (AB) programs and students' plans to volunteer in the future (Niehaus, 2012; Beatty et al., 2016), join other Alternative bBreaks programs (Bowen, 2011), and engage in activism opportunities (Porter, 2011; Mann, 2017), social integration and building relationships (Johnson, 2013). Another study advocates that AB experiences substantially influence students' understanding of people from different racial/ethnic groups (Niehaus & Rivera, 2015). As illustrated, most studies found in the literature show students' behavioral development due to their participation in AB programs. However,

additional research is needed to demonstrate students' skill development due to their involvement in AB programs.

### **Purpose Statement**

This study aimed to advance the literature by exploring the impact of FIU Alternative Breaks programs on participants' behavioral and skill development. The study focuses on a case study research design (Yin, 2017; Guetterman & Fetters, 2018) that analyzed the perspectives of participants toward their Alternative Breaks experience and how it influenced their behavioral and skill development. First, I collected qualitative interview and quantitative survey data to explore the impacts of FIU Alternative Breaks programs on participants' behavioral and skill development. Second, I investigated whether students learned or enhanced these behaviors and skills as a result of their participation in an AB program. Thirdly, I evaluated whether program participation was relatively accessible to students or students needed to afford it.

### **Florida International University Demographics**

I conducted the study at Florida International University (FIU), an urban, multi-campus, top 50 public research, and Hispanic serving institution, located in Miami, Florida, United States of America. The mission of the university, founded in 1965, is to commit to “high-quality teaching, state-of-the-art research and creative activity, and collaborative engagement with local and global communities.” The university offers more than 190 degrees, with 130 online degrees, tracks, and certificates. FIU is a member of the State University System of Florida and Phi Beta Kappa honor society (Florida International University, 2022).

FIU enrolled 56,592 students in the Fall 2021 semester, which included 41,160 undergraduate, 9,462 graduate, and 8,306 non-degree seeking and dual enrollment students. Of these students, 34,925 enrolled full-time, and 24,003 enrolled part-time, while 18,618 (31.59%) of those students received Pell, federal aid assistantship. Moreover, of the enrolled population, 2,979 (7.24%) undergraduate, 43 (0.45%) graduate, and 53 (0.64%) non-degree seeking students live on campus. Most of the students, 94.78%, live off-campus (FIU Accountability, n.d.).

More female than male students enrolled at FIU in the fall 2021 semester. 33,748 (57.27%) of the enrolled student population were female, while 25,164 (42.70%) and 16 (0.03%) were male and not reported respectively. In terms of race and ethnicity, the largest student population at FIU is Hispanic or Latino. Last year, 38,130 (64.71%) Hispanic students enrolled at FIU, followed by 7,162 (12.15%) Black or African American, and 5,991 (10.17%) white students (FIU Accountability, n.d.), making FIU a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). This type of higher education entities is “an eligible institution and has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic students at the end of the award year immediately preceding the date of application” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Also, 32 (0.05%) American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1,535 (2.60%) Asian, 4,489 (7.62%) Nonresident Alien, 392 (0.67%) Not Reported, 27 (0.05%) Pacific Islander, and 1,170 (1.99%) Two or More Race students enrolled at the institution in 2020 - 2021. Moreover, most of the students enrolled last year were Florida residents, with 51,738 (87.80%) in-instate, 4,489 (7.62%) international, and 2,701 out-state. 8,536 (14.49%) of those enrolled last year were first-generation students (FIU Accountability, n.d.).

Florida International University awarded 18,152 degrees in 2020 - 2021. It granted 13,986 (77.05%) bachelors, 3,534 (19.47%) masters, 29 (0.16%) specialist, 397 (2.19%) professional doctoral, and 206 (1.13) research doctoral degrees. Out of the 18,152 awarded degrees, 2,746 (15.13%) were diplomas for online programs. The institution granted 10,892 (60.00%) degrees to female, 7,255 (39.97%) to male, and 5 (0.03%) to not reported students. The university awarded degrees to 10 (0.06%) American Indian or Alaskan Native, 481 (2.65%) Asian, 2,186 (12.04%) Black or African American, 11,398 (62.79%) Hispanic, 1,884 (10.38%) Nonresident Alien, 68 (0.37%) Not Reported, 9 (0.05%) Pacific Islander, 353 (1.94%) Two or More Race, and 1,763 (9.71%) White students (FIU Accountability, n.d.). For a complete breakdown of the FIU's student demographics, refer to appendices A and B.

### **Research Questions**

The following two research questions guided the study:

- 1) What types of behavioral development do FIU students who participate in Alternative Breaks (AB) perceive from their participation in the program?
- 2) How do FIU students who participate in AB describe the program's influence on the types of skills developed?

### **Anticipated Contributions/Significance of the Study**

The study results may have had implications for college and university student affairs staff, faculty, and leadership. There are criticisms that service-learning programs, such as Alternative Breaks, do not provide significant space for student development and learning because these experiences occur for a short time (Niehaus, 2012). Developing a better understanding of the types of learning that happen to students as a result of their participation

in AB programs would help student affairs practitioners understand whether service-based programs like AB have a short-term, long-term, or no influence on student growth.

### **Delimitations/Assumptions**

Although the study may apply to other functional areas of student involvement, it was limited to students who participated in Alternative Breaks programs at Florida International University during the 2021-2022 academic year. As a result, the research did not compare other AB programs outside of FIU, either locally or nationally, and did not explore their differences and similarities. Additionally, it was outside the scope of the study to compare AB participants and non-AB participants. The study aimed to explore the types of behavioral and skill development, specifically associated with participation in FIU Alternative Breaks programs. There are also methodological limitations of the study due to the small sample size involved in the research.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following definition of terms will provide clarity to this study.

**Alternative Breaks:** Break Away, the national organization that supports and promotes Alternative Breaks program, defines AB as “a trip where a group of college students engage in direct service, typically for a week. Each trip has a focus on a particular social issue...Students educate themselves and each other, then do hands-on work with relevant organizations...Upon return, participants are empowered to make more informed decisions and to take meaningful action that supports a greater good.” (Break Away, n.d., para. 3).

**Behavior:** “The way a person acts or conducts oneself, especially toward others or in response to a particular situation or stimulus (The Britannica Dictionary, n.d.). A

quality, attribute, or characteristic belonging to an individual, such as cultural sensitivity, active citizenship, helping others, sense of belonging, etc. (self, n.d.).

**Community service:** “Community unpaid work that benefits people and organizations in the community. It could mean helping out at a nonprofit agency, volunteering for a special project in your school, or doing something positive to improve your neighborhood.” (Juvenile Section, 2012).

**Global thinking:** Taking into account new viewpoints, ways of life, and cultures in order to cope with change while meeting modernization's needs (Cyr, 2002).

**Globalization:** Involves the interdependence and interactions among countries, cultures, people, economies, and services and incorporates international communication, technical, economic, social, political, and cultural exchanges (Bozkurt & Yasar, 2016). It also entails "political and social movements that stress difference, dialogue, and an ethic of collective responsibility for the world" (Keith, 2005, p. 6).

**International service-learning:** “Combines academic instruction and community-based service in an international context. Objectives of linking international travel, education, and community service include increasing participants’ global awareness, building intercultural understanding, and enhancing civic mindedness and skills” (Crabtree, 2008, p. 18).

**Personal growth:** The development of your skills, knowledge, personal characteristics, life objectives, and viewpoint. It occurs whenever you want to improve yourself in any way, whether it's your disposition, formal education, or maturity (CoFounders Retreat, 2019).

**Professional skills:** “Career competencies and abilities used in the workplace that are beneficial for nearly any job. Professional skills are a combination of both hard skills (job-specific duties that can be trained) and soft skills (transferable traits like work ethic, communication, and leadership)” (Streiff, 2022)

**Service-learning:** A pedagogical approach that combines curricular and extracurricular learning with community service and allows experiential learning to occur (Brail, 2016). It includes a healthy mix of community involvement and academic education.

**Skills:** “A person’s capacity to perform a task as a result of education, practice, experience, or training” (The Britannica Dictionary, n.d.).

**Reflection:** The process of synthesizing service, education, and community immersion (Break Away, n.d.). It is a “form of response of the learner to experience” (Boud et al., 1996, p. 32). After the experience, reflection becomes a processing phase for the participants to relive, think about, and evaluate their experiences. It entails cognitive and affective actions in which individuals investigate their past experiences to get new insights and appreciations.

## **Summary**

In chapter 1 of the dissertation, I identified the background, context, and methodology I used for my dissertation study. I introduced the Alternative Breaks program as a service-learning opportunity and its role in college student learning. I presented a problem statement that argued that the literature showed positive associations between experiential learning opportunities and students' behavioral and skill development. However, when it came to Alternative Breaks, most research suggested its

impact on participants' behavioral development and little on skill development.

Consequently, I recommended further research to demonstrate students' skill development due to their participation in AB programs.

I further presented the purpose of the study, which was to advance the literature by exploring the impact that FIU Alternative Breaks programs had on participants' behavioral and skill development. I briefly explained the methods I used to investigate the matter and the population I studied. I also introduced the two research questions that guided my study. Lastly, I introduced the anticipated contributions and delimitations of the study.

I will further develop the concepts presented in this section of the dissertation in chapter 2 through a selected literature review that discusses experiential and service-learning, Alternative Breaks, globalization, critical theories and criticism about high-impact practices, and Kolb's experiential learning theory.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **Experiential Learning**

Kolb (1984) defines experiential learning as learning by doing and applying what you learn to real-world applications. Students learn through various opportunities such as fieldwork, internship, practicums, clinical experiences, study abroad, international education, volunteering, and service-learning. Several studies have found positive associations between participating in experiential learning opportunities, such as practicums and internships, and developing students' behaviors and skills. Therefore, this chapter will review the literature on experiential learning, service-learning, and Alternative Breaks opportunities and their influence on participants' behavioral and skill development.

Research on 38 students from a private university in a northern metropolitan area who enrolled for a psychology practicum or internship demonstrated an increase in their multicultural awareness and a deeper understanding of content in the psychology field (Simons et al., 2012). The students registered for either a three-credit course and completed 100 hours on-site or a six-credit one and completed 200 hours. Their practicum experience occurred in community mental health centers, drug and alcohol counseling centers, rehabilitation and community centers, intervention, and educational programs.

Another study on 188 students who participated in social work field practicums for the University at Albany, Marywood University, the University at Alban, and the University of Texas-Pan American demonstrated positive associations between the practicum and students' intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy (Fortune et al., 2005).

Students completed a 16-page questionnaire about their practicum at several points during the practicum. In addition to demonstrating increased motivation and self-efficacy, students showed satisfaction with field education, agency, instructor, learning, and social work skills.

A case study of ten construction management students who took an internship course at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln showed a positive relationship between their internship and their ability to meet employees from different parts of the company. According to Karji et al. (2020), there are some concerns that recent graduate students lack enough skills to compete and satisfy the demands of the industry because they may not develop interpersonal skills, such as communication and leadership, to be successful in their future careers. However, their students showed positive skill development outcomes for those who participated in the construction management internship. Students highly rated the internship course's benefits regarding finding their place, time management, scheduling work, business development and marketing strategies, finance, and budgets, using new technologies in construction contracts, risk analysis and management, personal management, communication, and leadership skills.

Other experiential learning opportunities, like Study Abroad, indicate an impact on students' leadership skill development and diversity awareness. Studying abroad is an opportunity to earn college credits while learning in another country, from several weeks to an entire semester to a whole year. For example, a study by Geyer et al. (2017) on 970 study abroad students who engaged in 1–6-week study abroad opportunities showed that they participated in leadership positions in school, the community, or work. Forty-five and one tenth percent of the study abroad participants held a leadership position versus

27.2 non-study abroad participants who had a leadership position. Their analysis suggests that study abroad students hold more leadership positions than non-study abroad students. Also, 43.4 and 46.9 percent felt optimistic, respectively, about diversity awareness and sensitivity. The study was conducted via a survey and administered to study abroad students who participated in the program in the last five years of the research.

Study Abroad provides students cross-cultural experiential learning and collaboration opportunities. New York University dance teaching students who studied abroad in Uganda between July 2012 and January 2013 learned dances and other cultural traditions from different ethnic communities. They also collaborated with Ugandan teachers and students while teaching dance to Uganda's children (Mabingo, 2015). Moreover, seven aerospace engineering students who participated in a study abroad program in Japan during summer 2008 gained cultural knowledge and appreciation. Thus, these findings suggest that “preconceived cultural knowledge and perceptions can be tested, evaluated, and possibly transformed.” (Paik, 2011, p. 13).

Other experiential learning opportunities, such as the ROTC, have positive associations with students' leadership, critical thinking, and career development skills. The Reserve Officer Training Corps, founded in 1962, is a program that trains American college and high school students to serve as officers in the US armed forces (Gainey, 2018). The United States Army, Air Force, Navy, and the Marine Corps currently offer ROTC programs (Tesch, 2019). For example, the Air Force ROTC program teaches critical thinking to their cadets, according to a study by Fagin et al. (2006). AFROTC course materials on critical thinking emphasize the habits of thought and action.

Additionally, in a study by Gilson, Latimer, and Lochbaum (2015), ROTC cadets who participated in a Leadership Development and Assessment Course (LDAC) at a camp put their leadership abilities to the test. The study aimed to assess cadets' experiences upon their return, and it involved semi-structured interviews with 25 cadets. The results illustrated that cadets developed new strategies and left LDAC with a greater appreciation of situational variables influencing leadership. For example, some cadets shared that they developed confidence as a result of the course. Others mentioned gaining technical, tactical, and cultural knowledge. Eleven cadets said they learned to adapt to difficult or uncommon circumstances. Cadets learned to adjust to environmental constraints and different personalities. They also learned to lead by example. Gilson et al. argued that utilizing learned behaviors based on organizational requirements might have distinguished capable leaders.

ROTC programs have required cadets to complete military science courses that taught leadership fundamentals, physical conditioning, necessary military skills, team organization, planning, decision making, and advanced military tactics (Legree et al., 2014). Field training exercises and activities also provided cadets with opportunities to develop leadership and defense skills. ROTC graduates include General Gordon Sullivan, General Fred Weyand, and General Colin Powell, who have succeeded in top leadership roles in the Army and the US government (Legree et al., 2014).

The ROTC also provides career preparation for their cadets in addition to helping students pay for college and develop critical thinking and leadership skills. The program allows students to get a college degree and learn workforce skills, such as time management, leadership, critical thinking, responsibility, and fitness (Jensen, 2011).

According to Jensen, ROTC programs recommend cadets majors to pursue. For example, the Naval ROTC encourages students to complete a major in science and engineering to prepare for shipboard life's highly technical nature.

### **Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory**

Alternative Breaks is a type of service-learning, and service-learning is a form of experiential learning (Robinder, 2012) that creates knowledge “through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). We experience situations that significantly impact what we learn, and we play a vital role in shaping the nature of such occasions (Robertson, 1988). Kolb's Experiential Learning theory recognizes the value of experience activities such as fieldwork, laboratory practice, study abroad, volunteering, and service-learning. It is fair to mention that there are many critiques about Kolb’s Experiential Learning theory (Garner, 2000; Calderón Carvajal, Ximénez Gómez, Lay-Lisboa & Briceño, 2021; Bergsteiner, Avery & Neumann, 2010). For instance, Kolb’s Experiential Learning model fails to distinguish between concrete/active/primary and abstract/passive/secondary learning processes in a meaningful and consistent manner (Bergsteiner, Avery & Neumann, 2010). Despite objections to their validity and weak interpretations, Kolb’s and other experiential learning methods are nevertheless widely used (Bergsteiner & Avery, 2014). As a result, I guided the research by Kolb's Experiential Learning theory. It introduces a four-stage learning cycle that highlights how we use reflection to transform experience into concepts. We then use these concepts to guide active experimentation and new experience selection (Healey & Jenkins, 2000).

According to Kolb's Experiential Learning theory, a person's learning style is determined by how much emphasis they place on each of the four modes of the learning

process (Kolb, 1984). Kolb argues that the learner begins in one of the following preferred bases and moves through them, not in a linear sequence, for learning to happen: (a) concrete experience, (b) observations and reflection, (c) formation of abstract concepts and generalization, and (d) testing implications of concepts in a new situation.

For example, Robertson (1988) explains that at the concrete experience stage, the learner jumps into an experience with no expectations to see what unfolds. At the observation and reflection stage, the person thinks profoundly and lengthily about the incident. The learner investigates every detail of what was happening, such as who was involved in the experience. They also explore what they were trying to do and when, how they felt, and what they thought. At the formation of abstract concepts and generalizations, the learner constructs concepts, principles, or hypotheses based on such experience. Then at the testing implications of ideas in a new situation stage, the learner tries out these ideas or theories in a situation to see what happens. Robertson also points out that as learners, "we grasp the learning concretely or abstractly and transform the learning to make it our own either reflectively or actively" (p. 51). Learners tend to favor certain stages of the learning process over others depending on their learning style, comfort level, and personality. Some people favor the substantial experience over the abstract concepts and the reflections over the testing implications, while others prefer the opposite.

One example of how students learn through experiential learning methods would be participation in an Alternative Breaks program that engages the students with volunteer work while addressing a particular social issue, such as community development, education, the environment, and children's rights. Student learning

transformation may occur as they encounter the substantial experience of working with and educating disadvantaged children. They will also observe, recall and analyze that experience while discussing and reflecting about what they lived, felt, and learned each day while serving the children in need. Moreover, they will form generalizations about the children, what affects them, and what they need. The students will then plan lessons or strategies to help the students. Once they finalized a plan of action, they will try it out while working with the children to see what happens.

Research shows that experiential learning participants develop cognitively and goal-orientation (Baker et al., 2012), problem-solving (Chan, 2012; Kamis & Khan, 2009, Mooney & Edwards, 2001), communication, collaboration, and critical thinking (Chan, 2012, Mooney & Edwards, 2001) skills. The NYU dance education study abroad students in Uganda applied Kolb's Experiential Learning theory. Students had the opportunity to engage in reflective observation and active experimentation as they encountered the "vocabulary, techniques and pedagogies of Ugandan music and dances, a new geographical and cultural space, and the cultural constructs of the person's experience in the social environment." (Mabingo, 2015).

Another study that required 70 marketing students participating in a service-learning project that benefitted the American Red Cross used Kolb's theory of experiential learning. Wang and Calvano's study (2018) demonstrated positive correlations between academic learning outcomes and the four stages of experiential learning: concrete experience ( $r = .509, p < .05$ ), reflective observation ( $r = .532, p < .05$ ), abstract conceptualization ( $r = .582, p < .05$ ), and active experiment ( $r = .521, p < .05$ ). The study also showed positive correlations between civic responsibility and the four

stages: concrete experience ( $r = .510, p < .05$ ), reflective observation ( $r = .535, p < .05$ ), abstract conceptualization ( $r = .532, p < .05$ ), and active experiment ( $r = .557, p < .05$ ).

### **Service-Learning**

Service-learning opportunities combine curricular and extracurricular learning with community service and allow experiential learning to occur (Brail, 2016). It includes a healthy mix of community involvement and academic education. The service piece and the learning piece of the service-learning whole have equal weight. Each piece enriches the other for everyone engaged in the experience (Eyler & Giles, 1999). According to Eyler and Giles, Fruco (1996) defines service-learning as experiential teaching based on pedagogical concepts where experience improves comprehension, leading to efficient actions.

When it comes to learning, service-learning connects personal and interpersonal growth with academic and cognitive development (Eyler & Giles, 1999). It assists participants in gaining knowledge that will aid in their comprehension of the world. Eyler & Giles further explain that understanding is the ability to recall material relevant to current and new situations. Grasped material provides meaning to students and aids in their understanding of the world. This type of experiential learning encourages learning in context and values the learner's contribution to the situation. As a result, students can grasp content and skills while also successfully applying what they have learned. Service-learning can provide tools to resolve previous problems, organize new information gained from those issues, and apply newly acquired skills in new contexts. For instance, service-learning programs may promote student development by placing them in circumstances that challenge their prejudices, prior experiences, and worldviews.

Eyler and Giles point out that students find service-learning courses appealing because they allow for interpersonal experiences in the community instead of their regular classroom work. In their study, students reported that their community service significantly impacted how they saw themselves and others. They also discovered that the folks they serviced were similar to themselves. They learned to respect various cultures, truly comprehend themselves, and develop spiritually. They also realized how enjoyable it is to help others and how to work well with others.

Moreover, service-learning participants grow confidence in the program's value in improving job skills. They also increase their willingness to include service to others in their career plans and a feeling of individual success. Improved tolerance, lower stereotyping, increased leadership and communication abilities, and creating deep personal relationships with others are all predictors of service-learning opportunities (Eyler & Giles, 1999). The projects allowed students to re-evaluate personal values, develop a commitment to the community they serve, use critical thinking and problem-solving skills, understand social issues affecting their community, and create civic responsibility.

When it comes to developing skills, most discussed studies in the literature focus on major or course-related service-learning rather than extracurricular service-learning opportunities such as Alternative Breaks. Several studies have found positive associations between participating in service-learning opportunities and applying teamwork skills (Sabat et al., 2015; Suckarieh & Krupar, 2005; ChanLin et al., 2016). For example, Suckarieh and Krupar (2005) studied engineering technology honors students who worked with third-grade children from schools in the Greater Cincinnati area. Upon

completing their service-learning opportunity, student reflections demonstrated instances that promoted teamwork as they had to work in groups and with the children to accomplish their projects. It also seems that a participant's role in a team is essential in creating opportunities for students to develop teamwork skills. For example, by participating in e-tutoring required for a service-learning project in their class, 25 students demonstrated teamwork skills while helping the community. The students displayed teamwork by mutually planning, scheduling, and facilitating tutoring activities to children (ChanLin et al., 2016).

The experiences in service-learning projects provide students with meaningful opportunities to work together toward a common goal. Because students have an interest or passion for working on tasks that make it possible to help others, participants offer their skills and strengths for the group's common good. Their collective performance, joined work, open communication, and cooperation make it possible to provide service to their community. For example, 45 students who participated in service-learning experiences at public health agencies demonstrated to enhance their teamwork capabilities (Campbell and Sasnett, 2011) while working together to help those in need.

There are positive associations between participating in service-learning opportunities and decision making (Coulter-Kern et al., 2013; Koliba, 1998; Moely and Ilustre, 2014), leadership (Simons et al., 2011; Wurr & Hamilton, 2012; Newman et al., 2007; Moely and Ilustre, 2014), and problem-solving skills (Ebner et al., 2017; Spears, 2018; Davidson, 2002). For instance, Moely and Ilustre (2014) showed that students practiced their ability to lead and make decisions, had opportunities to take a leadership role, or worked with other students in leadership roles. In their study, students reported

they felt that their service-learning course experiences had contributed to gains in their problem-solving and leadership skills and their general satisfaction with the university.

Olsen and Burk (2014) also demonstrated similar findings on 62 University of Northern Iowa, and 30 SUNY Cortland studied undergraduate students. They exhibited leadership skills because they participated in service-learning projects for their class. One student, for example, reflected, "It is important to take control. It is important to follow, but it is just as important to lead....Being a leader, people look up to you for inspiration and direction. Being a leader takes confidence, competence, control, and the ability to accept change and adapt to it" (p. 86). Another study suggested that students enhanced their leadership skills due to their participation in the Social Change Project (Seemiller, 2006). Upon completing their experience, students individually wrote a four to five-page paper to reflect on the lessons learned and any impact the project had had on them. The study's four-year data indicated that students learned the value of serving the community, engaging in social change, and using leadership skills to promote positive change.

Regarding service-learning specifically, research shows these opportunities allow many students to build behaviors in commitment to serve others and social justice, civic responsibility, prejudice reduction. Also, there is behavioral development in understanding others, cultural respect and appreciation, self-evaluation, adaptability, and the ability to accept others. These opportunities may also impact developing participants' problem solving, organization, communication, critical thinking, teamwork, collaboration, decision-making, leadership, professional and technical skills.

## **Alternative Breaks**

Most studies have found positive associations between participating in Alternative Breaks (AB) and students' behavioral development. For instance, students who have participated in Alternative Breaks opportunities reveal interests in engaging in activism opportunities (Porter, 2011; Mann, 2017). A study by Porter (2011) demonstrated that students' contact with a social issue, such as HIV/AIDS or educational inequality, sparked their interest to continue being involved in activism opportunities. Other students changed their career choice to fields related to serving others, such as teaching, and one of the students chose to become an AB site leader. Participation in Alternative Breaks also influences civic engagement. Participants of alternative spring break trips expressed their desire to serve in the community, according to a study Jessica Mann conducted in 2017. Some of the participants she interviewed reported their involvement in the Alternative Spring Break project developed a sense to serve as a community member, despite not being raised with a civic identity. Others demonstrated gaining an appetite to give back to their community or make changes that improve social issues (Mann, 2017).

There are also positive associations between participating in Alternative Breaks and students' plans to volunteer (Niehaus, 2012; Beatty et al., 2016; Bowen, 2011). For example, a study involving 1503 students, 405 Alternative Breaks programs, and 94 universities in the United States demonstrated that the experience influenced the participants' plans to volunteer in the future (Niehaus, 2012). Based on students' indications, Niehaus's Study showed that AB experiences significantly influenced volunteering for 84% of the students. They also influenced the plans to engage in advocacy on 68.8% of the students. For 53% of them, their experience changed their

consideration to participate in the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, Teach for America, or Doctors without Borders after graduation.

Students who have participated in AB opportunities have shown a willingness to continue to engage in community service opportunities and other Alternative Breaks programs in the future. For example, 82% of 44 undergraduate and graduate students who participated in Alternative Breaks trips in Panama and Costa Rica showed commitment to community service (Bowen, 2011). The study based their findings on abroad opportunities between 2006 and 2008, during the students' spring breaks. Participants assisted with ecological projects, school repairs, and medical care.

AB participants also report acquiring an appreciation for community service and giving back to the community (Hoey & Feld-Gore, 2014). Other Alternative breaks opportunities, such as the 2009 Clemson University's trips to Nashville, Tennessee and Columbia, South Carolina, developed students' sense of importance in building relationships with other participants and the community members they served (DuPre, 2010). It became necessary for the participants to establish comfortable and supportive environments, open up to sharing ideas, create bonds with their peers, and listen to the serving community members' stories. Students also have opportunities to bond, build healthy teamwork, practice mutual respect, accept diversity, and learn from each other (Gumpert & Kraybill-Greggo, 2005). The study also suggests students change their attitudes toward poverty and the poor due to their participation in AB.

Alternative Breaks opportunities also suggest changing participant's perception of self for those who experience the program. For instance, students have described reported adjustments in their actions and self-perceptions after completing their service (Mann &

DeAngelo, 2016). They vocalized the experience allowed them to get out of their shell, interact with new people, and participate in new activities. They also developed a sense of accomplishment while serving others and by completing their project tasks successfully. As a result of their interactions, they gained more confidence in themselves and their talents. They also developed a sense of gratitude for what they have compared to the people they served and their communities.

As a result of their involvement in Alternative Breaks trips and contacts with diverse groups, students gain a sense of cultural understanding and acceptance of difference (Mann & DeAngelo, 2016; Niehaus, 2017). They understand many people are different in race, class, background, and needs. They also learned that many people go hungry and live in poor conditions in developing countries and the United States. They now understand they do not need to go far or abroad to help others as people in need are nearby or in their communities.

Lastly, Alternative Breaks programs impact developing students' diversity awareness and a sense of social justice. Niehaus (2017) reports that students who participated in AB opportunities perceived a change in diversity and social justice orientations. Approximately half to three-quarters of the students specified a significant influence on social justice orientation measures. A strong positive predictor of perceived change in social justice orientation was the degree to which participants reported learning from community members. Moreover, pre-trip orientation sessions were strong positive predictors of perceived differences in social justice orientation.

Most research suggests positive associations with Alternative Breaks opportunities and participants behavioral development in areas such as activism, civic,

and advocacy engagement, commitment to social justice, desire to give back to the community and volunteer in the future, building relationships with others, diversity respect and acceptance, cultural awareness and appreciation, concern for the poor, openness to new activities, confidence, and sense of accomplishment. The literature only shows a connection between Alternative Breaks programs and students' teamwork and collaboration skill development. Consequently, further research is needed to demonstrate students' skill development due to their participation in AB programs.

### **Globalization**

In the United States and around the entire planet, globalization has created a demand for culturally informed and globally minded students (Pavelka & Minions, 2020). Globalization involves the interdependence and interactions among countries, cultures, people, economies, and services and incorporates international communication, technical, economic, social, political, and cultural exchanges (Bozkurt & Yasar, 2016). It also entails "political and social movements that stress difference, dialogue, and an ethic of collective responsibility for the world" (Keith, 2005, p. 6). Experiential learning opportunities, such as study abroad, service-learning, community-based learning, and Alternative Breaks, allow students to travel internationally to learn about other cultures and different issues affecting others worldwide. (Reilly & Senders, 2009; Gambrell, 2016; Baecher & Chung, 2020; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004).

### **Global Issues and Service**

Some experiential learning programs allow students to engage in social issues affecting others around the world. "International service-learning combines aspects of conventional study abroad with aspects of conventional service-learning, offering an

exceptional degree of integration into a target culture and an intensive experience of community service” (Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). It has the potential to foster a critical understanding of global citizenship, allowing students to advocate social change, disrupt society’s status quo, recognize social power dynamics, and cultivate genuine relationships with members of the community (Adarlo, 2020).

For example, one service-learning project engaged graduate counseling psychology students in providing psychoeducational services to adolescent girls who have been abused in Singapore while allowing the participants to experience how cross-cultural social justice and advocacy work abroad (Smith et al., 2014). Students facilitated strategies on coping with peer pressure and establishing, building, and keeping relationships going while allowing the girls to express their feelings, thoughts, and perceptions.

Another opportunity allowed pre-service teachers to work with teachers and teach students in low-income slum schools with a 1:65 teacher-student ratio in Kenya (Mbugua, 2010). They also worked with HIV/AIDS infected students and students who have lost loved ones to HIV/AIDS. The pre-service teachers taught social sciences and global principles while fostering a sense of care for others, personal transformation, and community collaboration. In the Philippines, early childhood education and health sciences students worked with a community affected by typhoon Haiyan in 2013. The students evaluated the operation of rural childbirth clinics and proposed recommendations for improving maternal healthcare delivery. Participants also supported the community's children with reading, writing, and formation skills (Adarlo, 2020).

Service-learning projects also allow students to address poverty issues abroad. Undergraduate business and Master of Business Administration students worked in Siem Reap, Cambodia, with the Jesuit Service nongovernmental organization to help alleviate extreme poverty conditions. The students helped plant trees in two rural schools and put together wheelchairs for landmine victims while observing Cambodians' resilience and unfortunate living conditions (Le, & Raven, 2015). Moreover, Taiwanese college students participated in a service-learning project to help Chinese people living in extreme poverty conditions in Myanmar. The military government ruled the country, and there was a considerable gap between the rich and the poor (Liu & Lee, 2011). The 15 participants worked with the Seeing Home Again Service team and assisted with collecting toys and textbooks for elementary and high schools. They helped teach life and health education, fundraised 12,000 NT dollars to build a kindergarten, and organized activities with the community children.

Moreover, study abroad programs often allow students to question their assumptions about policymaking on various global and local issues, such as environmental sustainability and social justice (Harrison & Palmer, 2019). Biology, natural science, social science, humanities, and Spanish students addressed ecological and social issues because of mining work in Costa Rica. The students assisted with recycling, cleaning rivers, teaching English, and geriatric physical therapy while learning about the nature, biodiversity, and culture offered by Costa Rica (Lewis, & Niesenbaum, 2005). Another study abroad program permitted students to research a South American forest to study its canopy and biodiversity. The students lived among the indigenous

people, helped rebuild a school and sell artifacts, and learned about the community's rich oral history (Griffen & Greene, 2019).

Service-learning projects also offer opportunities for students interested in women and gender issues at a global level. Twelve undergraduate students, one professor, and a graduate assistant served in Karagwe, Tanzania, with the Fair-Trade Learning non-profit organization. The students planted and cultivated crops, cleaned hospital rooms, and assisted with gender and cultural issues (Oberhauser & Daniels, 2017). The students frequently addressed issues concerning women and dominance dynamics and the role of patriarchy in the Tanzanian community. Participants noted that women had no control over family decisions, resources, and land and the community oppressed them (Oberhauser & Daniels, 2017).

Migration and immigration are other social issues affecting many people globally. Some service-learning and study abroad opportunities allow students to work with non-profit organizations that help migrants and refugees to find and integrate into a new home. For example, 21 students from New Mexico and Virginia universities worked with the Migration Crisis project in 2017. The project was responsible for integrating refugees in the area in or around Munich, Germany while allowing the students to assist and interact with people of different ages, genders, races, and religions (Hirschauer et al., 2021).

Some Alternative Breaks programs provide students with hands-on opportunities to work abroad with disadvantaged children who live in vulnerable environments. These children are deprived of fundamental rights, live in poverty, have no adequate access to food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, and shelter. They also lack appropriate

child and medical care (Gordon & Nandy, 2012). They may also not receive any or proper education and may engage in child labor and sexual abuse. They lack resources to survive or become successful. According to Gordon et al. (2003), severe deprivation of basic human needs has diverse consequences for children's development, health, and wellbeing. The Global Community Engagement site of Alternative Breaks sponsors college students' service-learning projects in Santiago, Dominican Republic (DR). Participants work with children's rights agencies and local schools focusing on educating and helping disadvantaged Haitian and children. These children live in deprived neighborhoods and experience extreme poverty, physical and emotional abuse, child labor, homelessness, sexual exploitation, and malnutrition. They also lack medical, psychological, emotional, and parental support. All of these negative factors, unfortunately, prevent children from receiving proper education and learning.

### **Global Experiential Learning**

When it comes to abroad experiential learning opportunities and student learning, common themes develop due to student participation in these experiences. Cultural competence and appreciation (Daly et al., 2014; Lough & Toms, 2018), civic engagement (Pavelka & Minions, 2020), and social justice advocacy (Smith et al., 2014) are some of the common types of learning students gain.

Cultural competence is attitudes and behaviors that allow people and systems to function efficiently in cross-cultural settings. It involves human behavior toward “thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, and social groups” that are inductive to working together effectively (Cross et al., 1989). Becoming culturally competent also involves valuing diversity, self-

assessing and understanding one's own culture, being aware of the dynamics that occur when cultures interact, incorporating cultural knowledge into our system (school, profession, work, etc.), and adapting to diversity.

A group of pre-service teachers who assisted low-income communities in Kenya developed cultural competence and global issues awareness (Mbugua, 2010). They also acknowledged professional growth as they became more culturally aware and developed empathy for the minority students they may teach in the United States while observing the world from various angles. The service-learning opportunity in Singapore provided participants with social justice and cultural knowledge (Smith et al., 2014). Some of the students developed cross-cultural and personal worldview awareness while working with the DaySpring girls.

The students who served in Karagwe, Tanzania, developed intercultural competence and global awareness (Oberhauser & Daniels, 2017). Oberhauser & Daniels point out that "outcomes and impacts of global service-learning also include various stages of feeling uncomfortable and awkward, leading to accepting and embracing a new culture" (p. 162). Participants learned about privilege, outsider status, material situations, and inequalities. They realized their white American privilege and the cultural disparities between the serving community and themselves. Students' opinions about what is valuable and important are also shaped by their study abroad experiences, which affect their intellectual and moral behavior (Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). Many students acquire more critical views of American values, customs, actions, and beliefs and learn to appreciate the little things they have back at home.

The term Civic Engagement refers to ways citizens participate in a community's existence to enhance the lives of others or to assist in determining the community's future (Adler & Goggin, 2005). Civic engagement involves solving community problems, fundraising for charity, voting regularly, protesting, contacting government officials and the news, as well as being a member of a non-profit, political, advocacy, and civil-rights group (Smith, 2013; Adler & Goggin, 2005; Prentice, 2007). It is the productive process of converting one's obligations to human and socioeconomic development and "involves people in the economic, social, cultural and political processes that affect their lives" (Malik & Waglé, 2002, p. 3).

Experiential learning projects promote civic identity and engagement, as is the case for Early Childhood Education and Health Sciences students who assisted communities in the Philippines (Adarlo, 2020). They solved literacy issues while teaching poor youngsters how to read and write and address the region's need for improved maternity care. The participants expressed becoming responsive to poor people's wealth fare are and their involvement in perpetuating repressive social institutions. The Taiwanese students in Liu and Lee's Study (2011) expressed gaining diverse perspectives on the world and better knowledge and appreciation for diverse cultures due to serving in Myanmar.

Social justice advocacy is coordinated efforts that facilitate fair resource distribution, eradicate group discrimination, and foster equality. Other goals involve encouraging people to act in policies and procedures that affect their lives and demand transparency and accountability for society's decisions (Klugman, 2011). For example, it addresses human and social rights injustices (Wettstein, 2010; Farrior, 2009), racial,

class, gender, and other types of oppression (Toporek & Liu, 2001), inequality (Mumtaz, 2005), and socioeconomic abuses (McBride, 1988).

Study abroad and international service-learning projects promote a sense of social justice advocacy on participants, as is the case of the 10-counselor education and counseling psychology students who provided service in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, for 13 days. For example, some students expressed gaining perspectives about the struggle and quality of life people in Honduras have. They became aware of their needs to the point that they would stand up against prejudice and injustice of immigrants who came to the United States for a better life (Dietz & Baker, 2019). Other students want to continue advocating for those in need at larger global scales.

Another valuable aspect of global service-learning projects is the opportunity they allow participants to develop relationships and friendships (Baecher & Chung, 2020; Liu & Lee, 2011; Oberhauser & Daniels, 2017). They can form strong ties with and share experiences with other participants as they travel and live together, work jointly to serve those in need, and have common goals, passions, and interests (Baecher & Chung, 2020). They can also establish relationships with the local agency personnel and members of the serving communities (Baecher & Chung, 2020; Dietz & Baker, 2019).

Research on students who participate in experiential learning opportunities shows that participants may develop a global vision of citizenship (Christie et al., 2012). These projects expose them to diverse scenarios and gain a more global perspective on life. On many occasions, there are positive associations with international experiential learning programs and student behavioral development in intellectual and moral responsibility, global citizenship, cultural competence, diversity awareness and respect, and cross-

cultural appreciation. There is also growth in civic engagement, social justice advocacy, empathy towards minorities, privilege and inequality consciousness, appreciation of the little things they have, and cross-cultural collaboration and relationship-building skills.

## **Critical Theories and Criticism**

### ***High-Impact Practices***

Kuh et al. (2005) comprehensively characterized student success as "satisfaction, persistence, and high levels of learning and personal development" (Abes et al., 2019, p. 314). As indicated by Kuh (2008), there are eleven high-level practices that colleges and universities can apply to upgrade student learning and achievement. They are "(a) first-year seminars and experiences, (b) common intellectual experiences, (c) learning communities, (d) writing-intensive courses, (e) collaborative assignments and projects, (f) undergraduate research, (g) diversity and global learning, (h) ePortfolios, (i) service-learning and community-based learning, (j) internships, and (k) capstone courses and projects" (Abes et al., 2019, p. 314). As specified, service and community-based learning are some of the initiatives that promote student learning and development.

For instance, high-impact practices, such as learning networks, writing-intensive courses, and ePortfolios, contribute to student adjustment to college (Conefrey, 2021), as reported by a qualitative case study on first-generation students at a 4-year institution in Northern California. Also, students who took part in numerous high-impact practices increased self-efficacy in literacy and study skills, improved outcome expectations and goals, and perceived fewer barriers and more support (Conefrey, 2021).

A quantitative study demonstrated that participation in multiple high-impact opportunities, such as learning communities, service-learning courses, study abroad

experiences, internships, capstone courses or culminating senior experiences, and research with a faculty member influenced students' perceptions of learning (Finley & McNair, 2013). The study included data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) from 25,336 students at 38 California, Oregon, and Wisconsin colleges. Results showed self-reporting gains in general education knowledge, practical competence, and personal and social development (Finley & McNair, 2013).

A phenomenological study showed that 23 alumni who participated in internships and field experiences, diversity/study abroad/global learning, learning communities, and undergraduate research high-impact programs were able to explore college and career opportunities. Participants worked toward meeting college and career goals, connected with peers with the same interests, grew academically and professionally, developed skills, and expanded their cultural knowledge (Grabsch et al., 2021).

Service-learning is viewed as a high-impact practice because it requires significant commitment and exertion outside of the classroom learning, faculty-student interaction, joint efforts with diverse groups, and considerable feedback (Goff et al., 2020). For example, 55 Park, Recreation, and Tourism Studies (PRTS) students at a southern Virginia university demonstrated learning and development because they participated in a Character and Resiliency Education (CARE) Now after-school program for middle school students. Analyzing participants' written reflections showed that the service allowed students to grow personally and professionally, face unique challenges, and apply learned knowledge to real-world problems. It also increased participants' awareness of youth to youth, youth to family, and environmental challenges. Lastly, the

service-learning opportunity developed meaningful connections to the served youth, experience, and future advocacy (Goff et al., 2020).

### **Critical Theories on High-Impact Practices**

There are some critiques about high-impact practices and whether they contribute to student learning and success for all college students or just some. For example, scholars have suggested that these practices may not include diversity, inclusion, racism, and classism. As a result, they may not promote minority participation (Abes et al., 2019). In some high-impact practices, such as service-learning, community-based learning, and volunteerism, student participation requires a certain amount of free time, money, and access to local groups. Minoritized students may not have access to resources (Stewart & Nicolazzo, 2018) and, as a result, may never have the opportunity to experience high-impact practice benefits. In most cases, those serving others are the “white, sheltered, middle-class, single, without children, un-debted, and between 18 and 24 years old students” (Seider & Hillman, 2011, p. 1). There is more negligible participation from students of color, low socioeconomic status, and non-traditional ages.

When it comes to service-learning and community-based engagements, the privileged individuals who have greater access and status are also the ones who can participate in these activities at the expense of those less privileged and in need (Abes et al., 2019). Sweat et al. (2013) found in their study of 141 white, 16 African Americans, 17 Native Americans, 63 Asian Americans, 27 Latino/as, and three unknown race/ethnicity students that white students have more access to high-impact services than minority students. Their participation in quality writing, research, creative work, diversity, and different view courses was higher than that of minority students. They also

engaged more in internships, professional mentorship, capstone research and projects, and learning communities.

Participation in internship opportunities varies significantly by race (Hora et al., 2019). Their mixed-methods analysis, which involved 1129 students who completed surveys and 57 students who participated in focus groups, determined that 312 (28%) out of the 1129 students did an internship. Out of the 312 students, 183 (59%) were white, 89 (29%) African American, 22 (7%) Hispanic or Latino, and 18 (6%) others. Moreover, out of the 794 students who did not participate in an internship, 502 indicated they intended to have an internship but could not engage in one because of access barriers. The barriers included lack of childcare (affecting 5.20% of the students), lack of transportation (affecting 14.90%), insufficient pay offered (affecting 27.40%), lack of internship opportunities (affecting 42.10%), heavy course load (51.90%), and the need to work at a current job (58.00%) (Hora et al., 2019, p. 11). These results demonstrate that the non-traditional non-privileged students who are minorities, have personal responsibilities, and need to work have less access to this type of high-impact opportunities.

There are also instances when typical awareness-raising exercises, such as community walks, frequently prioritize the learning of privileged students at the expense of minoritized ones (Abes et al., 2019). Service-learning and community-based projects may expose the conditions minoritized and low socioeconomic students live in their community while teaching the most prosperous about these issues. As a result, we ask minoritized students' communities to exhibit the tangible results of their societal oppression. For example, a study of predominantly white female social work students who participated in a service-learning project that assisted Native American communities

reported that the students improved empathy for Native American people. They increased their understanding of America's cultural bias while developing feelings of remorse and sorrow over US policy decisions and sympathy with Native people's rage and frustration as they continue to battle to be understood. Students spoke about the misinformation they got in public school and the difficulties Native students faced in classes where their presence, contributions, and current existence were neglected (Bolea, 2012). The privileged students were able to learn about the struggles, injustices, and poor living conditions of their Native American peers at the expense of the minoritized population.

There is also the issue of power and pervasiveness of oppression, which questions colleges create spaces where minoritized students may feel they do not belong (Abes et al., 2019). Abes et al. point out that white queer and trans\* students utilize LGBTQ+ learning communities more often than queer and trans\* people of color (QTPOC) because white students in the space tend to make QTPOC as if they do not belong there.

In his book, *Trans\* in College*, Nicolazzo (2016) talks about problematic situations trans\* students have to deal with in college. One problem is the fact of gender discourse. We expect students to fit into one of the two binary gender categories, men and women, and look according to their biological sex. If students do not, they could get looks from others, and people would talk. Faculty and students' attitude towards the binary gender dress expectation is also not welcoming and only makes some trans\* students feel out of place. It is disappointing that a university space would make one of their students consider changing their major because they felt pressure to wear a dress shirt and pants to look more masculine while presenting for class (Nicolazzo, 2016, p.65). Then we also have students who expressed a sense of loneliness and difficulty because

“people in the black community on campus treated hir differently because of their queer gender presentation” (Nicolazzo, 2016, p.70). They feel that they have to “act like other black queers on campus where they were super masculine or super feminine and that it was the only way she could be accepted” (Nicolazzo, 2016, p.70). Sadly, the environment at a university learning community center “promoted gender binary discourse by not welcoming discussions, expressions, or embodiments of genderqueerness” (Nicolazzo, 2016, p.70).

Equally important, when it comes to LGBTQ+ students, overall student support and social acceptance have a more significant substantial impact on LGBTQ+ students' academic achievement than internships, learning communities, senior capstone experiences, and study abroad (Kilgo et al. 2019). These findings also suggest that high-impact practices are not adequate to student success unless they provide avenues and spaces that make all types of students welcome and accepted. Only then would students want to utilize their services, support, and resources.

Minoritized students begin college already equipped with coping mechanisms for dealing with oppressive institutional structures. Also, university settings continue to place students from marginalized groups in hostile environments designed to benefit privileged students (Abes et al., 2019). Therefore, higher education institutions should adopt high-impact activities, knowing that some students may believe they need to be resilient to get through college. Instead of assigning staff to collaborate with these students to brainstorm ways to combat systematic oppression, colleges need to consider what campus spaces create these difficulties (Abes et al., 2019) and remove those structures.

Since privileged students may control college space and the media, the oppressed frequently face "erasure and invalidation of their lived experiences. They can suddenly and traumatically experience dissonance through student involvement and engagement experiences" (Abes et al., 2019, p. 278). For example, there is the issue of racism in international service. Abes et al. introduced an African American student who faced racial discrimination from an indigenous Ecuadorian community while engaging in service-learning projects in that country. The children she would be assisting were more welcoming of the white volunteers in her group and would avoid her. She felt the children were afraid of her. When she signed up for the experience, she thought she would "engage in cultural exchange, teach English in a rural school, and put her skills into use in a new setting" (Abes et al., 2019, p. 146). Instead, she ended up having a bad experience and felt out of place. It was clear to her that these children had never had any previous contact with a black individual. The student also mentioned that the site coordinator knew of anti-black racism in Ecuador but decided not to disclose that to the group because she was not proud of her country's racism (Abes et al., 2019). Again, this instance demonstrates the dissonance minoritized students may face due to high-impact practices and opportunity structures controlled by privileged groups.

First-generation students also face access challenges to high-impact practices, such as service-learning and community-based learning. These students are those whose at least one parent has not earned a bachelor's degree and are more likely of color, older, lower socioeconomic status, and lack parental support (Pascarella et al., 2004; Taylor et al., 2019). They face decreased college enrollment and degree completion rates (Engle, 2007). First-generation students may develop deeper community relationships by serving

communities similar to theirs. They may "navigate issues of power, privilege, and systematic oppression" (Taylor et al., 2019, p. 351) if they were to participate in service-learning projects offered by their college. However, they have lower chances to engage in these opportunities because of time, finances, and other responsibilities.

### ***Critical Theories on Experiential Learning Opportunities***

Service-learning receives criticism because students see it as charity or volunteering rather than a learning and social change opportunity. Since it also creates spaces for privileged students to work in communities with low resources, defining it as a charitable endeavor only establishes a hierarchy between elite students and the populations who are ostensibly in need of assistance (Endres & Gould, 2009). Also, predominantly white professors at mostly white universities carry out service-learning projects to help poor people of color (Mitchell et al., 2012).

There are also concerns that service-learning courses do not always address diversity. For example, Seider et al. (2013) compared the experience of 244 white students and 118 students of color in a service-learning program. The class involved humanity and social science readings and discussions and required the students to volunteer 10 hours a week at an anti-poverty service location. The students of color expressed that the course provided no sense of community and was hesitant to engage in racial debates with their white peers because they thought their viewpoints were naïve, misinformed, or disrespectful. Therefore, "the learning of all students is diminished when diverse perspectives are not fully represented or heard "(Seider et al., 2013, p. 25).

Higher education institutions use study abroad programs to "bring in top students and demonstrate to students and parents that their money can buy an exciting,

broadening, and enriching experience" (Reilly & Senders, 2009, p. 242). They use these programs as a marketing tool to recruit wealthy, privileged students. However, only about 4% of college students can travel, live, and learn in a foreign environment. Those who cannot afford it may decide to seek student loans. But then, they find themselves in debt (Reilly & Senders, 2009). Study abroad is cost-prohibitive for most students (Byker & Putman, 2019).

Study abroad and service-learning projects may also "include experiences more akin to poverty tourism" (Byker & Putman, 2019, p. 99), and many times they offer to walk through at-risk communities without their residents' permission and consent. This action may cause the locals feel invaded while the students learn at the cost of the disadvantaged ones. It is essential that volunteers first consult with the locals and obtain a local guide who knows the residents and their needs. They also need to show respect for those in the community and establish rapport with them (Byker & Putman, 2019). Moreover, Byker and Putman argue that study abroad programs need to be more accessible to all students to challenge and allow them to develop critically conscious global competencies. These programs would want to create "citizens that act with empathy, are more interculturally aware and outraged by social injustice, take responsibility for their actions, and are willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place" (Byker & Putman, 2019, p. 86).

Race and class privilege also play a role in the transformative learning of study abroad students. The most privileged, white, upper-middle-class students tend to gain "personal transformation, such as feelings of great independence and thinking about the future" (Gambrell, 2016, p. 109), rather than social ones. Yet, the less privileged students

tend to gain both personal and social transformation. They enjoy celebrating and learning about other cultures and challenge stereotypes and racism (Gambrell, 2016). Social power systems are put in place to allow transformations to be purely personal for white, upper-middle-class individuals. In contrast, individuals without privilege must understand unfair social institutions to maneuver an oppressive society (Gambrell, 2016).

Students may increase their multicultural competence (Farence & Bell, 2014) and better understand their identities (Jones et al., 2012) because they participate in Alternative Breaks programs. However, Niehaus & Rivera (2015) reported that white students felt their AB experience helped them better understand other races if people in the serving community were of a different race or ethnicity. They experienced no increase in understanding their own identities. On the other hand, students of color understood their own racial/ethnic identity if community members were from a similar race/ethnicity. These findings indicate that white students are more inclined to see community members of different privilege levels, whereas students of color are more likely to identify with them (Espino & Lee, 2011; Green, 2001; Seider et al., 2013).

Critical race theories also address how students of color experience study abroad and other experiential learning and service-based opportunities. Minoritized students may feel out of place due to diversity and racism in the serving country. Goldoni's (2017) research shows that race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status impact African American students' interaction with locals and their language and culture learning. For example, a black student studying in Spain reported being "discriminated against for his skin color, presumed socioeconomic class, and hip-hop/Black culture attire. The local police also stopped him twice for apparently no reason while sitting outside a bar in Spain with his

US white friends. Authorities did not stop his white friends" (Goldoni, 2017, p. 333). Instead of having a positive learning experience, the student encountered a disconnection from the host community, prejudice, and racism. Instead of learning about and appreciating a new culture, he rejected the Spanish culture and felt that he could only relate to those from his sociocultural background.

In general, researchers and practitioners present critical theories and criticism to argue high-impact practices and experiential learning opportunities contribute to the learning and success of some students and not all. Some say that these opportunities do not include issues of diversity, inclusion, racism, and classism. Others argue that mostly the privileged students with class and financial resources have access to these programs and benefit at the expense of the less privileged. Moreover, they proclaim that race is a factor in determining who usually has to opportunity to participate in high-impact practices and experiential learning opportunities. Research shows that white students are most likely to access these programs compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Lastly, they argue that colleges and universities may create spaces that prevent minoritized students from taking advantage of the opportunities high-impact practices and experiential learning programs offer their participants.

## **Summary**

Chapter 2 of the dissertation provided an overview of experiential and service-learning opportunities and their impact on participants' development in areas such as multicultural and diversity awareness, intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, confidence, familiarity with the professional field, adaptation to a problematic situation, commitment to serve others and social justice, civic responsibility, prejudice reduction, understanding

others, self-evaluation, adaptability, and ability to accept change. These programs may also impact the development of participants' problem-solving, time management, organization, communication, critical thinking, teamwork, collaboration, decision-making, responsibility, leadership, professional, and technical skills.

I also presented Alternative Breaks programs' impact on some participants' behavioral development in areas such as activism, civic, and advocacy engagement, commitment to social justice, desire to give back to the community and volunteer in the future, building relationships with others, diversity respect and acceptance, cultural awareness and appreciation, concern for the poor, openness to new activities, confidence, and sense of accomplishment. However, more research must be conducted on Alternative Breaks programs and participants' skill development. Consequently, I proposed conducting further research to demonstrate students' skill development due to their participation in AB programs.

Moreover, I provided an overview of experiential learning programs' role globally and how research suggested students' behavioral development in intellectual and moral responsibility, global citizenship, cultural competence, diversity awareness and respect, and cross-cultural appreciation. Other areas include civic engagement, social justice advocacy, empathy towards minorities, privilege and inequality consciousness, appreciation of the little things they have, and cross-cultural collaboration and relationship-building skills.

I presented some critical theories and criticism around high-impact practices and -experiential learning projects that argue their limitations regarding access and benefits. They claimed these programs contribute to the learning and success of some students and

not all because they do not include diversity, inclusion, racism, and classism issues. They also argued that they were available only to white students and those who could afford them. At the same time, college spaces discouraged minoritized students from seeking high-impact practices and experiential learning opportunities. Moreover, I provided an overview of Kolb's experiential learning theory, and the literature review provided a solid foundation for identifying current knowledge gaps that could potentially result in future investigations.

In chapter 3 of the dissertation, I will present the study methodology, design, and population selection. I will also introduce the instruments I used to gather data and ensure the study's reliability and validity. I will also demonstrate my positionality and reflexivity as a researcher. Lastly, I will discuss any considerations to address ethical issues to protect the individual involved in my research.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This case study aimed to describe the impact of FIU Alternative Breaks programs on participants' behavioral and skill development. The study addressed two research questions: (a) What types of behavioral development do FIU students who participate in Alternative Breaks (AB) perceive from their participation in the program? and (b) How do FIU students who participate in AB describe the program's influence on the types of skills developed?

This chapter will detail the research methodology for the study and is divided into the following sections: (a) rationale for research paradigm, (b) design, (c) sampling and participant selection, (d) United Nations' sustainable development goals, (e) instruments, (f) reliability and validity, (g) researcher's positionality and reflexivity, (h) considerations of ethical issues, and (i) summary.

#### **Rationale for Research Paradigm**

The study relied on a pragmatist approach since it, as a worldview, arises out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In pragmatism, the reality is that which is practical. It involves the concept of inquiry in which its goal is to learn more about a certain aspect of reality and to produce information that can be used to influence that aspect of reality (Dewey, 1931). The main goal of inquiry is to provide information for the sake of growth and change (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). The researcher discovers knowledge by examining the usefulness of theory in practice (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013) and actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In pragmatism the meaning a person obtains from his or her life is a

result of dynamic interactions between learned concepts and current human experience (Maddux & Donnett, 2015). A case study is a methodology that fits this paradigm and allows the researcher to multiple methods (Yazan, 2015), different worldviews, and various assumptions, as well as other forms of data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **Design**

The study used a case study research design (Yin, 2017; Guetterman & Fetters, 2018) to provide a holistic understanding of participants' experiences of service-learning opportunities offered by Alternative Breaks programs at Florida International University. A case study is "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, institution, person, process, or a social unit" (Yazan, 2015, p. 139). Case studies allow the researcher to focus in-depth on understanding "complex social phenomena and to retain a holistic and real-world perspective, such as studying individual life cycles, small group behavior, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, school performance, international relations, and the maturation of industries" (Yin, 2017, p. 5). It allows the researcher to explain how and why a social phenomenon occurs.

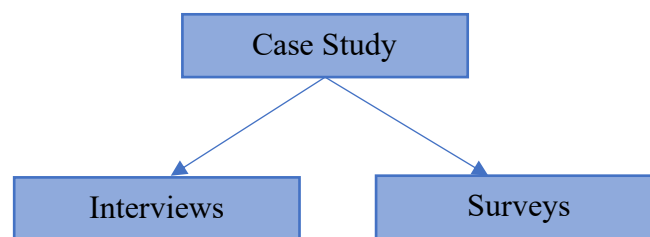
Moreover, a case study is a preferable research method when the researcher has no influence or control over behavioral events and wishes to focus on current rather than historical events (Yin, 2017). Also, a case study's particular strength is the ability to deal with a wide range of evidence, such as documents, artifacts, interviews, observations, and surveys. Therefore, as a bounded system, the case study in my research provided a holistic understanding of participants' experiences of service-learning opportunities

offered by FIU Alternative Breaks and explored how the program influenced students' developed behaviors and skills.

This case study included qualitative interview data supplemented by quantitative survey data. Interviewing a small sample and surveying a larger population of FIU AB participants explored the program's impact on college students' behavioral and skill development. I analyzed the two data sets separately and merged them to create a comprehensive analysis and discussion.

Stake (1995) advises case study researchers to develop two or three research questions to structure the interviews and other methods (Yazan, 2015). As a result, I composed two research questions to guide what I asked my interviewed and surveyed participants. The two research questions were a) What types of behavioral development do FIU students who participate in Alternative Breaks (AB) perceive from their participation in the program? and b) How do FIU students who participate in AB describe the program's influence on the types of skills developed?

**Figure 3.1: Case Study**



### **Sampling and Participant Selection**

The participants for this study were Florida International University students who participated in local or international Alternative Breaks projects in either the Winter 2021, Spring 2022, or Summer 2022 semester breaks. I asked all participants in the study

to commit to completing the pre-AB experience survey (see Appendix E) and the post-AB experience survey (see Appendix F), while participation in an interview was optional and not required of all participants. Students who participated in an interview and submitted a survey committed an average of 115 minutes to the study. The 115 minutes included a 15-minute study introduction and instruction, a 60–70-minute interview, a 15-minute pre-AB Experience survey, and a 15-minute post-AB Experience survey. 3 interviewed students also committed to 15 additional minutes of a follow-up interview and 2 more responded to email questions that sought clarification and further information that resulted from their original interview. Students who only completed the surveys but not an interview committed to 45 minutes. The 45 minutes included a 15-minute study introduction and instruction, a 15-minute pre-AB experience survey, and a 15-minute post-AB experience survey.

I interviewed a small sample of 8 college students who participated in an FIU site of Alternative Breaks during the 2021 - 2022 academic year. To obtain participation in the interviews, I first relied on snowball sampling and asked students to help me recruit other participants. I asked participants of the GCE site of Alternative Breaks, who I worked with, to assist recruit students who participated in other AB sites. Since I also maintained a professional relationship with AB's coordinators and staff at FIU, I asked them to email all AB participants to invite volunteers who would like to participate in the interviews. I also asked them to use AB's Facebook and Instagram social media platforms to seek volunteers. Lastly, I requested AB to allow me to attend some of their site meetings to introduce myself, create rapport with the students, and ask for volunteers I could interview. At the meetings, 13 students showed interest in the interviews. After

contacting them via email and text, only four of them followed through and participated in an interview. Other students and an AB staff member assisted me in recruiting the additional four interviewed participants. I used the Participant Invitation Handout to assist with participant recruitment (see Appendix C).

I also asked college students who participated in Alternative Breaks sites during the 2021-2022 academic year to complete surveys (Mills & Gay, 2019). To maximize responses, I requested permission to administer an electronic survey to all participants willing to complete it during AB general and individual site meetings before and after their AB experience. I also asked the AB program coordinator to email the survey to students who did not attend the meetings. I only requested students who completed the pre-AB experience survey to complete the post-AB experience survey. Since survey responses were anonymous, I used the consent forms signed by the students to track the participants who submitted a pre-AB experience survey and asked them to complete a post-AB experience survey. Since I collected the first sets of AB experience surveys in Spring 2022, students who participated in a 2021 winter break site opportunity completed a pre-post-AB Experience survey (see Appendix G) in February 2022. Spring and Summer site participants completed the pre-AB Experience survey between February and March 2022 and the post-AB Experience survey between May and August 2022. I collected 94% of the pre-AB experience surveys at AB meetings and 6% by reaching out to participants electronically via email and text. I gathered 80% of the pre-post-AB experience surveys at a meeting and 20% electronically. Lastly, I collected 60% of the post-AB experience surveys at a meeting and 40% electronically. Since most of the sites

did not meet after their service completion, I emailed and texted the participants who did not meet after their experience to ask them to complete the post-AB Experience survey.

Even though my goal was to survey 75 students, the Coronavirus pandemic obstructed me from reaching this goal. I collected 39 pre-AB experience survey data from the participants. Out of those 39 participants, 30 (77%) completed the post-AB experience survey. Three participants informed me they withdrew from the service a few weeks before it took place and did not submit the post-AB experience survey. 6 participants never responded to my several requests to complete the post-AB experience survey. The 39 pre-AB experience survey and 30 post-AB experience survey responses included five winter site participant responses to a pre-post-AB experience survey instead. As mentioned above, I surveyed these 5 participants for the first time after they had completed their service.

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic's unpredictability, the number of participants and site opportunities drastically changed. The AB program at FIU went from offering traditionally 25 site opportunities in a year, pre-pandemic, to only 6 this year. The University prohibited outbound student group travel to unsafe locations for students, faculty, and staff. During the 2021-2022 academic year, the University permitted the most group to travel to locations within the United States. The FIU Alternative Breaks program facilitated five local sites, all in South Florida. Most sites were express opportunities. Express sites required participants to provide service to the community for 1 or 2 days. At the same time, weeklong sites required participants to assist the community for 3 to 7 days.

AB offered two winter express sites, Lotus House and Operation Gratitude, that took place in late December 2021. It also provided one weeklong spring site, Green Haven, and one spring express site, Biscayne National Park and Global Empowerment Mission, which took place at the end of February 2022. The 5<sup>th</sup> local site AB offered was the weeklong summer site, Deering Estate, which took place during the first week of May.

The University also limited international travel, following US Department of State (DOS) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advisories (Florida International University, n.d.). Travel to countries classified as level 1 or 2 by the Department of State and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention did not need approval. However, groups traveling to countries classified as level 3 or 4 had to submit a petition for traveling and guarantee the safety of their participants. The International Traveling Committee (ITC) at FIU reviewed the petition and recommended or denied permission for the groups to travel abroad. The Provost ultimately approved or banned travel for any group wishing to work in a level 3 or 4 classified country. Previously denied traveling in March 2022 during spring break, the weeklong Global Community Engagement site of Alternative Breaks, which traveled to the Dominican Republic (DR), eventually became the only AB international group allowed to travel overseas. GCE participants completed their service-learning project in DR during the summer break, from May 2 – 9, 2022. Overall, AB offered five local and one international site opportunities during the 2021-2022 academic year.

**Table 3.1: Participants’ Data Collection Breakdown**

Data Collection Tool	Number of Participants	Data Collection Location	Period
Original interview	8	Zoom	May 17, 2022 – August 21, 2022
Follow-up interview	3	Zoom	October 3, 2022 – October 6, 2022
	2	E-mail	October 3, 2022 – October 29, 2022
Pre-AB experience survey (Summer and Spring breaks)	32	On-campus meeting	February 1, 2022 – February 11, 2022
	2	E-mail or text response	February 28, 2022 – March 12, 2022
Pre-post-AB experience survey (Winter break)	4	On-campus meeting	February 1, 2022
	1	E-mail or text response	February 28, 2022
Post-AB experience survey (Summer and Spring breaks)	15	On-campus meeting	May 20, 2022
	10	E-mail or text response	May 24, 2022 – September 9, 2022
Total Pre-AB experience surveys (all term breaks)	39	On-campus meeting and e-mail or text	February 1, 2022 – March 12, 2022
Total Post-AB experience surveys (all term breaks)	30	On-campus meeting and e-mail or text	February 1, 2022 – September 9, 2022

**United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals**

At Florida International University, Alternative Breaks sites focus on addressing and meeting the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to help students contextualize what their site’s social issue looks like globally. In 2015, the United Nations adopted these goals “as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.” (United Nations Development Programme, 2022, para. 1). There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which understand that combating poverty and other forms of deprivation requires plans

that enhance health and education, lessen inequality, promote economic growth, combat climate change, and fight to protect our oceans and forests (United Nations Sustainable Fe, n.d.). Figure 3.2 lists the 17 goals.

These goals are (a) No Poverty, (b) Zero Hunger, (c) Good Health and Well-Being, (d) Quality Education, (e) Gender Equality, (f) Clean Water and Sanitation, (g) Affordable and Clean Energy, (h) Decent Work and Economic Growth, (i) Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, (j) Reduced Inequalities, (k) Sustainable Cities and Communities, (l) Responsible Consumption and Production, (m) Climate Action, (n) Life Below Water, (o) Life on Land, (p) Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, and (q) Partnerships for the Goals.

**Table 3.2: 2021-2022 FIU Alternative Breaks Sites**

Site Name	Break	Length	Location	Social Issue	United Nations Sustainable Development Goal
Lotus House	Winter	Express	Miami, Florida, United States	Homelessness	#1 No Poverty
Operation Gratitude	Winter	Express	Miami, Florida, United States	Veterans	#3 Good Health and Well-Being
Green Haven	Spring	Weeklong	Miami, Florida, United States	Food Insecurity	# 2 Zero Hunger and # 3 Good Health and Well-Being
Biscayne National Park & Global Empowerment Mission	Spring	Express	Homestead, Florida, United States	Environmental and Disaster Relief	# 14 Life Below Water, #17 Partnerships for the Goals and #16

					Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
Deering Estate	Summer	Weeklong	Miami, Florida, United States	Environmental	#15 Life on Land
Global Community Engagement	Summer	Weeklong	Santiago, Dominican Republic	Disadvantaged Children Education	#4 Quality Education

### **Instruments**

I conducted semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions (Wertz et al., 2011; Mills & Gay, 2019; Morse & Clark, 2019; Ravitch & Riggan, 2017) that allowed probing and follow-up questions (Wertz et al., 2011; Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). Merriam (1998) suggests asking good questions and probes (Yazan, 2015), so I prepared thirteen general and six potential probing open-ended questions. I piloted these open-ended questions in an interview I conducted for an advanced qualitative research class I took prior to collecting data for this study. See Appendix D for the interview protocol and questions. The protocol includes 13 predetermined questions and nine questions that emerged during this study’s participant interviews. Conducting the semi-structured initial interviews took 60 to 75 minutes and took place during the Summer 2022 semester. The interviews occurred after participants returned from their AB trips. Follow-up interviews took place in the Fall 2022 semester. I allocated 20 minutes to facilitate follow-up interviews to ask for clarification or gain a deeper understanding of a concept or idea that resulted from the original interview. I also asked students for clarification via email if I was not clear about a couple of concepts that came up in the interviews.

I conducted all interviews via zoom to address the Institutional Review Board (IRB) recommendations to develop and alter techniques to allow flexibility for conducting research activities remotely due to the pandemic. As Merriam recommends, I kept a formal and approachable interaction with respondents. I also recorded the video and audio conversations using zoom. Zoom originally transcribed the discussions, and I watched the videos and listened to the recordings while going over the zoom transcripts. This process allowed me to check the accuracy of the zoom transcripts while allowing me to edit them and get familiar with the data. It also allowed me to hear my participants and deeper learn about their experiences. I analyzed the interview transcripts using Nvivo. Nvivo allowed me to code the transcripts (Mills & Gay, 2019) while allowing me to organize and analyze the data.

I also used a 5-point Likert scale survey (Mills & Gay, 2019) to investigate AB programs' level of influence on student behavioral and skill development. I administered three types of surveys to the AB participants. Students who participated in an AB winter site project completed a pre-post-AB experience survey. These participants completed the survey a month and a half after completion of their AB service. Students who participated in an AB spring or summer site project completed a pre-AB experience survey before their AB service and a post-AB experience survey after completing their experience. I used SPSS for descriptive statistics and a nonparametric test, the Mann-Whitney U test, to analyze the survey data (Mills & Gay, 2019).

I utilized descriptive statistics to determine the AB program's level of influence on developed behaviors and skills. It allowed me to measure the central tendency and variability of my data. For example, it helped me determine the percentage or number of

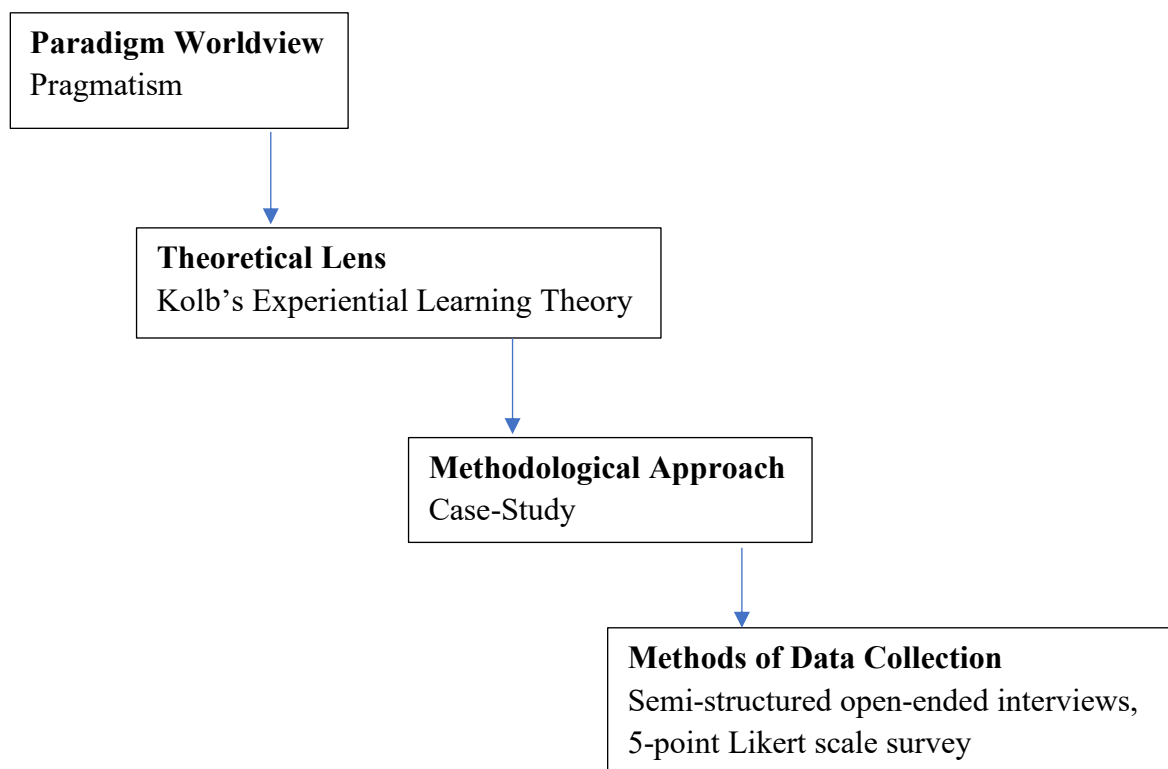
students of different behavior and skill levels. I also used descriptive statistics to compare the number of participants by gender, race/ethnicity, type of trip (local/national vs. international), length of service (express/weekend vs. weeklong), and service years (one, two to three, or four or more years).

Moreover, I used the Mann-Whitney U nonparametric test as a nonparametric statistics method to make statistical inference that regards normal distribution (Agresti, 2018). I utilized the Mann-Whitney U test because, as a nonparametric test, it does not rely on the assumption that the data are normally distributed. The test compares the mean ranks of the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience surveyed populations and observe whether there was any difference in response to the AB program's level of influence on developed behaviors and skills. I also used the test to investigate whether the difference between the pre-AB and post-AB experience survey response was statistically significant for each level of influence on developed behaviors and skills.

It is essential to mention that there were methodological limitations of the study due to the small sample size involved in the research. First, there were only 8 participants engaged in the interviews. Additionally, the pre- and post-AB experience survey responses were small due to low AB participant involvement during the 2021-2022 academic year. Therefore, the small sample size does not represent the entire AB population. Non-response bias also occurred as some participants did not take the survey. Some participants were absent at meetings where the surveys were administered, did not receive the email requesting survey completion, or were not interested in completing the surveys.

To address the Institutional Review Board (IRB) recommendations to develop and alter techniques to allow flexibility for remote research activities due to Covid19, I administered the surveys electronically, using Qualtrics. The electronic survey minimized in-person interaction with the participants. However, I attended the AB site meetings to maximize survey responses from participants. Consequently, I practiced precautions to ensure the safety of the participants and mine. I followed recommendations to use the P3 App to screen participants, kept social distancing, wore masks, disinfected the area, washed and sanitized hands, and minimized the time in the room to 30 minutes or less.

**Figure 3.2: Four Levels of Developing a Research Study**



(Creswell & Clark, 2018, p. 35)

### **Reliability and Validity**

I used several strategies to ensure the reliability of the study. First, the study design, a case study, allowed me to use different data collection sources, such as

qualitative semi-structured interviews and quantitative surveys, to answer my research questions and understand the research problem. As a result, I used triangulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to ensure my study's trustworthiness. Since triangulation means using more than one method to collect data on the same topic, the interview and survey approach to study the program's effects on students was practical.

I also checked interview transcripts to ensure they did not contain apparent mistakes made during transcription (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Third, I continually compared data with the codes and wrote memos about them and their definitions to ensure there was no shift in the codes' meaning during the coding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Also, I documented the methods and processes involved in the investigation to account for reliability. I justified my answers using the literature to tie my findings to similar results from other research (Mills & Gay, 2019). Last, I conducted follow-up interviews to allow me to ask probing questions and confirm interpretations (Mills & Gay, 2019).

Member checking (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was a primary means to address the interview data validity. I shared and discussed my initial findings with the participants and asked for their feedback to double-check that my interpretations of what they said were accurate. I also asked for expert opinions from members of my dissertation committee. Lastly, I recorded my bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I explicitly addressed positionality and reflexivity to examine my beliefs, judgments, and practices and their influence on the research (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). As mentioned earlier, I advised one of the AB sites; however, I ensured the students in that group understood their participation was voluntary. On the other hand, I had no contact with the students in

the other AB sites at FIU. I constantly reminded participants to say no to participation if they chose not to be part of the study.

The survey targeted the population of students who participated in the AB program. Internal consistency (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) estimated reliability by grouping questions in the survey that measure the same concept. For example, I wrote three sets of items that measured the same idea, such as leadership skills. After collecting the responses, I ran a correlation (Cronbach's alpha) between the groups that measured the same idea to determine whether my instrument reliably assessed the same underlying construct. A concept with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.700 or higher is highly reliable. First, I measured the following four main concepts related to behavioral development: (a) helping others, (b) active citizenship and advocacy, (c) appreciation and sense of belonging, and (d) cultural sensitivity and respect.

Four items, measured on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), displayed the participants' agreement level to helping others. This concept had high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.741). Table 3.3 shows the items for this concept, along with the scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha).

**Table 3.3: Helping Others Reliability**

Item	Cronbach's alpha
I have an interest in participating in another AB site project in the future.	0.741
I have an interest in participating in another non-AB service-learning/community-based opportunity in the future.	
I have an interest in holding an AB leadership position.	
I have a desire to help or care for others.	

Six items, measured on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), displayed the participants' agreement level to active citizenship and

advocacy. This concept had high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.957). Table 3.4 shows the items for this concept, along with the scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha).

**Table 3.4: Active Citizenship and Advocacy Reliability**

Item	Cronbach's alpha
I have a sense of ethical/moral responsibility.	0.957
I have a sense of social responsibility or commitment to public/human service.	
I have a positive attitude toward community involvement/citizenship.	
I have an understanding of the problems or challenges other people or groups face in society.	
I have a sense of responsibility to serve my community.	
I believe I can make a difference in my community.	

Two items, measured on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), displayed the participants' agreement level to appreciation and sense of belonging. This concept had relatively low reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.607). Table 3.5 shows the items for this concept, along with the scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha).

**Table 3.5: Appreciation and Sense of Belonging Reliability**

Item	Cronbach's alpha
I have a sense of appreciation for the things I have.	0.607
I have a sense of self-confidence.	

Four items, measured on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), displayed the participants' agreement level to cultural sensitivity and respect. This concept had high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.915). Table 3.6 shows the items for this concept, along with the scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha).

**Table 3.6: Cultural Sensitivity and Respect Reliability**

Item	Cronbach's alpha
I have an understanding of social/cultural differences.	0.915
I have a sense of sensitivity.	
I am open-minded.	
I recognize my own prejudices and biases.	

Second, I measured the following six main concepts related to skill development: (a) people, (b) active listening and communication, (c) adaptability, (d) self-efficacy, (e) leadership, and (f) logistics and problem-solving. Five items, measured on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), displayed the participants' agreement level to people skills. This concept had high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.881). Table 3.7 shows the items for this concept, along with the scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha).

**Table 3.7: People Skills Reliability**

Item	Cronbach's alpha
I have the ability to trust others.	0.881
I know how to collaborate.	
I know how to work in teams.	
I know how to be social.	
I know how to network with others.	

Two items, measured on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), displayed the participants' agreement level to active listening and communication skills. This concept had high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.883). Table 3.8 shows the items for this concept, along with the scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha).

**Table 3.8: Active Listening and Communication Skills Reliability**

Item	Cronbach's alpha
I have the ability to listen to others.	0.883
I know how to communicate with others.	

Three items, measured on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), displayed the participants' agreement level to adaptability skills. This concept had high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.770). Table 3.9 shows the items for this concept, along with the scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha).

**Table 3.9: Adaptability Skills Reliability**

Item	Cronbach's alpha
I have the ability to manage stress.	0.770
I know how to manage time.	
I know how to adapt to different situations.	

Four items, measured on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), displayed the participants' agreement level to self-efficacy skills. This concept had high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.869). Table 3.10 shows the items for this concept, along with the scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha).

**Table 3.10: Self-efficacy Skills Reliability**

Item	Cronbach's alpha
I have the ability to take the initiative or be a self-started.	0.869
I have the ability to persist.	
I know how to make decisions.	
I know how to set goals.	

Three items, measured on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), displayed the participants' agreement level to leadership skills. This concept had high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.776). Table 3.11 shows the items for this concept, along with the scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha).

**Table 3.11: Leadership Skills Reliability**

Item	Cronbach's alpha
I have the ability to delegate work.	0.776
I have the ability to mentor others.	

I know how to lead others.	
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Four items, measured on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), displayed the participants' agreement level to logistics and problem-solving skills. This concept had high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.831). Table 3.12 shows the items for this concept, along with the scale reliability (Cronbach's alpha).

**Table 3.12: Logistics and Problem-solving Skills Reliability**

Item	Cronbach's alpha
I know how to think critically.	0.831
I know how to be creative.	
I know how to solve problems.	
I know how to manage conflict.	

### **Researcher's Positionality and Reflexivity**

I was specifically interested in studying FIU Alternative Breaks programs' impact on students' learning. I had always wanted to understand more about outside-the-classroom opportunities that promoted and supported student learning, growth, and development. My interest grew from my involvement in community service-based programs like Dance Marathon and Alternative Breaks and my background in higher education, academic advising, and student organization advising. My interest in Alternative Breaks resulted from my involvement in Global Community Engagement (GCE) for the past 16 years. GCE is one of the current FIU Alternative Breaks sites that sponsor co-curricular service-learning projects. Every year GCE takes students to work in vulnerable neighborhoods in Santiago, Dominican Republic, focusing on educating disadvantaged children. Participants work with Dominican and Haitian children who attend children's rights agencies and local schools with limited resources. They work with

non-governmental organizations, such as *Acción Callejera* (Action on the Streets), that provide services to children in vulnerable situations, most of whom work on the streets as shoe-shiners, traders, sellers, builders, and florists. They also work with other educational institutions in Santiago, such as *La Otra Banda* (The Other Band) elementary school and the Pontifical Catholic University Madre y Maestra.

Some of the children GCE participants serve are homeless. Others are unaccompanied immigrants from Haiti, and most live in poor conditions while being neglected by their parents and society. Community members and governmental officials mistreat children because they see them as a burden. Many of these children experience drug abuse and dealing, physical abuse, sexual exploitation, and trafficking. One of GCE's goals is to advance *Acción Callejera's* mission of providing a safe place for kids to grow emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually while participating in various community projects. GCE members prepare for two semesters by fundraising over \$20,000 and meeting weekly or biweekly to design lesson plans and learn about the Dominican Republic, its people, and the population they serve. Participants then spend ten days in the Dominican Republic during Spring Break to provide the children with educational and other programming types. Due to the pandemic this year, the GCE trip was moved to the summer term and took place for eight days.

With this study, I tried to understand the potential associations between Alternative Breaks programs and participants' behavioral and skill development. Through my involvement with GCE, I noticed that some students could demonstrate different skills by participating in the program activities from August to May. For example, students worked in teams, thought critically, and used creativity to brainstorm, develop,

and execute fundraising activities, sponsorship strategies, and marketing projects to meet their budget and promote the organization. They also practiced these skills when developing lesson plans and teaching them to children in the Dominican Republic. They also participated in two retreats, teambuilding opportunities, and leadership development activities throughout the Fall and Spring semesters before their departure to the Dominican Republic. They practiced critical thinking, time management, communication, and collaboration skills when developing and facilitating presentations. Some presentations included GCE's history, information about the *Acción Callejera* Foundation, *La Otra Banda* school, the City of Santiago, and the Dominican Republic. They also spoke about the Dominican culture, people, food, and music. They worked in pairs or small groups of 3-5 students to teach lessons to groups of 15 – 35 children. Moreover, students were exposed to cultural awareness, experienced the lives and realities of disadvantaged children and adults, and learned about social issues, such as extreme poverty, child labor, the right to education, human dignity, discrimination, and social injustice.

Furthermore, I used a journal to reflect, write down, and examine why I was interested in my research study. I checked for potential bias toward Alternative Breaks because of my involvement with one of its sites for many years. For example, I recorded bias while reviewing the literature. I made notes that signaled I was reviewing literature that indicated positive associations with participating in experiential learning and Alternative Breaks opportunities and participants' specific behavioral and skill development types, such as cultural sensitivity and leadership skills. My 16 years in GCE have allowed me to observe participants display these types of development. As a result, I

originally assumed the participants in the study would also show gaining these specific behaviors and skills. I made notes in my journal to remind me that I was interested in exploring and finding out how the participants described the AB program's influence on any types of behavior and skills developed. After consulting with my dissertation chair, I also noted the need to review the literature discussing some of these opportunities' weaknesses and criticism in my journal. This action made me check for my bias that experiential learning opportunities could only provide positive experiences and share other aspects involved with these programs.

Consequently, I expanded my literature review to include as many behavioral and skill development types due to participation in experiential learning, high-impact practices, service learning, and alternative breaks opportunities. I also recorded relevant information in the literature to guide my study and the decision-making process. These reflections from my journal also helped me expand the original questions I had included in my pre-AB experience and post-AB experience survey to include other behaviors and skills so that participants could agree on whether they displayed them.

In my journal, I also reflected on how I performed my research and what I needed to modify to improve it (Watt, 2007). For example, I noticed I was interviewing more participants from one of the AB sites, so I tried to get more participants from other sites. I also reviewed my first couple of interview videos and recordings and noted whether interviewer bias happened to make sure I was not influencing the participants' answers. Moreover, some questions in my interviews did not encourage students to share important information, so I noted them and made proper revisions to encourage participants to talk more about their experience and what they got out of it. I also used a

journal to reflect on whether conducting an informal and exploratory interview rather than structured was effective. I found that facilitating informal interviews via zoom prompted participants to feel as if we were just having a conversation where they seemed comfortable sharing their AB experience with me. Lastly, I used it to note whether my relationship with the participants was not affecting the study's outcome and that I was creating a good rapport without causing harm (Watt, 2007).

### **Considerations of Ethical Issues**

When researching the human subjects in my study, I requested Institutional Review Board approval and followed its protocol to protect the participant's rights and welfare (Wertz et al., 2011; Brown et al., 2014; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). I obtained IRB approval at the end of November 2021 before I started to work with my study participants and collected data. I also minimized harm while maximizing benefits (Arwood & Panicker, 2020). I did not place participants at risk of physical, mental, emotional, psychological, legal, social, or economic harm (Wertz et al., 2011).

First, I protected the interviewed, surveyed, and studied participants' privacy and autonomy (Hicks, 2020; Wertz et al., 2011). I asked the participants to sign an informed consent form (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Hicks, 2020; Wertz et al., 2011; Brown et al., 2014). The consent form explained the nature, purposes, and expected duration of the study so that the interviewed and surveyed participants learned how they would engage in my research. The form also informed them what I would ask them to do, their rights, and how I would secure their privacy and confidentiality. They learned that their participation was voluntary (Polonsky & Waller, 2018) and had the free choice to leave the research at any moment without a penalty.

Moreover, the consent form (See Appendix H) informed participants that I would use portions of their coded interview recordings and survey responses in my dissertation report and during my defense presentation. I obtained explicit consent for such use and explained that I would not reveal their identities. The consent form contained my contact information if they needed to reach me for questions, wanted to withdraw from the study (Hicks, 2020), or had concerns about the research (Polonsky & Waller, 2018). I handed consent forms to participants before I interviewed and surveyed them.

When reporting results, I kept the interviewed participants' names anonymous to protect their privacy and confidentiality (Polonsky & Waller, 2018; Hicks, 2020). The participants chose a pseudonym to protect the identities of those involved in the interviews. I made sure that I selected direct quotes and descriptive information that did not potentially reveal a participant's identity (Polonsky & Waller, 2020).

Lastly, the surveys did not collect participants' names, addresses, telephone numbers, student identification numbers, or other information that revealed their identity. I stored any paper data, journals, and notes in a locked cabinet at home (Hicks, 2020). I also encrypted all electronic data and kept files locked on my laptop and google drive. Upon completing my study, I deposited any recordings, shredded paper files, and permanently deleted any electronic files on memory drives or laptops.

## **Summary**

Chapter 3 offered an overview of the research design and a justification for the selected case study approach. I also presented my study population and how I recruited and selected participants. I explained the United Nations' sustainable development goals adopted by each FIU Alternative Breaks site in this study. I also introduced semi-

structured open-ended interviews and a 5-point Likert scale survey as the instruments to gather data. Further, I explained how I organized and analyzed the data to answer my two research questions. Lastly, I provided an overview of how I planned to ensure the reliability and validity of the study. I established my positionality and reflexivity as a researcher. Lastly, I presented any consideration to address ethical issues to protect the individuals involved in my research.

Chapter 4 of the dissertation will describe the findings of this study. I will outline the themes identified from the Alternative Breaks participants' semi-structured interviews and pre- and post-AB experience surveys. It will use quotations from the participants' interview answers and survey responses to describe how participants perceived that their AB service-learning experience influenced their behavioral and skill development.

## Chapter 4: Results

This exploratory study aimed to describe how student participants of Alternative Breaks (AB) programs perceived that their service-learning experience influenced their behavioral and skill development. The Alternative Breaks program at Florida International University was selected for this exploratory study. The study analyzed data from semi-structured interviews and pre- and post-AB experience surveys. Eight students who participated in an AB program during the 2021-2022 academic year were interviewed. Also, 39 student participants, including the eight interviewed students, completed a pre-AB experience survey. Of the 39 students, 30 completed a post-AB experience survey. Their perceptions were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. This chapter presents the study findings derived from both data collection techniques in response to two primary research questions:

1. What types of behavioral development do FIU students who participate in Alternative Breaks (AB) perceive from their participation in the program?
2. How do FIU students who participate in AB describe the program's influence on the types of skills developed?

### Research Participants

**Interviewees.** Eight 2021-2022 AB participants were interviewed between May and August 2022, and follow-up interviews were conducted in October 2022.

**Participant profiles.** The profiles of the eight interviewed participants in this study are listed below. Each profile describes the students' status when they were interviewed about their recent AB service experience. I asked the interviewed participants to choose a pseudonym to protect their identity and displayed such pseudo names below.

***Amy.*** Amy is a Hispanic or Latina, female AB participant at Florida International University (FIU). She is a first-time AB participant and participated in a weeklong national or local site in Miami, Florida, during the spring 2022 break.

***Anne.*** Anne is a Hispanic or Latina, female AB participant at FIU. She is a second-time AB participant who recently participated in a weeklong international site in Santiago, Dominican Republic, during the Summer 2022 break.

***April.*** April is a Hispanic or Latina, female AB participant at FIU. She is a first-time AB participant and participated in a weeklong international site in Santiago, Dominican Republic, during the summer 2022 break.

***Charlie.*** Charlie is a Hispanic or Latino, male AB participant at FIU. He is a second-time AB participant who recently participated in a weeklong international site in Santiago, Dominican Republic, during the Summer 2022 break.

***Diego.*** Diego is a Hispanic or Latino, male AB participant at FIU. He is a fourth-time AB participant who recently participated in an express/weekend national or local site in Homestead, Florida, during the Spring 2022 break.

***Steve.*** Steve is a Hispanic or Latino, male AB participant at FIU. He is a first-time AB participant and participated in a weeklong national or local site in Miami, Florida, during the summer 2022 break.

***Valerie.*** Valerie is a Hispanic or Latina, female AB participant at FIU. She is a second-time AB participant who recently participated in a weeklong international site in Santiago, Dominican Republic, during the Summer 2022 break.

*Yvonne.* Yvonne is a Hispanic or Latina, female AB participant at FIU. She is a first-time AB participant and participated in an express/weekend national or local site in Miami, Florida, during the winter 2021 break.

**Table 4.1: Interviewed Participant Demographics**

Pseudonym	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Length of Service	Type of Trip
Amy	Female	Hispanic/ Latina	Weeklong	National/ Local
Anne	Female	Hispanic/ Latina	Weeklong	International
April	Female	Hispanic/ Latina	Weeklong	International
Charlie	Male	Hispanic/ Latino	Weeklong	International
Diego	Male	Hispanic/ Latino	Express / Weekend	National / Local
Steve	Male	Hispanic/ Latino	Weeklong	National / Local
Valerie	Female	Hispanic/ Latina	Weeklong	International
Yvonne	Female	Hispanic/ Latina	Express / Weekend	National / Local

**Surveyed participants.** Thirty-nine 2021-2022 AB student participants completed a pre-AB experience survey in February 2022, and 30 of the 39 previously surveyed participants returned a post-AB experience survey between February and September 2022.

**Participant profiles.** The profiles of the surveyed population in this exploratory study are listed below. Each profile describes the population’s status when they were surveyed before and after their most recent AB service experience.

*Pre-AB experience survey.* 79.5% of the 39 pre-surveyed participants identified as female, 20.5% as male, 0% as non-binary or third gender, and 0% as prefer not to say. 2.6% of the participants identified as Asian, 10.3% as Black or African American, 84.6% as Hispanic or Latino, 2.6% as White, 0% as American Indian or Alaska Native, 0% as Pacific Islander, and 0% as two or more races. 10.3% of the participants were freshmen, 17.9% sophomores, 17.9% juniors, 51.3% seniors, and 2.6% graduates. The participants pursued undergraduate degrees, such as Biological Sciences (61.5%), International Relations (5.1%), Psychology (5.1%), Civil Engineering (5.1%), Business Management (2.6%), Marketing and International Business (2.6%), Behavioral Neuroscience (2.6%), Chemistry (2.6%), Elementary Education (2.6%), Hospitality Management (2.6%), Nursing (2.6%). One participant pursued a Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering (2.6%).

Moreover, 15.4% of the participants signed up to participate in an express/weekend AB experience while 84.6% in a weeklong AB experience. 48.7% signed up to serve an international location, and 51.3% to serve a national or local one. 12.8% of the participants signed up for a winter break opportunity, 17.9% for a spring break, and 69.2% for a summer break. 84.6% of the participants signed up for an AB experience for the first time, while 12.8% signed up for a second or third time and 2.6% for a fourth or higher time. 100% of the participants indicated their current AB experience was 100% fundraised. Lastly, 2.6% of the participants signed up for the Biscayne Bay National Park and Global Empowerment Mission site, 20.5% for Deering Estate, 48.7% for Global Community Engagement, 15.4% for Green Haven, 5.1% for Lotus House, and 7.7% for Operation Gratitude. See Appendix L for graphs that describe

the pre-AB experience surveyed participant demographics. Table 4.2 also displays the population demographics.

**Table 4.2: Pre-AB Experience Surveyed Participant Demographics**

Gender	Male	20.5%
	Female	79.5%
	Non-binary or third gender	0%
	Prefer not to say	0%
Race or ethnicity	Asian	2.6%
	Black or African American	10.3%
	Hispanic or Latino	84.6%
	White	2.6%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	0%
	Pacific Islander	0%
	Two or more races	0%
Classification	Freshman	10.3%
	Sophomore	17.9%
	Junior	17.9%
	Senior	51.3%
	Graduate	2.6%
Major (Undergraduate, unless specified)	Biological Sciences	61.5%
	International Relations	5.1%
	Psychology	5.1%
	Civil Engineering	5.1%
	Business Management	2.6%
	Marketing and International Business	2.6%
	Behavioral Neuroscience	2.6%
	Chemistry	2.6%
	Elementary Education	2.6%
	Hospitality Management	2.6%
	Nursing	2.6%
	Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering	2.6%
Service Length	Express/weekend	15.4%
	Weeklong	84.6%
Trip type	National/local	51.3%
	International	48.7%
Break type	Winter	12.8%
	Spring	17.9%
	Summer	69.2%
Program recurrence	1 time	84.6%
	2 or 3 times	12.8%
	4 or more times	2.6%

Funding	100% self-paid	0%
	Partially self-paid and fundraised	0%
	100% fundraised	100%
Served site or community	Biscayne Bay National Park and Global Empowerment Mission	2.6%
	Deering Estate	20.5%
	Global Community Engagement	48.7%
	Green Haven	15.4%
	Lotus House	5.1%
	Operation Gratitude	7.7%

*Post-AB experience survey.* 70% of the 30 participants who returned a post-AB experience survey identified as females, 30% as males, 0% as non-binary or third gender, and 0% as prefer not to say. 3.3% of the participants identified as Asian, 6.7% as Black or African American, 80% as Hispanic or Latino, 10% as White, 0% as American Indian or Alaska Native, 0% as Pacific Islander, and 0% as two or more races. 3.3% of the participants were freshmen, 20% were sophomores, 26.7% were juniors, 46.7% were seniors, and 3.3% were graduates. The participants pursued undergraduate degrees, such as Biological Sciences (70%), Psychology (6.7%), Civil Engineering (3.3%), Business Management (3.3%), Chemistry (3.3%), Hospitality Management (3.3%), Mechanical Engineering (3.3%), Nursing (3.3%). One participant pursued a Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering (3.3%).

Moreover, 20% of the participants participated in an express/weekend AB experience while 80% in a weeklong AB experience. 50% of the participants served an international location, and 50% helped a national or local community. 16.7% of the participants participated in a winter break opportunity, 20% in a spring break, and 63.3% in a summer break. 73.3% of the participants experienced AB for the first time, 23.3% for a second or third time, and 3.3% for a fourth or higher time. 100% of the participants

indicated their current AB experience was 100% fundraised. Lastly, 3.3% of the participants served the Biscayne Bay National Park and Global Empowerment Mission site, 13.3% Deering Estate, 50% Global Community Engagement, 16.7% Green Haven, 6.7% Lotus House, and 10% Operation Gratitude. See Appendix M for graphs that describe the post-AB experience surveyed participant demographics. Table 4.3 also displays the population demographics.

**Table 4.3: Post-AB Experience Surveyed Participant Demographics**

Gender	Male	30%
	Female	70%
	Non-binary or third gender	0%
	Prefer not to say	0%
Race or ethnicity	Asian	3.3%
	Black or African American	6.7%
	Hispanic or Latino	80%
	White	10%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	0%
	Pacific Islander	0%
	Two or more races	0%
Classification	Freshman	3.3%
	Sophomore	20%
	Junior	26.7%
	Senior	46.7%
	Graduate	3.3%
Major (Undergraduate, unless specified)	Biological Sciences	70%
	Psychology	6.7%
	Civil Engineering	3.3%
	Business Management	3.3%
	Chemistry	3.3%
	Hospitality Management	3.3%
	Nursing	3.3%
	Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering	3.3%
Service length	Express/weekend	20%
	Weeklong	80%
Trip type	National/local	50%
	International	50%
Break type	Winter	16.7%
	Spring	20%
	Summer	63.3%

Program recurrence	1 time	73.3%
	2 or 3 times	23.3%
	4 or more times	3.3%
Funding	100% self-paid	0%
	Partially self-paid and fundraised	0%
	100% fundraised	100%
Served site or community	Biscayne Bay National Park and Global Empowerment Mission	3.3%
	Deering Estate	13.3%
	Global Community Engagement	50%
	Green Haven	16.7%
	Lotus House	6.7%
	Operation Gratitude	10%

**Research Question One: What types of behavioral development do FIU students who participate in Alternative Breaks (AB) perceive from their participation in the program?**

**Interviewed Participants' Perceptions.** The semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions offered valuable insights into the eight participants' perceptions of how the Alternative Breaks program may have allowed them to gain and develop personal behaviors because of their participation in the program and service to the community. This study adhered to the six stages of thematic analysis proposed by Braun & Clark (2006). The chosen steps of analysis made it possible to discover, analyze, and detect trends and themes in the data. The first stage in the thematic analysis is to get familiar with the data. I transcribed the audio interview data using zoom and NVivo transcription programs to become acquainted with the full body of data. I then extensively reviewed and edited the transcripts to reach accuracy. I also identified and wrote down possible codes in the data in a journal. The second stage is to create your initial codes. To correctly analyze the data and reduce the chance of leaving out important information, I organized the transcript data and saved them in NVivo before

starting the coding process. I read through the data and applied codes to meaningful excerpts in the data. The same code was applied to passages that convey the same idea. The third thematic analysis stage is collating codes with supporting data. Using NVivo, I grouped all the quotes related to a specific code.

The fourth stage is to group codes into themes. I combined the codes into potential themes to observe patterns in the data. The fifth stage is to review and revise themes. I reviewed each of theme to ensure there was enough data to support them and that they were distinct. Themes with similar meanings were merged, and those with insufficient supportive data were removed. The sixth stage in the thematic analysis is to produce the report. The report provides a logical narrative about the data by selecting memorable quotes from the data to support the arguments and contains an analysis of my interpretations. The following four key behavior themes emerged from the interview data analysis and related to Research Question 1: (a) helping others, (b) active citizenship and advocacy, (c) appreciation and sense of belonging, and (d) cultural sensitivity and respect.

**Research Question 1, Theme 1: Helping Others.** The first theme that emerged from the interview data analysis relating to Research Question 1 was that participants enhanced or intensified the act of helping others. The eight interviewed participants indicated they found the Alternative Breaks experience pertinent to giving back, continuing to help others, and making an impact in someone’s life. Table 4.4 shows the first theme and codes that emerged from the data analysis.

**Table 4.4: Research Question One’s Theme One and Codes**

RQ1	Theme	Codes	Number of Reporting Participants (out of 8)
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Behavior	Helping others	Giving back	6
		Continue to help others	8
		Making an impact in someone's life	5

For instance, Amy reflected on her AB experience and expressed,

Something that became more prevalent was my sense of helping others because before I would help out my friends. Now I want to help out on a bigger scale. I like helping others. Whether they are friends or just part of the community, I just realized who I am. Since I learned about food insecurity, I try to pick up shifts at the local homeless shelter. I help them out in the kitchen for the lunch service. So yeah, I think my way of helping others has definitely changed in a way that I want to help at a bigger scale.

Other study participants indicated similar inclinations to help others while discussing their recent Alternative Breaks involvement. Steve shared,

Going through AB, I just learned that I like to help out. Before, I would not really help out, and I would not do anything about it either, and because of AB, I found out that every opportunity is just not going to come to you; you have to go and look for it to actually help out the community. Just reach out to different places and see what they need help with. Just being able to be a part of anything that is going to make their life different is, I think, worthwhile.

Most of the respondents expressed that their Alternative Breaks experience inspired them to give back. Anne mentioned,

It really instilled in me the fact that there are people that are not as advantaged as us, and we do really have to give them a hand because when you see it, it impacts

you, and it makes you realize the need to give back. And I don't think I had that before.

Another student, Yvonne, shared that AB offered her an opportunity to help others and give back. During her interview, she expressed,

AB gave me the chance to give back to people who serve and protect our country. To thank them for everything they do. Thank you for being there to protect us. Thank you for being brave. Thank you for everything you do because we know it is hard and know that you are not alone. You got us here. Saving someone's life seems pretty valuable to me. So, of course, I wanted to hurry up and do as many things as I could in the time that we were doing this service for them.

Steve shared that Alternative Breaks was more than an opportunity to get credits for volunteering but rather an opportunity to give back to the community and learn about the social issues affecting others. He said,

AB offered me what it means to give back. It does not just let me do this to get credit for, to show off that I am volunteering, but to actually reflect on my service and be knowledgeable about different social issues, which I was not before. Thanks to AB I learned about social issues and different ways we can help out and contribute to our community.

All respondents claimed they were interested in continuing to help after their participation in AB, thus showing the Alternative Breaks program's influence on students' willingness to help others. One participant, Anne, expressed,

I will do this next year, being a part of Alternative Breaks. As long as I am able to do this, I would go. When I graduate, I would like to continue things like AB is

doing. In my following school, medical school, even if it does not have that type of community service or community work, maybe I can try to implement and do my own type of organization just like what AB is doing. And that is the type of impact that they have had on me and what I wanted to do with in the future.

Another participant, Steve, expressed his willingness to return to be part of Alternative Breaks to help others while also recruiting people to be part of AB. He mentioned,

I really enjoy helping out, and I would like to have more opportunities to do so. Being a part of the organization and assisting with reaching out to people with a like-minded side who also want to help, I feel it's a great thing to do. I want to be part of that process, to find people that want to help out because it is good for everyone; it benefits everyone. Yeah, that is one way I want to continue my journey with AB.

Moreover, most participants revealed that their AB service allowed them to impact someone's life. Yvonne conveyed,

I learned I'm doing something good; I'm doing something helpful. Because talking to the coordinators of Operation Gratitude and hearing about all those experiences of people writing back and saying " Oh, I received the thank you cards you made", it made me feel a lot better. Knowing that what you're doing at that moment is going to have an impact later makes you want to do more and better and keep doing it. Being helpful to others and being part of something greater or a bigger cause makes me feel I'm in the right place.

April also reflected on her interaction with children in her AB serving community and how she realized she impacted someone's life. She shared the following anecdote,

A little girl was crying. I asked her if she needed help. She was not sobbing, but yeah, I could see the tears. Her eyes were watering, and I asked her if she needed help, and she said she did not know what to write. And then I started telling her; well, I really like your hair. How about you write about that or your eyes and stuff like that. And I walked away from her to help another kid before she had written anything. She got her markers, and she was about to write. When I came back, she had written more than what I had suggested for her, so she found things to like about herself. And then, on the other side of the paper, we had to write things or something that we liked about another person there, and she actually wrote that she liked my attitude and my positive way. And that was really meaningful because it showed me that she understood that I was being optimistic about something and telling her how to find things that she liked about herself.

Based on the participants' interview analysis and interpretation, the researcher concludes that participation in the AB program developed the participants' act of helping others. Specifically, the Alternative Breaks experience enhanced the participants' act of giving back because they realized many were not as advantaged as them. Seeing the reality of others impacted and encouraged them to continue to lend a hand. The program also provided participants with opportunities to impact someone's life. Next, the researcher will discuss the second theme that emerged from the interview data analysis regarding research question one.

**Research Question 1, Theme 2: Active Citizenship and Advocacy.** The second theme that emerged from the interview data analysis relating to Research Question 1 was that participants perceived their AB experience developed active citizenship and advocacy behaviors in them. Table 4.5 shows the second theme and codes that emerged from the data analysis.

**Table 4.5: Research Question One’s Theme Two and Codes**

RQ1	Theme	Codes	Number of Reporting Participants (out of 8)
Behavior	Active citizenship and advocacy	Active citizenship	6
		Advocacy	5
		Social issue awareness	7

For example, Amy expressed that the Alternative Breaks program taught her to become an active citizen and aware of the social issues in the community. When asked what she got from her AB experience, she mentioned,

Being more involved in the community and the problems of the world because having had this experience, there's so many people, even my friends, that do not know about all the things that are going on in the world, and all the food insecurity that happens in our local community. We also learned a lot more about how to be an active community member because those are the people that make a change. And learning all that, just makes you really grow as a person and as an individual and overall makes you a more active citizen, which is part of the goals of AB with its members, being an active citizen.

When asked what he got from his AB experience, Diego shared similar thoughts about becoming aware of the social issue. He explained,

AB teaches you to be able to trust your community partner and do good research to be able to inform yourself and provide aid in a way that is beneficial to everyone involved. The other thing that was really important was learning how to find good sources of information to educate yourself and be able to act responsibly when you are trying to work in the service of somebody else. Having people who work directly with the social issue and were in close proximity to the location that was being impacted. And hear from people who work these, live these things firsthand, they were a great source of knowledge.

Most participants also acknowledged that the AB experience made them realize a need to advocate and create awareness of the social issues affecting many communities.

Valerie mentioned,

We talked to the university students in Santiago about Hoyo de Puchula [a community in need], and that was crazy how they did not know about it. A needed community in your own country. It is literally 30 minutes from here, where you are, and you have no idea what is going on. That made me mad. I feel every city should have a program like we do. The university students are right there. I think it is way easier, and they could impact their community way more than we do. So, we talked to them about what we do, and this community. And we were also speaking about how, in a way, they are privileged. It was a very smooth conversation. They were super nice, and they said they were privileged and happy to learn about the work we do.

The interviewed participants also indicated that Alternative Breaks programs taught them to become educated about what caused these social issues in the communities and

take action to eliminate the source of the problem. For example, when asked what she got from her AB experience, April expressed,

I learned that giving money [to beggars on the streets] is not always the solution to things, and you have to teach people to learn the skills to then earn their way out of things, instead of just giving it to them, because if you give them a way out, an easy way out, they are just going to go right back to the same thing. It is just the giveaway. Then you start expecting things to be given to you. So, yeah that is what the lesson is. In life things are not just going to be handed to you. You got to learn that you got to you have to work for things and find your way there yourself.

Amy expressed similar thoughts about taking action to eliminate the problem's sources. She expanded,

So, let's say we, as a community, clean up the park one day. Next week, the park will be dirty again. We clean up that park, next week the park will be dirty again. So, what we learned is that we need to look more into why this is happening. Why does this community not have enough resources to have recycling and have trashcans in the park. So how can we make this a change for long term? It is also up to you and the community to talk to officials and make your voice heard. And just making long term impacts. So basically, while you are helping the community, while you are doing all this, you should not forget why is this happening? Why was a place a food desert? So, what are the bigger factors affecting this place? Is it its inability to access affordable nutritious food.

Based on the participants' interview analysis and interpretation, the researcher concludes that participation in the AB program developed the participants' act of active

citizenship and advocacy. Specifically, the Alternative Breaks experience enhanced the participants' act of becoming aware of the social issues affecting others. They reported becoming aware of the problems, encouraging them to advocate for others and take action to eliminate the problem's sources. Next, the researcher will discuss the third theme that emerged from the interview data analysis regarding research question one.

**Research Question 1, Theme 3: Appreciation and Sense of Belonging.** The third theme that emerged from the interview data analysis relating to Research Question 1 was that the participants developed an appreciation of the things they had and a sense of belonging because of their participation in an Alternative Breaks experience. Table 4.6 shows the third theme and codes that emerged from the data analysis.

**Table 4.6: Research Question One’s Theme Three and Codes**

RQ1	Theme	Codes	Number of Reporting Participants (out of 8)
Behavior	Appreciation and sense of belonging	Appreciation for the things I have	6
		Sense of belonging	5

For instance, the majority of the participants expressed gaining an appreciation for the things they have. Anne expressed,

I have had it relatively easy compared to other people. I was born in the United States, and I went to school. Not everyone has that advantage of going to school, and I primarily saw that in Santiago de los Caballeros. They [the kids we worked with] did not have the best schools. They did not have the same learning capabilities in the sense that they did not have all the resources. When we brought the resources, they were super happy for the materials and all the coloring and things that we take for granted, all the colored pencils, markers, and types of papers. When you will

get outside and see their environment, they are surrounded with bad conditions. It impacts you because sometimes we take things for granted. And we have everything, and they do not. They really do not. They do not have anything to play with. They do not have toys; they do not have anything. So, we give our kids so many toys, and then here is this small kid just playing with a condom he found on the floor because that is all he finds, and he does not know any better. You also see they are hardworking kids because they do work in the streets and that is something we do take for granted because we do not work as kids, but they had to work as kids to survive, to give food back to their family.

Another participant, Charlie, also learned to appreciate the things he had and realized how privileged he was. He shared,

It is just really like a life experience because you did not expect it to be that hard in real life. It really took a toll on me because those kids live literally in the worst situations in that city or in that country. So, you get to see how privileged we are here and that we have everything in the US, while they literally do not have anything, and they are still so happy and so excited, and they have someone internally. I just felt really bad when I came back home, and I hear how much I complained about any stuff. I felt so obnoxious because I have so much stuff, and I am complaining about the stuff that I do not have while there they literally do not have anything. They barely have clothes, and they are still so happy, and they just enjoy the little things they have.

Moreover, Valerie considered Alternative Breaks a life-changing experience that taught her to value the things she had and the people in her life. She expressed,

It changes you. It changes the way you see things, so you value things. It made me appreciate the little things. It made me appreciate my parents, my family, my house, my school, where I live, and everything you may need. But, especially the little things, like washing my teeth, having a washing machine, showering, which are really basic stuff. But they are not basic for them; they do not have them. I am so privileged that I have to appreciate everything that I have. When I am feeling bad, I go like there are people worse than me, so get it together. If they do it, and they may be eight years old, then I can do it.

Most participants also expressed developing a sense of belonging because of their participation in the Alternative Breaks experience. Amy, for example, shared,

We made great connections there in the community, and people would come in, they would say hi to us. And it was just like such a big sense of, something that I've never felt outside of my family. You feel like family when you're there. You feel like you know you're truly part of the community, you are helping the community, you're doing something for the community.

While Yvonne also felt she belonged somewhere because of her AB participation. She expressed,

It definitely make me feel proud of something because when I was part of that group, you have something in common with your other group members. And we as human beings, I think we feeling we belong somewhere. But we're part of something. And I think that it is really helpful for anyone to have in their life, or for their mental health, to feel they belong somewhere and that they are part of something bigger than they are.

Based on the participants' interview analysis and interpretation, the researcher concludes that participation in the AB program developed the participants' acts of appreciation and sense of belonging. Specifically, the Alternative Breaks experience enhanced the participants' appreciation for what they have while noticing what others lack in the served communities. They have come to realize their privilege, and as a result, they learned to value the things they had and the people in their lives. The program also enhanced the participant's sense of belonging as they were part of a group and cause. Next, the researcher will discuss the fourth theme that emerged from the interview data analysis regarding research question one.

**Research Question 1, Theme 4: Cultural Sensitivity and Respect.** The fourth theme that emerged from the interview data analysis relating to Research Question 1 was that participants developed cultural sensitivity and respect for others because of their Alternative Breaks experience. Table 4.7 shows the fourth theme and codes that emerged from the data analysis.

**Table 4.7: Research Question One's Theme Four and Codes**

RQ1	Theme	Codes	Number of Reporting Participants (out of 8)
Behavior	Cultural sensitivity and respect	Cultural sensitivity	6
		Respect for others	5

For example, most participants expressed they became more culturally sensitive while working with and serving the people in the community. Valerie revealed,

I also learned that I have to be more cautious about the way I speak or say things because I could offend someone because in their country and their culture, it is offensive. So, I have to take that into consideration. There are different cultures. I

learned about different cultures, and I learned a lot about the Dominican Republic and things that go on over there. One of our members explained it to us because she is from over there. She is like you should not give money to the people asking on the streets because it is very common over there. People usually do not work; they do that instead. So, we should listen to someone that has experienced in that country, that has lived there, and be more cautious about different cultures and customs.

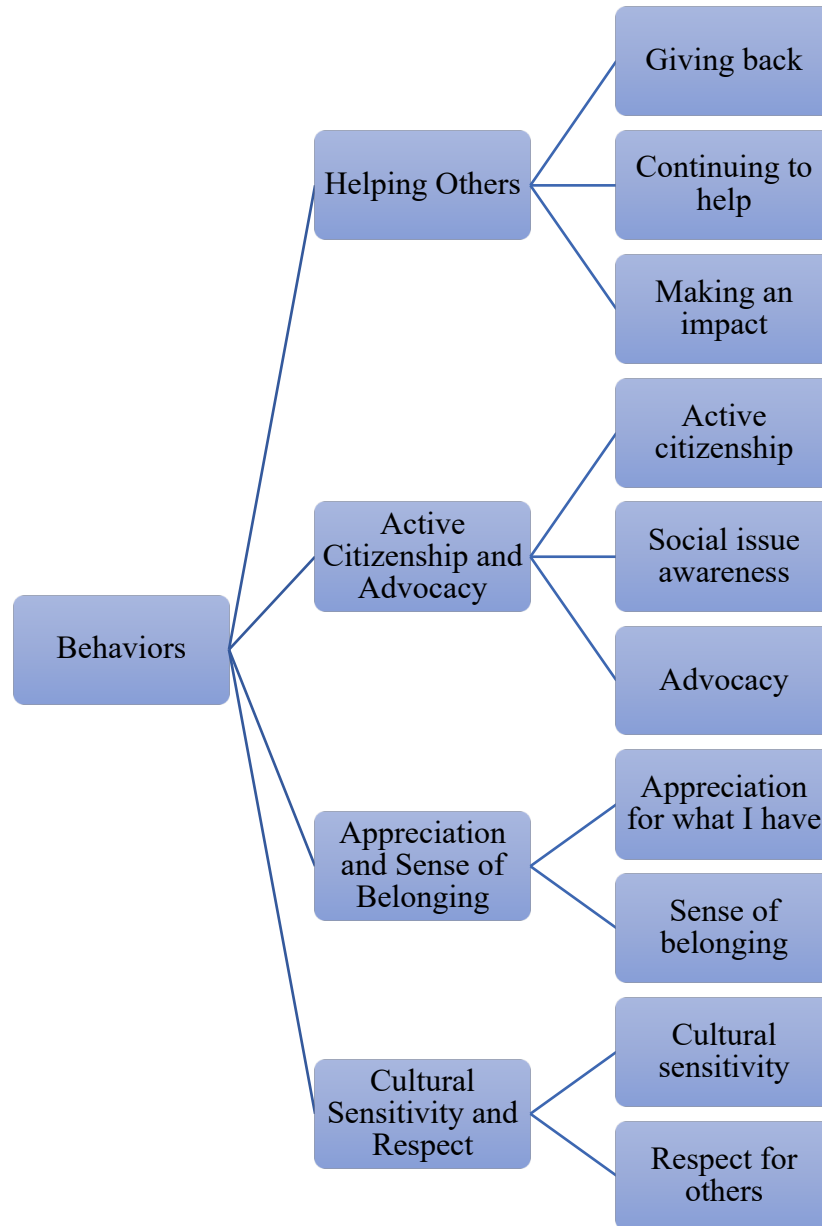
Furthermore, most participants expressed that their Alternative Breaks experience enhanced their respect and appreciation for others. To illustrate, Steve expressed the importance of respecting everyone. He shared,

I learned that it is important to treat everyone with respect and everything should go well. You need to lead with respect to people and kindness. If I had to ask them for something just tell them in a respect respectful way. Also, being respectful to others, and to their time, showing up to the meetings, not being lazy and stuff and having respect for the organization itself. It is your team, and always live by the treat others how you want to be treated and so just treat everyone with the right respect, and everything should go well.

Based on the participants' interview analysis and interpretation, the researcher concludes that participation in the AB program developed the participants' cultural sensitivity and respect for others. Specifically, the AB participants became more culturally sensitive while working with and serving the people in the community, and the experience also enhanced their respect and appreciation for others. Figure 4.1 below

shows a list of the four behavior themes and codes that emerged from analyzing the eight participants' semi-structured interview data and that related to Research Question 1.

**Figure 4.1. Interview Data Analysis Emerged Behavioral Themes and Codes**



**Surveyed Participants' Perceptions.** The 5-point Likert scale pre-AB experience and post-AB experience surveys also offered the 30 or more surveyed participants' perceptions on how the Alternative Breaks program may have developed personal

behaviors because of their participation in the program and service to the community. Participants involved in the study were given pre- and post-surveys to observe what changes they had in their perceptions of certain behaviors. Before and after their AB participation, they were asked to rate their level of agreement with different behavior-related statements from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). See Appendix N for the participants' perceptions of behaviors before and after their AB experience.

The following two hypotheses sought to answer Research Question 1: What types of behavioral development do FIU students who participate in Alternative Breaks (AB) perceive from their participation in the program?

### **Research Hypotheses Relating to Research Question One**

Null Hypothesis: There are no significant differences in Alternative Breaks participants' behavior from pre-AB experience to post-AB experience.

Alternative Hypothesis: There are significant differences in Alternative Breaks participants' behavior from pre-AB experience to post-AB experience.

To answer research question 1, the researcher focused the data analysis on the following four types of behaviors: (a) helping others, (b) active citizenship and advocacy, (c) appreciation and sense of belonging, and (d) cultural sensitivity and respect. The researcher used the Mann-Whitney U test to investigate whether there was a change in the participants' level of agreement with each behavior-related variable before (pre-AB experience) and after (post-AB experience) their participation in the Alternative Breaks program. Since the populations in this study did not meet normal distribution assumption, the Mann-Whitney test, as a nonparametric and ordinal-level method, fitted this study's testing efforts. First, the test compared the mean ranks, rather than medians, of the pre-

AB experience and post-AB experience surveyed population responses. Second, the test examined whether the difference between the pre-AB and post-AB experience populations was statistically significant for each behavior-related variable. Table 4.8 displays a summary of the Mann-Whitney U test mean rank per behavior variable, and table 4.9 displays the test statistics per behavior variable.

**Table 4.8: Mann-Whitney U Test Mean Rank per Behavior Variable Summary**

Variable	Surveyed Population	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Helping others	Pre-AB experience	38	33.63	1278.00
	Post-AB experience	30	35.60	1068.00
	Total	68		
Active citizenship and advocacy	Pre-AB experience	36	29.60	1065.50
	Post-AB experience	30	38.18	1145.50
	Total	66		
Appreciation and sense of belonging	Pre-AB experience	38	31.39	1193.00
	Post-AB experience	30	38.43	1153.00
	Total	68		
Cultural sensitivity and respect	Pre-AB experience	39	30.86	1203.50
	Post-AB experience	30	40.38	1211.50
	Total	69		

**Table 4.9: Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics per Behavior Variable Summary**

Variable	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Helping others	537	1278	-0.417	0.677
Active citizenship and advocacy	399.5	1065.5	-2.054	0.04
Appreciation and sense of belonging	452	1193	-1.633	0.102
Cultural sensitivity and respect	423.5	1203.5	-2.148	0.032

**Research Question 1, Variable 1: Helping Others.** To test whether there was a change in the behavior of the helping others, the researcher asked AB participants to rate their level of agreement with the following statements before and after their experience: (a) I have an interest in participating in another AB site project in the future, (b) I have an interest in participating in another non-AB service-learning/community-based opportunity in the future, (c) I have an interest in holding an AB leadership position, and (d) I have a desire to help or care for others. First, the Mann-Whitney U test revealed the mean rank score on the AB experience survey instruments increased from pre-AB experience ( $M_r = 33.63$ ) to post-AB experience ( $M_r = 35.60$ ) in response to the helping others variable.

**Table 4.10: Mann-Whitney U Test Mean Rank per the Helping Others Variable**

Variable	Surveyed Population	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Helping others	Pre-AB experience	38	33.63	1278.00
	Post-AB experience	30	35.60	1068.00
	Total	68		

Second, the test examined whether the difference between the pre-AB and post-AB experience populations was statistically significant for the *helping others* variable. The test indicated that the difference between the pre-AB and post-AB experience population was not statistically significant for this variable [ $U(N_{\text{pre-AB experience}} = 38, N_{\text{post-AB experience}} = 30) = 537, z = -0.417, p = 0.677$ ]. Since  $p = 0.677 > 0.05$ , we must accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no difference between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience surveyed populations. Therefore, the mean rank increase between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience survey results is plausibly due to random chance. Table 4.11 displays the Mann-Whitney U test statistic

(U), the standardized test statistic (Z score), and the Asymptotic 2-tailed significance (*p*) values.

**Table 4.11: Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics per Helping Others Variable**

Variable	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Helping others	537	1278	-0.417	0.677

**Research Question 1, Variable 2: Active Citizenship and Advocacy.** To test whether there was a change in the active citizenship and advocacy behavior, the researcher asked AB participants to rate their level of agreement with the following statements before and after their experience: (a) I have a sense of ethical/moral responsibility, (b) I have a sense of social responsibility or commitment to public/human service, (c) I have a positive attitude toward community involvement/citizenship, (d) I have an understanding of the problems or challenges other people or groups face in society, (e) I have a sense of responsibility to serve my community, and (f) I believe I can make a difference in my community. First, the Mann-Whitney U test revealed the mean rank score on the AB experience survey instruments increased from pre-AB experience ( $M_r = 29.60$ ) to post-AB experience ( $M_r = 38.18$ ) in response to the *helping others* variable.

**Table 4.12: Mann-Whitney U Test Mean Rank per Active Citizenship and Advocacy Variable**

Variable	Surveyed Population	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Active citizenship and advocacy	Pre-AB experience	36	29.60	1065.50
	Post-AB experience	30	38.18	1145.50
	Total	66		

Second, the test indicated that the difference between the pre-AB and post-AB experience population was statistically significant for the *active citizenship and advocacy* variable [U(Npre-AB experience= 36, Npost-AB experience= 30) = 399.5, z = -2.054, p = 0.04]. Since  $p = 0.04 < 0.05$ , we must reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a difference between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience surveyed populations. Therefore, the mean rank increase between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience survey results is plausibly due to the Alternative Breaks program participation.

**Table 4.13: Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics per Active Citizenship and Advocacy**

**Variable**

Variable	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Active citizenship and advocacy	399.5	1065.5	-2.054	0.04

**Research Question 1, Variable 3: Appreciation and Sense of Belonging.** To test whether there was a change in the appreciation and sense of belonging behavior, the researcher asked AB participants to rate their level of agreement with the following statements before and after their experience: (a) I have a sense of appreciation for the things I have, and (b) I have a sense of self-confidence. First, the Mann-Whitney U test revealed the mean rank score on the AB experience survey instruments decreased from pre-AB experience (Mr = 31.39) to post-AB experience (Mr = 38.43) in response to the *appreciation and sense of belonging* variable.

**Table 4.14: Mann-Whitney U Test Mean Rank per Appreciation and Sense of Belonging Variable**

Variable	Surveyed Population	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Appreciation and sense of belonging	Pre-AB experience	38	31.39	1193.00
	Post-AB experience	30	38.43	1153.00
	Total	68		

Second, the test indicated that the difference between the pre-AB and post-AB experience population was not statistically significant for the *appreciation and sense of belonging* variable [U(Npre-AB experience= 38, Npost-AB experience= 30) = 452,  $z = -1.633$ ,  $p = 0.102$ ]. Since  $p = 0.102 > 0.05$ , we must accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no difference between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience surveyed populations. Therefore, the mean rank increase between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience survey results is plausibly due to random chance.

**Table 4.15: Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics per Appreciation and Sense of Belonging Variable**

Variable	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Appreciation and sense of belonging	452	1193	-1.633	0.102

**Research Question 1, Variable 4: Cultural Sensitivity and Respect.** To test whether there was a change in the active citizenship and advocacy behavior, the researcher asked AB participants to rate their level of agreement with the following statements before and after their experience: (a) I have an understanding of social/cultural differences, (b) I have a sense of sensitivity, (c) I am open-minded, and (d) I recognize my own prejudices and biases. First, the Mann-Whitney U test revealed the mean rank

score on the AB experience survey instruments increased from pre-AB experience ( $Mr = 30.86$ ) to post-AB experience ( $Mr = 40.38$ ) in response to the cultural sensitivity and respect variable.

**Table 4.16: Mann-Whitney U Test Mean Rank per Cultural Sensitivity and Respect Variable**

Variable	Surveyed Population	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Cultural sensitivity and respect	Pre-AB experience	39	30.86	1203.50
	Post-AB experience	30	40.38	1211.50
	Total	69		

Second, the test indicated that the difference between the pre-AB and post-AB experience population was statistically significant for the *cultural sensitivity and respect* variable [ $U(N_{\text{pre-AB experience}} = 39, N_{\text{post-AB experience}} = 30) = 423.5, z = -2.148, p = 0.032$ ]. Since  $p = 0.032 < 0.05$ , we must reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a difference between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience surveyed populations. Therefore, the mean rank increase between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience survey results is plausibly due to the Alternative Breaks program participation.

**Table 4.17: Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics per Cultural Sensitivity and Respect Variable**

Category Variable	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Cultural sensitivity and respect	423.5	1203.5	-2.148	0.032

**Research Question Two: How do FIU students who participate in AB describe the program’s influence on the types of skills developed?**

**Interviewed Participants’ Perceptions.** The semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions offered valuable insights into the eight participants' perceptions of how the Alternative Breaks program may have allowed them to gain or intensify skills because of their participation in the program and service to the community. Adhering to the six stages of thematic analysis proposed by Braun & Clark (2006), the following six key skill themes emerged from the interview data analysis and related to Research Question 2: (a) people, (b) active listening and communication, (c) adaptability, (d) self-efficacy, (e) leadership, and (f) logistics and problem-solving.

**Research Question 2, Theme 1: People Skills.** The first theme that emerged from the interview data analysis relating to Research Question 2 was that participants enhanced or intensified their people skills. The eight interviewed participants indicated they found the Alternative Breaks experience pertinent to teamwork, collaboration, and meeting and understanding others. Table 4.18 shows the first theme and codes that emerged from the data analysis.

**Table 4.18: Research Question Two’s Theme One and Codes**

RQ1	Theme	Codes	Number of Reporting Participants (out of 8)
Skill	People	Teamwork	8
		Collaboration	6
		Meeting and understanding others	6

For instance, Amy reflected on her AB experience and expressed appreciation for having a team to count on. She shared,

I think I like doing things sometimes by myself. I thought I was like a lone wolf, but having a good support system, someone that you can count on, I discovered that I actually like being in group settings; I like group work. Just like helping the community, you cannot do everything yourself, and I knew that if this was something that I was going to do, I did need someone, and then that someone came around to help me out. But yeah, if you are planning to be part of something bigger, you need your people. Be open to have others helping you because you never know, you may meet a really good person. You might need someone with incredible ideas that you both want to do to help other communities. You cannot do it yourself. You need the help of others; you need a community.

Another participant, Steve, shared similar thoughts regarding teamwork and relying on others to accomplish tasks. He expressed,

I mostly like to work alone and do my own type of things. I feel that I do work best when I am doing it by myself. But having someone else and just being there for you was great. Just not having to rely on myself, and in case something happens, just being able to rely on someone else was a good feeling. Not being alone for the process was also great. Without people you would not be able to do anything. It's important to reach out to people to not only ask for their help but also to inform them of the different social issues affecting us.

Moreover, Valerie emphasized her AB experience made her realize the importance of teamwork and counting on others. She mentioned,

I learned that I think the whole trip, in this whole AB organization, is all about teamwork. I do not think that if we were not good at teamwork, this could have

happened because we had to work in group for everything. It was not just about me or about someone else; we all had to work together for it to work. I remember we were already exhausted by the end of the week, but my classroom co-facilitator made it work. I would do my part, and he would talk about something else, and I would just jump in. Or sometimes I would take on something myself, as he was tired, for him to rest. And he will do the other part. Or I would be the one facilitating our lesson, and he was just going around to make sure that they were doing it. And that is important because by myself, I do not think I could have done it. So yes, it made me realize how important teamwork is and that we could do things better when we think and work together. The results come out better.

Similarly, most participants indicated that their Alternative Breaks experience provided opportunities to collaborate with others. For example, April expressed,

I learned about collaboration because we had to work together, and what I liked is that for almost everything, we had to do together. It was not we always had the same partner or that we ever could pick the partner. It was always assigned to us, and it was always a different person, and this occurred on the trip as well. They took both of our personalities and our strengths in mind and kind of put us together based off that. So, on the trip, I really enjoyed that when we went to La Otra Banda, the person I was paired with is a lot quieter and softer spoken, but they are really fluent in Spanish. Whereas I tend to be more outspoken; I have a strong voice, but I'm not a good Spanish speaker. So, I like that this pairing put our strengths and our weaknesses together, and we made it work as a unit. I really enjoyed that. Collaboration was definitely a skill that was acquired.

Also, Diego talked about collaborating with other groups to become prepared for their Alternative Breaks projects. He shared,

We also spent a lot of time collaborating outside of our own groups with the other site leaders to engage with them and try to just discuss different issues during a hypothetical scenario of things that might come up during the trip and then how you would address those issues either before or after to make sure that everybody was calm, knew how to address problems that could arise. I was also very open with my co-site leader at the time. So having somebody else to discuss situations with and debate the way that we were approaching certain things and come to a conclusion, together, was also very beneficial because if I need to, I can make the decision on my own. But I like to get other voices involved. One so they can check me in case I'm doing something the wrong way, but also to have the opportunity to explore more varied ideas.

Most participants also perceived that their Alternative Breaks experience allowed them to meet, bond, and understand others. For instance, Charlie expressed,

When I came here, I did not know anyone. I was alone, and the people from AB from last year, they were my first friends that I had here, really. And in the beginning, it was hard because I had classes, I did not have car, and I could not go anywhere. So, the AB meetings were the only time that I could actually meet people because I was also living far away to come here. So, I couldn't interact much with many people. AB gives you the opportunity to meet more people and make connections and make friends really because that is what we all become after the trip.

Charlie also spoke about learning to understand others because he participated in the AB program. He shared,

I learned to be understanding. Before I would not give anyone too many chances. If you pissed me off, that was it. But after these kids, like they were pissing me off at first because they were doing crazy stuff and they were not behaving. But then you have to understand that at the end of the day, they come to these places too to have fun because they are probably having bad situations at home. So, you have to understand that those places are their safe space. Also, with the people in the group. We all come from different backgrounds as we mentioned it in the reflections. So, I did not understand, in the beginning, many of the points that they were talking about. For example, how they felt about how their country was different from this one. After telling all their stories, it helped me understand, and you cannot expect everyone to be the same as you are. So that is one thing that I got to realize or understand.

Steve also talked about having the opportunity to meet and interact with new people in college. He mentioned,

It was a lot about meeting new people and just how to interact because in college you do not really have to necessarily talk to people. You can just go about your life and just go to your class. But in AB, we would do a lot of icebreakers to familiarize and get to know each other better. It was also an opportunity to see who they were as a person, if we had something in common, and making new friends. AB helped out with learning how to interact with others through the meetings. I am very shy, and they make you interact with each other. Every time we would be drawn closer

together. And I feel that really helped for there to be no awkwardness between us. Being able to interact with these new people.

Based on the participants’ interview analysis and interpretation, the researcher concludes that participation in the AB program developed the participants’ people skills. Specifically, the Alternative Breaks experience enhanced the participants’ teamwork and collaboration capabilities as they had to work together and rely on others to accomplish everyday tasks and goals. The program also offered participants opportunities to meet new people and interact with and understand other people’s backgrounds, personalities, and points of view. Next, the researcher will discuss the second theme that emerged from the interview data analysis regarding research question two.

**Research Question 2, Theme 2: Active Listening and Communication Skills.**

The second theme that emerged from the interviews relating to Research Question 2 was that the eight participants found the Alternative Breaks experience pertinent to developing active listening, communication, and perspective-taking skills. Table 4.19 shows the second theme and codes that emerged from the data analysis.

**Table 4.19: Research Question Two’s Theme Two and Codes**

RQ1	Theme	Codes	Number of Reporting Participants (out of 8)
Skill	Active listening and communication	Active listening	6
		Communication	7
		Perspective-taking	8

Anne reflected on how she is now able to communicate in big group settings. She responded,

I am able to now communicate to a big group without getting as nervous. I still do get nervous, but it is not as bad as before. It is a little bit less. I did learn how to

Speak at least in a big group, so I did have a voice. So, I am a very nervous person, very shy person. I get nervous in meetings, but I think I now get comfortable. So, I grew that. As I grow and am as part of this organization as well, it is just bringing out in me the need to stand up and have a voice and say the things that I need to say. I just tended to shut my mouth and not say anything. But it has helped me a little bit more in terms of that.

Diego also expressed gaining the opportunity to practice and improve his communication skills. He shared,

It was important that when you are fundraising or when you are trying to inform people and what you are doing, to communicate those ideas well. For me, it was important to get a lot of practice doing that in order to better my communication skills. Being able to communicate with a group of people, both within your own group or outside of it. Whether it is sharing what you did or something that you found that is beneficial to the group. We better our communication skills.

When asked what he got out of his Alternative Breaks experience, Steve also indicated gaining communication skills and being more open to speaking his mind. He shared,

Communication definitely. I was very reserved before and just being able to speak my mind really helped me outgrow as a person and be more open with people and get to know them. So, I think it is very important to speak your mind and communicate with everyone if you have a chance. Especially when planning fundraisers and events or having the icebreakers and meetings because if you are

not able to communicate with your team, it is not going to be organized, and just things might not happen.

The eight interviewed participants also indicated enhancing their ability to listen to others and take others' perspectives. One participant, Amy, shared the importance of getting other perspectives when working in team settings. She mentioned,

If you listen to others, they will listen to you. And it is a good way to get your voice heard and also get great insight on things, different perspectives that you probably did not consider before. And I think that is also like a very important thing about working as a group; you get, even if you had the idea, you get other perspectives. Like oh well, that would not work for this minority group, that would not work for people that cannot make it at that time. You should really listen to others because you might get great ideas with some other people that can help you develop them. Some people can help you maybe get more insight on it, because maybe you have an idea, but other people can help you with that idea. They probably have other knowledge from other fields that help you develop that idea. I am now more open to listening to others and their ideas.

Similarly, Diego indicated that the Alternative Breaks program allowed him to communicate with and learn from people from different areas. He expressed,

If you go somewhere, if your trip is in a location that is culturally different from yours, then you also have an experience of communicating with people from a different area. So, being able to learn from people from a different culture, who might have a perspective of different ways of life, different histories, that can form their decisions on a different way than yours. It was a good way to do some

introspection and learn about, evaluate why you believe in the things that you believe, and how other perspectives can help also the way you see things.

Based on the participants’ interview analysis and interpretation, the researcher concludes that participation in the AB program developed the participants’ active listening and communication skills. Specifically, the Alternative Breaks experience enhanced the participants’ communication capabilities as the program offered them opportunities to speak in front of a group, practice their communication skills, share their thoughts to the group and others, and communicate with people from different backgrounds and cultures. AB also offered participants opportunities to listen to others and take their perspectives. Next, the researcher will discuss the third theme that emerged from the interview data analysis regarding research question two.

**Research Question 2, Theme 3: Adaptability Skills.** The third theme that emerged from the interviews relating to Research Question 2 was that participants enhanced or intensified their adaptability skills. Most interviewed participants indicated they found the Alternative Breaks experience pertinent to adapting, managing time, and being patient. Table 4.20 shows the third theme and codes that emerged from the data analysis.

**Table 4.20: Research Question Two’s Theme Three and Codes**

RQ1	Theme	Codes	Number of Reporting Participants (out of 8)
Skill	Adaptability	Adapting	7
		Time management	7
		Patience	5

For example, Amy expressed adapting to changes when situations did not go as planned. She explained,

There were some tough times. We did run into some problems, and I believe I have really adapted to the change and any changes that happened. When you have something in mind and not everything gets resolved the way you expected it to, you do have to adapt to those changes. Things are still happening, and you cannot give up. Also, always listening to people's ideas, and if there is something that I had to change, you know you are not always right, you know you do have to listen to others. And I think I now apply that in my everyday life. You are not always right, and you know your idea might not be it all. You might have to change it, adapt it, depending on the project, depending on the situation.

April shared similar feelings about adapting to make her Alternative Breaks experience work. She mentioned,

I tend to be a little uncomfortable when I am out of my normal environment, or if I am around people that I do not really know, and when I am disconnected from my family. But that ended up not happening at all. I learned to adapt to things in this trip. The experience helped me intensify that perspective and enjoy working with or dealing with people. You got to make it work.

Most participants also expressed their Alternative Breaks experience allowed them to learn to manage their time more effectively. For instance, Anne shared,

It did enhance my time management. I was not as proficient in it, but it did get better just because everything was in a timely manner. We did have to schedule hard rock fundraising events and attend them. We did have meetings. We had all these events, and I did have to put them in a calendar, which I did not normally do so. I did learn how to do that, and I really did progress in my time management. I

would set things aside, and I would prioritize certain things over others. So, if I had to study because I had an exam on Monday, let's say, and I had a Hard Rock fundraiser on Sunday, I would start studying the week before just because it would not catch up on me on Sunday when I have to do the Hard Rock.

Similarly, Charlie indicated learning to manage his time and balance his commitment because of the AB program. He mentioned,

It is a commitment. I did not know if I was going to be able to all of this with my schoolwork and with all extracurriculars that I had. I was pretty proud of myself last year and this year too that I was able to keep doing it, and it helped me managed my time more too. I was able to stay committed to this place because I was making time and trying to do all my stuff so I could go to the meetings or do fundraisers in order to be able to go to a trip. Also, I just learned new ways of studying because, as I said, I'd rather spend so much time on just an assignment. It could take me like two hours because I was just talking to my friends and playing a little. By now, I am like ok during these 30 minutes I'm going to focus 100%, and I'm just going to do that. I'm not going to look at my phone. I'm not going to talk to anyone, and yeah just focusing as much as I could during that little time, just to get more stuff done.

Furthermore, most participants specified developing patience while adapting to the demands of their Alternative Breaks project. April, for example, expressed,

It also brought out a lot of patience because it was definitely tough dealing with people there in the fundraisers. It makes you kind of appreciate the people in the DR a lot more because people here can be very unpleasant. For example, after the

trip, about a month later, I went to Orlando for a week, and I was with my family, so that includes my sister's husband, my brother-in-law, and then also my aunt who gets on my nerves, and my dad gets on my nerves. And then my little brother, his best friend, and my two cousins. And they are all in the same age group, the friend is 16, my brother is turning 15 next week, one cousin is 15, and the other is 14. My mom had pointed out when we got back, she goes you were so patient with everyone because normally on a trip like that I will lose my patience and it will show. So, I think the trip working not only with the kids but working with people my age as well, older people kind of helped me to intensify just to have patience with everyone and not lose my cool.

Based on the participants' interview analysis and interpretation, the researcher concludes that participation in the AB program developed the participants' adaptability skills. Specifically, the Alternative Breaks experience enhanced the participants' ability to adapt to changes when situations do not go as planned or new environments and surroundings. AB also offered participants opportunities that allowed them to learn to manage their time more effectively and balance their commitments. Moreover, participants developed patience capabilities while adjusting to the demands of the AB project and the people they interacted with. Next, the researcher will discuss the fourth theme that emerged from the interview data analysis regarding research question two.

**Research Question 2, Theme 4: Self-Efficacy Skills.** The fourth theme that emerged from the interviews relating to Research Question 2 was that participants enhanced or intensified their self-efficacy skills. Most interviewed participants indicated they found the Alternative Breaks experience pertinent to gaining efficiency and

persistence. Table 4.21 shows the fourth theme and codes that emerged from the data analysis.

**Table 4.21: Research Question Two’s Theme Four and Codes**

RQ1	Theme	Codes	Number of Reporting Participants (out of 8)
Skill	Self-efficacy	Efficiency	5
		Persistence	6

For example, Valerie expressed that she learned to be efficient and responsible because of her involvement in Alternative Breaks. She shared,

You learn to be efficient and responsible, be on time every time you have to go to the Hard Rock fundraisers and learn customer service. I would always complain about the Hard Rock fundraisers, and my mom was always like you are learning. You are learning to be responsible, to wake up early, to be responsible. I mean, that is important too because now we are efficient and going to be responsible. Also, you have to work with customers. And work in a group, teamwork, because we would have so many customers, and we would have to figure out a way to work better together for everyone. I learned that I think I grew up a little bit in the trip too, to be responsible, to be on time, to be independent, and to be bilingual because you have to do the lessons in Spanish and English.

Charlie expressed similar feelings about becoming effective because of his role in Alternative Breaks. He said,

I just became really effective at doing everything because during the meetings, we kind of had this hour or hour and 30 Minutes that we have to get these tasks done. It got to be done during those times. Those were the only times that we could all

meet in order to be able to do that. So, I learned how to live like that and be like that. Also, the fundraising is done through Hard Rock concession stands. It is every two weeks, maybe it really depends, you have to go and work in the Hard Rock. It is not something given to you. You have to work for that money in order to be able to go to the trip. And also, all of the meetings that you have on Fridays. You cannot really miss them. You have to go, you have to participate in, you have to be interested in it. It is a commitment. It is dedication, and I am happy I was able to do it all.

Many participants also expressed becoming persistent because of the many demands and challenges involved with their Alternative Breaks experience. One participant, Amy, revealed,

I realized I am very persistent. I would always get to the meetings early. This is the person I was. I was very involved. I feel like this year in particular, a little bit more than others, I was always there, always present even when others weren't. Sometimes people sign up and again it's more than they bargained for. Even when I was left to do some work alone at the beginning, I stayed. I could have left AB, but I wanted to stay. I wanted to be in this. I wanted to be part of this. Also, if something bad happens, you have to adapt to that change. You have to work around that. I think it talks more about the person, how they get through it. How to get through it, and how they adapted to it, and what it says about them as leaders, as a committee member, as a person.

Another participant, Anne, also indicated that she learned to persist and stick through her commitments despite the challenges she faced during the Alternative Breaks experience and the Covid pandemic. She shared,

I learned that I really can stick through to things, and if I really want something, I will do it. Two years ago, Covid happened unfortunately, and it was very uncertain if we would go to DR this year because the world was very chaotic. We could not go during Spring break in February, so we did the lessons through zoom. We did it virtually. And that was also a great success. We were able to teach them. It was a little bit harder just because they do not have the resources in terms of the Internet, and the computers, and everything that we do, but I still did find it successful. The kids were able to interact with us, even though zoom. And they were able to get something out of us just as we were able to get something out of them, and that was great. We were eventually able to go in person in May and that was great too.

Based on the participants' interview analysis and interpretation, the researcher concludes that participation in the AB program developed the participants' self-efficacy skills. Specifically, the Alternative Breaks experience enhanced the participants' ability to be efficient and responsible while participating in fundraising efforts, meetings, community service activities, and working with others. AB also offered participants opportunities that allowed them to become persistent as they handled the many demands and challenges involved with their AB experience. Next, the researcher will discuss the fifth theme that emerged from the interview data analysis regarding research question two.

**Research Question 2, Theme 5: Leadership Skills.** The fifth theme that emerged from the interviews relating to Research Question 2 was that most participants

indicated they found the Alternative Breaks experience enhanced or intensified their leadership and people management skills. Table 4.22 shows the fifth theme and codes that emerged from the data analysis.

**Table 4.22: Research Question Two’s Theme Five and Codes**

RQ1	Theme	Codes	Number of Reporting Participants (out of 8)
Skill	Leadership	Leadership	7
		People management	5

For instance, Diego expressed becoming a leader because of the responsibilities assigned to him during his Alternative Breaks experience. He indicated,

The most important thing that I learned was to know that I am capable of being a leader. Whether it’s being the leader of a group or organizing something, being able to practice skills where I can take the responsibility of making sure that a group of people that I’m working with are all well informed and able to work together to achieve a common goal and listening, it was really important for me too. That it was important to be well informed, and more researched so that if they had any sort of questions, I was either ready to answer or was able to be honest when I didn’t have an answer. But was able to later find that information and get back to them. Also, showing that concern for everybody in the group, making sure that they were comfortable with expressing their ideas, make sure everybody had a voice.

Similarly, another participant, Amy, noted that Alternative Breaks allowed her to become a leader and manage others for the first time. She shared,

So, before this, I would have never said that I’m a good leader. I was so unsure of myself; I’ve always been unsure of myself in that aspect. I was always a follower,

and this is one of the times where I was testing if I could be a leader. Even in the garden, I was able to manage and lead my participants, and I felt really proud of myself when they would look up to me, and what I want to do as a leader. I learned a lot, a really good skill set of just getting people together, getting everyone involved in something bigger than us.

Based on the participants’ interview analysis and interpretation, the researcher concludes that participation in the AB program developed the participants’ leadership skills. The Alternative Breaks experience enhanced the participants’ abilities to become leaders and manage others because they had to take on leadership roles while working in groups to accomplish shared goals and complete projects. A few interviewed participants also held site leader roles for the first time, which taught them how to guide others. Next, the researcher will discuss the sixth theme that emerged from the interview data analysis regarding research question two.

**Research Question 2, Theme 6: Logistics and Problem-Solving Skills.** The sixth theme that emerged from the interviews relating to Research Question 2 was that most participants indicated they found the Alternative Breaks experience enhanced or intensified their logistics and problem-solving skills. Table 4.23 shows the sixth theme and codes that emerged from the data analysis.

**Table 4.23: Research Question Two’s Theme Six and Codes**

RQ1	Theme	Codes	Number of Reporting Participants (out of 8)
Skill	Logistics and Problem-solving	Planning	6
		Creativity	5
		Organization	6
		Problem-solving	7

For example, when asked what skills he developed by participating in Alternative Breaks, Steve mentioned planning. He said,

Planning is definitely key if you want to do something as big as planning a whole site, and making the whole itinerary, and figuring out and planning the different activities you would do it during the site. And just to think about what we would do for our pre-service and then for our full service. Whether it had to be financial or logistical, how just to be able to recruit people, on how to do so, whether it be from tabling or just making flyers and stuff like that. Just planning ahead, and it really helps out when you're trying to execute something like that.

Yvonne expressed intensifying her planning and creativity skills because of her AB involvement. She shared,

I think being in the AB experience intensifies your planning and creativity because there are so many things that you have to coordinate. And even if I am not the leader of my group, we still give our opinions on what we can do for the fundraising or how to make the service go smoother when we are there. And I think it boosts your creativity and planning to be there.

Moreover, when asked what they got from their AB experience, Diego expressed gaining organizational skills. He expressed,

Learning how to organize myself better. I learned how to pay attention to details and consider things to make sure that the project went smoothly and all. In high school, I never would have been able to organize a road trip or anything like that with any of my friends. That is something I learned after having been gone through

the experience of AB. I now know how to create a better mental checklist for certain things that are essential.

Additionally, most interviewed participants perceived their Alternative Breaks experience enhanced their problem-solving skills. Valerie shared,

It helped with solving problems. It made me realize that sometimes things do not go up as planned because, I mean, we have never been there before; we had no idea. But when things do not go as planned, you have to make things work. But we figured it out at the end by making the lessons craftier and by listening to the kids. It was also very important to know what they wanted and thinking about ok how would you teach it differently than previously planned. We figured it out. We made it work.

Based on the participants' interview analysis and interpretation, the researcher concludes that participation in the AB program developed the participants' logistics and problem-solving skills. The Alternative Breaks experience enhanced the participants' abilities to plan, be creative and organized since they had to coordinate events, fundraisers, meetings, lessons, and activities. The AB program also enhanced their problem-solving capabilities as participants had to generate alternative solutions to resolve situations that did not go as planned, handle internal conflicts, and overcome barriers and challenges. Figure 4.2 below shows a list of the six skill themes that emerged from analyzing the eight participants' semi-structured interview data and that related to Research Question 2.

**Figure 4.2. Interview Data Analysis Emerged Skill Themes**



**Surveyed Participants' Perceptions.** The 5-point Likert scale pre-AB experience and post-AB experience surveys also offered the 30 or more surveyed participants' perceptions on how the Alternative Breaks program may have developed

skills because of their participation in the program and service to the community. Participants involved in the study were given pre- and post-surveys to observe what changes they had in their perceptions of specific skills. Before and after their AB participation, they were asked to rate their level of agreement with different skill-related statements from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). See Appendix O for the participants' perceptions of skills before and after their AB experience.

The following two hypotheses sought to answer Research Question 2: How do FIU students who participate in AB describe the program's influence on the skills exposed to or developed?

### **Research Hypotheses Relating to Research Question Two**

Null Hypothesis: There are no significant differences in Alternative Breaks participants' skills from pre-AB experience to post-AB experience.

Alternative Hypothesis: There are significant differences in Alternative Breaks participants' skills from pre-AB experience to post-AB experience.

To answer research question 2, the researcher focused the data analysis on the following six types of skills: (a) people, (b) active listening and communication, (c) adaptability, (d) self-efficacy, (e) leadership, and (f) logistics and problem-solving. The researcher used the Mann-Whitney U test to investigate whether there was a change in the participants' level of agreement with each skill-related variable before (pre-AB experience) and after (post-AB experience) their participation in the Alternative Breaks program. Since the populations in this study did not meet normal distribution assumption, the Mann-Whitney test, as a nonparametric and ordinal-level method, fitted this study's testing efforts. First, the test compared the mean ranks, rather than medians, of the pre-

AB experience and post-AB experience surveyed population responses. Second, the test examined whether the difference between the pre-AB and post-AB experience populations was statistically significant for each skill-related variable. Table 4.14 displays a summary of the Mann-Whitney U test mean rank per skill variable, and table 4.15 displays the test statistics per skill variable.

**Table 4.24. Mann-Whitney U Test Mean Rank per Skill Variable Summary**

Variable	Surveyed Population	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
People skills	Pre-AB experience	39	29.38	1146.00
	Post-AB experience	30	42.30	1269.00
	Total	69		
Active listening and communication skills	Pre-AB experience	38	31.08	1181.00
	Post-AB experience	30	38.83	1165.00
	Total	68		
Adaptability skills	Pre-AB experience	39	30.22	1178.50
	Post-AB experience	30	41.22	1236.50
	Total	69		
Self-efficacy skills	Pre-AB experience	39	31.18	1216.00
	Post-AB experience	30	39.97	1199.00
	Total	69		
Leadership skills	Pre-AB experience	38	29.92	1137.00
	Post-AB experience	30	40.30	1209.00
	Total	68		
Logistics and problem-solving skills	Pre-AB experience	39	33.15	1293.00
	Post-AB experience	30	37.40	1122.00
	Total	69		

**Table 4.25. Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics per Skill Variable Summary**

Variable	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
People skills	366	1146	-2.765	0.006
Active listening and communication skills	440	1181	-1.87	0.062
Adaptability skills	398.5	1178.5	-2.36	0.018
Self-efficacy skills	436	1216	-1.91	0.056

Leadership skills	396	1137	-2.26	0.024
Logistics and problem-solving skills	513	1293	-0.938	0.348

**Research Question 2, Variable 1: People Skills.** To test whether there was a change in people skills, the researcher asked AB participants to rate their level of agreement with the following statements before and after their experience: (a) I have the ability to trust others, (b) I know how to collaborate, (c) I know how to work in teams, (d) I know how to be social, and (e) I know how to network with others. First, the Mann-Whitney U test revealed the mean rank score on the AB experience survey instruments increased from pre-AB experience ( $Mr = 29.38$ ) to post-AB experience ( $Mr = 42.30$ ) in response to the *people skills* variable.

**Table 4.26. Mann-Whitney U Test Mean Rank per People Skills Variable**

Variable	Surveyed Population	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
People skills	Pre-AB experience	39	29.38	1146.00
	Post-AB experience	30	42.30	1269.00
	Total	69		

Second, the test examined whether the difference between the pre-AB and post-AB experience populations was statistically significant for the *people skills* variable. The test indicated that the difference between the pre-AB and post-AB experience population was not statistically significant for this variable [ $U(N_{pre-AB \text{ experience}} = 39, N_{post-AB \text{ experience}} = 30) = 366, z = -2.765, p = 0.006$ ]. Since  $p = 0.006 < 0.05$ , we must reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a difference between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience surveyed populations. Therefore, the mean rank increase between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience survey results is plausibly due to

the Alternative Breaks program participation. Table 4.13 displays the Mann-Whitney U test statistic (U), the standardized test statistic (Z score), and the Asymptotic 2-tailed significance (*p*) values.

**Table 4.27. Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics per People Skills Variable**

Variable	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
People skills	366	1146	-2.765	0.006

**Research Question 2, Variable 2: Active Listening and Communication**

**Skills.** To test whether there was a change in active listening and communication skills, the researcher asked AB participants to rate their level of agreement with the following statements before and after their experience: (a) I have the ability to trust others, (b) I know how to collaborate, (c) I know how to work in teams, (d) I know how to be social, and (e) I know how to network with others. First, the Mann-Whitney U test revealed the mean rank score on the AB experience survey instruments increased from pre-AB experience ( $Mr = 31.08$ ) to post-AB experience ( $Mr = 38.83$ ) in response to the *active listening and communication skills* variable.

**Table 4.28. Mann-Whitney U Test Mean Rank per Active Listening and Communication Skills Variable**

Variable	Surveyed Population	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Active listening and communication skills	Pre-AB experience	38	31.08	1181.00
	Post-AB experience	30	38.83	1165.00
	Total	68		

Second, the test indicated that the difference between the pre-AB and post-AB experience population was not statistically significant for the *active listening and*

*communication skills* variable [U(Npre-AB experience= 38, Npost-AB experience= 30) = 440,  $z = -1.87$ ,  $p = 0.062$ ]. Since  $p = 0.062 > 0.05$ , we must accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no difference between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience surveyed populations. Therefore, the mean rank increase between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience survey results is plausibly due to random chance.

**Table 4.29. Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics per Active Listening and Communication Skills Variable**

Variable	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Active listening and communication skills	440	1181	-1.87	0.062

**Research Question 2, Variable 3: Adaptability Skills.** To test whether there was a change in adaptability skills, the researcher asked AB participants to rate their level of agreement with the following statements before and after their experience: (a) I know how to manage time, (b) I know how to adapt to different situations, and (c) I have the ability to manage stress. First, the Mann-Whitney U test revealed the mean rank score on the AB experience survey instruments increased from pre-AB experience ( $Mr = 30.22$ ) to post-AB experience ( $Mr = 41.22$ ) in response to the *adaptability skills* variable.

**Table 4.30. Mann-Whitney U Test Mean Rank per Adaptability Skills Variable**

Variable	Surveyed Population	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Adaptability skills	Pre-AB experience	39	30.22	1178.50
	Post-AB experience	30	41.22	1236.50
	Total	69		

Second, the test indicated that the difference between the pre-AB and post-AB experience population was statistically significant for the *adaptability skills* variable

[ $U(N_{\text{pre-AB experience}}= 39, N_{\text{post-AB experience}}= 30) = 398.5, z = -2.36, p = 0.018$ ]. Since  $p = 0.018 < 0.05$ , we must reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a difference between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience surveyed populations. Therefore, the mean rank increase between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience survey results is plausibly due to the Alternative Breaks program participation.

**Table 4.31. Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics per Adaptability Skills Variable**

Variable	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Adaptability skills	398.5	1178.5	-2.36	0.018

**Research Question 2, Variable 4: Self-efficacy Skills.** To test whether there was a change in self-efficacy skills, the researcher asked AB participants to rate their level of agreement with the following statements before and after their experience: (a) I have the ability to take the initiative or be self-started, (b) I have the ability to persist, (c) I know how to make decisions, and (d) I know how to set goals. First, the Mann-Whitney U test revealed the mean rank score on the AB experience survey instruments increased from pre-AB experience ( $Mr = 31.18$ ) to post-AB experience ( $Mr = 39.97$ ) in response to the *self-efficacy skills* variable.

**Table 4.32. Mann-Whitney U Test Mean Rank per Self-efficacy Skills Variable**

Variable	Surveyed Population	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Self-efficacy skills	Pre-AB experience	39	31.18	1216.00
	Post-AB experience	30	39.97	1199.00
	Total	69		

Second, the test indicated that the difference between the pre-AB and post-AB experience population was not statistically significant for the *self-efficacy skills* variable [U(Npre-AB experience= 39, Npost-AB experience= 30) = 436, z = -1.91, p = 0.056]. Since  $p = 0.056 > 0.05$ , we must accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no difference between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience surveyed populations. Therefore, the mean rank increase between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience survey results is plausibly due to random chance.

**Table 4.33. Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics per Self-efficacy Skills Variable**

Variable	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Self-efficacy skills	436	1216	-1.91	0.056

**Research Question 2, Variable 5: Leadership Skills.** To test whether there was a change in leadership skills, the researcher asked AB participants to rate their level of agreement with the following statements before and after their experience: (a) I have the ability to delegate work, (b) I have the ability to mentor others, and (c) I know how to lead others. First, the Mann-Whitney U test revealed the mean rank score on the AB experience survey instruments increased from pre-AB experience ( $Mr = 29.92$ ) to post-AB experience ( $Mr = 40.30$ ) in response to the *leadership skills* variable.

**Table 4.34. Mann-Whitney U Test Mean Rank per Leadership Skills Variable**

Variable	Surveyed Population	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Leadership skills	Pre-AB experience	38	29.92	1137.00
	Post-AB experience	30	40.30	1209.00
	Total	68		

Second, the test indicated that the difference between the pre-AB and post-AB experience population was statistically significant for the *leadership skills* variable [U(Npre-AB experience= 38, Npost-AB experience= 30) = 396, z = -2.26, p = 0.018]. Since p = 0.024 < 0.05, we must reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a difference between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience surveyed populations. Therefore, the mean rank increase between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience survey results is plausibly due to the Alternative Breaks program participation.

**Table 4.35. Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics per Leadership Skills Variable**

Variable	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Leadership skills	396	1137	-2.26	0.024

**Research Question 2, Variable 6: Logistics and Problem-solving Skills.** To test whether there was a change in logistics and problem-solving skills, the researcher asked AB participants to rate their level of agreement with the following statements before and after their experience: (a) I know how to think critically, (b) I know how to be creative, (c) I know how to solve problems, and (d) I know how to manage conflict. First, the Mann-Whitney U test revealed the mean rank score on the AB experience survey instruments increased from pre-AB experience ( $Mr = 33.15$ ) to post-AB experience ( $Mr = 37.40$ ) in response to the *logistics and problem-solving skills* variable.

**Table 4.36. Mann-Whitney U Test Mean Rank per Logistics and Problem-solving Skills Variable**

Variable	Surveyed Population	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
	Pre-AB experience	39	33.15	1293.00

Logistics and problem-solving skills	Post-AB experience	30	37.40	1122.00
	Total	69		

Second, the test indicated that the difference between the pre-AB and post-AB experience population was not statistically significant for the *logistics and problem-solving skills* variable [U(Npre-AB experience= 39, Npost-AB experience= 30) = 513, z = -0.938, p = 0.348]. Since p = 0.348 > 0.05, we must accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no difference between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience surveyed populations. Therefore, the mean rank increase between the pre-AB experience and post-AB experience survey results is plausibly due to random chance.

**Table 4.37. Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics per Logistics and Problem-solving Skills Variable**

Variable	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Logistics and problem-solving skills	513	1293	-0.938	0.348

### Summary

This chapter analyzed the impact of Alternative Breaks programs on participants' behavioral and skill development with data collected through participants' interviews and pre-AB experience and post-AB experience surveys. The interviews were completed with eight AB participants after their involvement in an Alternative Breaks site during the 2021-2022 academic year. Also, 39 participants, including the eight interviewed students, completed a pre-AB experience survey. Of the 39 students, 30 completed a post-AB experience survey. The data collected during this study revealed the effectiveness of the Alternative Breaks program in developing the following participants' behaviors: (a)

helping others, (b) active citizenship and advocacy, (c) appreciation and sense of belonging, and (d) cultural sensitivity and respect. Moreover, the data collected revealed the effectiveness of the program in developing the following participant' skills: (a) people, (b) active listening and communication, (c) adaptability, (d) self-efficacy, (e) leadership, and (f) logistics and problem-solving.

## **Chapter 5: Discussions, Implications, and Conclusions**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will examine the data collected from the FIU Alternative Breaks (AB) participants' interviews and pre-AB and post-AB Experience Survey responses. The researcher will use the summary of results to assess whether there is enough proof to demonstrate that participants perceive the AB program influences their behavioral and skill development. The researcher will report the study results in six parts. The first portion will discuss the impact of the AB experience on participants' behavioral development, and the second part will explain the program's influence on participants' skill growth. Part three will discuss the findings' connections to previous research criticism, and part four will review the links to the conceptual framework. The fifth part will discuss the implications for practice, and the sixth portion will explain the implications for future research.

### **Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this case study and the analysis of the participant perspectives was to explore whether FIU Alternative Breaks (AB) programs influenced participants' behavioral and skill development. Kolb (1984) defines experiential learning as learning by doing and applying what you learn to real-world applications. Students learn through various opportunities such as fieldwork, internship, practicums, clinical experiences, study abroad, international education, volunteering, and service learning.

The problem examined in this research is that numerous studies demonstrate positive associations between participating in Alternative Breaks (AB) programs and participants' behavioral development in areas such as the following: (a) plans to volunteer

in the future (Niehaus, 2012; Beatty et al., 2016), (b) join other Alternative Breaks programs (Bowen, 2011), and engage in activism opportunities (Porter, 2011; Mann, 2017), (c) social integration and building relationships (Johnson, 2013), and (d) understanding of people from different racial/ethnic groups (Niehaus & Rivera, 2015). However, only some studies reveal students' skill development due to their involvement in AB programs. Therefore, this study described how participants perceived the AB service-learning experience influenced their behavior and skill growth.

### **The Impact of the Alternative Breaks Experience on Behavioral Development**

The findings in this study support service-learning participants' behavioral development found in the literature. Participants in this study reported that the Alternative Breaks experience intensified their desire to give back and continue to help others. Hoey & Feld-Gore (2014) and Mann (2017) report that AB participants acquire an appreciation for community service and giving back to the community. Many AB participants in this study expressed that the program inspired them to give back because they realized many people were less advantaged than them. The experience exposed them to the many challenging situations others faced and lived in daily, and it has impacted them and made them realize the need to give back and lend a hand.

Similarly, Bowen (2011) and Porter (2011) outline that students who have participated in AB opportunities have shown a willingness to continue to engage in community service, activism, and other Alternative Breaks opportunities in the future. The participants in this study expressed they were interested in continuing to help after participating in AB, thus showing the Alternative Breaks program's influence on students'

willingness to help others. To them, AB positively impacted them, so they would want to continue being part of the program even beyond graduation.

Participants in this study also described gaining a sense of active citizenship, social issue awareness, and advocacy. The findings in the study support Alternative Breaks' goals to develop active citizens who, through their life choices, take informed measures toward appreciating and prioritizing their communities (Break Away, n.d.). Other researchers, such as Porter (2011) and Mann (2017), report positive associations between participating in AB and students' plans to engage in activism.

This study's participants acknowledged that their AB experience made them realize a need to advocate and create awareness of the social issues affecting many communities. To them, AB taught them to become educated about what caused these social issues in the communities and take action to eliminate the source of the problem. Other researchers report that AB experiences influence participants' plans to engage in further advocacy and engage in the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, Teach for America, and Doctors without Borders after graduation (Niehaus, 2012) and advocacy work abroad (Smith et al., 2014). The study's findings also support programs' influence to engage in future advocacy (Goff et al., 2020) and social issue advocacy (Mbugua, 2010) and awareness (Marts, 2016; Smith et al., 2014) as found in the literature about service-learning and high-impact practices.

Participants in this study described building up an appreciation of the things they had, a sense of belonging, and recognition of self-privilege. Alternative Breaks experiences closely expose participants to the challenges others face. As a result, they realized their living conditions and daily challenges were relatively more straightforward

or less complicated than those in the community they served. They learned to appreciate the things they have, their family and friends, food and clean water, the opportunity to get educated, and all their privileges. These findings support previous research demonstrating positive associations between participating in international experiential learning programs and participants' development in appreciation of the little things they have and privilege (Christie et al., 2012).

Alternative Breaks participants shared their admiration for the community members' persistence, resilience, and commitment to strive and face challenging situations in their daily lives. For example, many Haitian adults and children cross the border to the Dominican Republic (DR) to seek better opportunities and escape poverty and crime. The AB participants especially shared their admiration for the children they worked with in the Dominican Republic. Most of these children immigrated to the DR alone. They worked on the streets, along with Dominican children, as shoe shiners, traders, sellers, builders, and florists to provide basic needs for themselves and their families. Many sought assistances from non-profit organizations such as *Acción Callejera*, which helped them get an education, clean clothes, showers, and emotional, psychological, and medical care.

Participants also shared their admiration for the optimism community members showed toward situations, their communities, their fellow members, and themselves daily. They displayed happiness, kindness, care for their family members and others, commitment, hard work, and unity. They welcomed the AB participants into their communities, collaborated, and shared their stories. Participants connected with the people in the community and built relationships. Community members displayed traits

and skills for improving their communities as they participated in efforts such as cleaning their community, harvesting their food, serving food to feed their fellow community members, working as shoe-shiners, builders, and florists to provide for their families, and taking care of their environment and surroundings. Participants also learned from and trusted the community partners and agencies on how best to utilize resources, workforce, and collaborative efforts to help and enhance present conditions. These organizations assisted community members in harnessing significant assets and instilling a feeling of duty to society. Community members seemed content and pleased with participating in endeavors to advance their neighborhood, their fellows, and themselves while collaborating with AB participants and the non-profit organizations.

Lastly, regarding developed behaviors, participants also described gaining cultural sensitivity and respect for others because of their Alternative Breaks experience. They became more culturally sensitive and enhanced their respect and appreciation for others while working with and serving the people in the community. Experiential learning opportunities enhance participants' cultural and intercultural sensitivity (Anderson et al., 2006; Rexeisen & Al-Khatib, 2009; Chi, 2013), cultural competence and awareness (Greatrex-White, 2008; Carley et al., 2011), cultural understanding (Batchelder & Root, 1994), cultural exchanges (Bozkurt & Yasar, 2016), and cross-cultural social justice and advocacy (Smith et al., 2014).

### **The Impact of the Alternative Breaks Experience on Skill Development**

The findings in this study also support service-learning participants' skill development found in the literature. Participants in this study reported enhancing or intensifying their people skills. They found the Alternative Breaks experience pertinent to

teamwork and collaboration. AB offered them opportunities to appreciate others and count on a team. Sabat et al. (2015), Suckarieh & Krupar (2015), and ChanLin et al. (2016) attribute service-learning opportunities to participants' teamwork development. The Alternative Breaks participants in this study enhanced their teamwork capabilities (Campbell & Sasnett, 2011) while working together to help those in need. They also displayed teamwork by mutually planning, scheduling, and facilitating activities (ChanLin et al., 2016). Participants also had opportunities to bond, build healthy teamwork, and learn from each other (Gumpert & Kraybill-Greggo, 2005).

The Alternative Breaks experience provided the participants in this study with opportunities to learn to collaborate with others. They learned about collaboration because they had to work together to fundraise for the trip, create an itinerary, develop lesson plans and other activities for the serving population, and help the community on-site. Solis et al. (2015), Mabingo (2015), Chan (2012), Mooney & Edwards (2001) report a positive association between experiential learning opportunities and participants' collaboration skill development.

Participants also described their Alternative Breaks experience as one that permitted them to meet, bond, and understand others. Participants had the opportunity to meet new people, connect with others with similar interests, and create new friendships. AB programs allow participants to get out of their shells, interact with new people, and participate in new activities (Mann & DeAngelo, 2016). Service-learning projects enable participants to develop relationships and friendships (Baecher & Chung, 2020; Liu & Lee, 2011; Oberhauser & Daniels, 2017). Participants in this study reported forming strong ties with and sharing experiences with other participants as they traveled and lived

together, worked jointly to serve those in need, and had common goals, passions, and interests (Baecher & Chung, 2020). They also established relationships with the local agency personnel and members of the serving communities (Baecher & Chung, 2020; Dietz & Baker, 2019).

Although not explicitly found in the AB-related literature, this study's findings also support active listening and communication skill development found in the service-learning literature. Participants reported gaining active listening, communication, and perspective-taking skills because of their engagement in the Alternative Breaks program. They get to practice and improve their communication skills, and they can communicate in small and big group settings, share ideas, and listen to others' points of view. Students who participate in service-learning opportunities develop communication abilities (Eyler & Giles, 1999) and open communication while working together to help those in need (Campbell & Sasnett, 2011). Participants establish comfortable and supportive environments, open up to sharing ideas, and listen to the serving community members' stories (DuPre, 2010).

Another set of skills not previously made explicit in the AB-related literature and discovered in this study is that participants enhanced their adaptability skills because of their Alternative Breaks experience. They found it pertinent to adapt, manage time, and be patient. AB provided them opportunities to adapt to changes when situations did not go as planned and get out of their comfort zone. Experiential learning programs allow participants to learn to adapt to difficult or uncommon circumstances (Gilson et al., 2015) and accept and adapt to change (Olsen & Burk, 2014). Participants also managed time more efficiently because of the many responsibilities and tasks they needed to

accomplish. They reported managing time to handle school and work responsibilities while also maneuvering AB responsibilities such as fundraisers, meetings, events, and projects. As a result, experiential learning programs offer participants opportunities to improve time management skills (Karji et al., 2020; Jensen, 2011).

When it comes to developed skills, the findings in this study also support service-learning participants' self-efficacy skill growth found in the experiential learning and high-impact practice related-literature but not in the AB one. Participants described building up efficiency and persistence because of their Alternative Breaks involvement. AB places participants in situations they learn to be efficient and responsible while engaging in semester-long fundraisers, meetings, planning activities, and spending days of service in the community. They become more committed, dedicated, responsible, punctual, and independent. Experiential learning opportunities, such as study abroad, service-learning, and field practicums, positively influence students' self-efficacy skill development (Milstein, 2005; Simons & Cleary, 2006; Stewart, 2008; Weiler, 2013; Fortune et al., 2005). Also, high-impact practice participants increase self-efficacy in literacy, study, and goal achievement skills (Conefrey, 2021).

Moreover, participants reported becoming persistent because of the many demands and challenges involved with their Alternative Breaks experience. They learned to persist and stick through their school, extracurricular, and AB commitments despite the number of responsibilities on their plate. They learned to manage the heavy loads and stay committed to completing their AB experience. These findings suggest student success, as Kuh et al. (2005) characterize student success as "satisfaction, persistence, and high levels of learning and personal development" (Abes et al., 2019, p. 314).

Although not explicitly found in the AB-related literature, this study's findings also support leadership and people management skill development found in the service-learning literature. Simons et al. (2011), Wurr & Hamilton (2012), and Newman et al. (2007) attribute service-learning opportunities to leadership skill development. Participants became leaders because the program allowed them to take the initiative and lead while working in small or large groups. Participants lead others in fundraising, logistics, trip planning, and community service execution. Eyster & Giles (1999) identify that increased leadership and communication abilities and creating deep personal relationships with others are all predictors of service-learning opportunities. Also, Moely and Ilustre (2014) report that students can practice the ability to lead, make decisions, or work with other students in leadership roles.

Last, findings in this study also support participants' logistics and problem-solving skill development not found in the AB-related but in the service-learning literature. Participants in this study reported that the Alternative Breaks experience enhanced or intensified their logistics, planning, organizational, and problem-solving skills. AB required participants to plan an entire site visit, work logistics with non-profit organization partners, collaborate with the community members, research and execute fundraising events, develop an itinerary, and plan different activities to serve the population in need. Service-learning opportunities enhance participants' planning skills (Legree et al., 2014) as they work in teams to plan, schedule, and facilitate activities for the serving community (ChanLin et al., 2016). Participants learned organizational skills (Liu & Lee, 2011) as they had to arrange meetings, locations, and activities before and during their community service. Furthermore, they enhanced problem-solving skills (Chi,

2013; Spears, 2018; Ebner et al., 2017; Davidson, 2012; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mooney & Edwards, 2001) as challenges arise along the way, conflict among team members occur, and activities, schedules, and intentions did not go as planned.

### **Findings' Connection to Criticism**

There are critiques about high-impact practices, such as service-learning, community-based learning, and volunteerism, where scholars suggest these practices may not promote minority participation because involvement requires a certain amount of free time, money, and access to local groups (Abes et al., 2019). However, findings in this study indicate that 90% percent of the FIU Alternative Breaks participants who completed the program were of minority groups. 3.3% of the participants identified as Asian, 6.7% as Black or African American, 80% as Hispanic or Latino, 10% as White, 0% as American Indian or Alaska Native, 0% as Pacific Islander, and 0% as two or more races. Since the researcher conducted this study at Florida International University (FIU), an urban, multi-campus, top 50 public, research, and Hispanic-serving institution, the Alternative Breaks program was accessible to a significant minority student population. The university student population for the 2021-2022 academic year included 64.71% Hispanic, 12.15% Black or African American, 10.17% white, 7.62% Nonresident Alien, 2.60% Asian, 1.99% Two or More Race, 0.05% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.05% Pacific Islander, and 0.67% Not Reported students.

Minoritized students may need access to resources (Stewart & Nicolazzo, 2018) and, as a result, may never have the opportunity to experience high-impact practice benefits. In most cases, those serving others are the "white, sheltered, middle-class, un-debted students" (Seider & Hillman, 2011, p. 1), suggesting there is more negligible

participation from students of color and low socioeconomic status. Nevertheless, several students of color took advantage of the Alternative Breaks experience at this institution. Moreover, participants indicated their AB experience was 100% fundraised. They received financial support from the Alternative Breaks program and fundraised the money needed for the trip. Therefore, findings in this study suggest AB is easily accessible to many minoritized students.

Another criticism is that typical awareness-raising exercises, such as community walks, frequently prioritize privileged students' learning at the expense of minoritized ones (Abes et al., 2019). Service-learning and community-based projects may expose the conditions minoritized and low socioeconomic students live in their community while teaching the most prosperous about these issues. However, findings in this study report that the AB program also provided a significant minority student population with opportunities to observe similar or other minority groups' living conditions and daily struggles.

Abes et al. (2019) point out that university settings continue to place students from marginalized groups in hostile environments designed to benefit privileged students. They suggest higher education institutions adopt high-impact activities that consider what campus spaces create difficulties for this student population instead of assigning staff to collaborate with them to brainstorm ways to combat systematic oppression (Abes et al., 2019) and remove those structures. For example, there is the issue of racism in international service. Abes et al. introduced an African American student who faced racial discrimination from an indigenous Ecuadorian community while engaging in service-learning projects in that country. However, participants in this study described an

overall positive experience working with diverse groups and cultures during their AB experience. Additionally, the Alternative Breaks program offered campus spaces for all types of students to plan and participate in the service of others. Participants described developing cultural sensitivity, respect for others, and a sense of belonging. AB teaches them to trust their community partners and learn about their daily struggles. They were also able to give back to local and international communities and make an impact in the lives of others, some from their same ethnic group.

Moreover, service-learning receives criticism because students see it as charity or volunteering rather than a learning and social change opportunity. Endres & Gould, (2009) suggest that since it also creates spaces for privileged students to work in communities with low resources, defining it as a charitable endeavor only establishes a hierarchy between elite students and the populations who are ostensibly in need of assistance. On the other hand, the FIU Alternative Breaks provides service-learning opportunities rather than charity or volunteering to all types of students. Alternative Breaks projects enable participants to think critically about their place in the global society through service, activism, and leadership while exploring social, economic, political, and cultural significance issues (Break Away, 2021). Additionally, AB sites focus on addressing and meeting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to help students contextualize what their site's social issue looks like globally. Participants in this study indicated AB provided them with opportunities to be involved in the community, research to find resources to educate about the community's challenges and people, learn about the problems of the world, and become active community members.

Service-learning projects may also "include experiences akin to poverty tourism" (Byker & Putman, 2019, p. 99). They often offer walk through at-risk communities without their residents' permission and consent. This action may cause the locals to feel invaded while the students learn at the cost of the disadvantaged ones. Alternative Breaks programs, however, work with local community organizations worldwide (Break Away, 2021) that educate participants on the social issues affecting the communities in need. They work directly with agencies that provide services to the community and know their struggles. As a result, AB participants work closely with community members, consult with the locals, gain their trust, and develop relationships with them. Participants in this study described that the AB experience teaches participants and community members to trust each other. Both groups work together as a team in projects and services that help the community, spend time together, share life experiences, and learn from each other. AB participants learned to respect those in the community and establish rapport with them. They also learned to advocate and create awareness of these communities' social issues. The AB programs create "citizens that act with empathy, are more interculturally aware and outraged by social injustice, take responsibility for their actions, and are willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place" (Byker & Putman, 2019, p. 86).

Lastly, Niehaus & Rivera (2015) reported that white students felt their AB experience helped them better understand other races if people in the serving community were of a different race or ethnicity. On the other hand, students of color understood their own racial/ethnic identity if community members were from a similar race/ethnicity. These findings indicate that white students are more inclined to see community members

of different privilege levels, whereas students of color are more likely to identify with them (Espino & Lee, 2011; Green, 2001; Seider et al., 2013). The results of this investigation indicate that students of color understood their own racial/ethnic identity while working with community members of similar races or ethnicities. Nevertheless, participants, although from the same race or ethnicity, described that they also realized their identity as a privileged one and developed an appreciation for the things they have and the need to help others.

### **Connection to the Theoretical Framework**

Alternative Breaks is a type of service-learning and experiential learning (Robinder, 2012), which creates knowledge “through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). The findings of this study echo Kolb’s experiential learning theory. Kolb argues that the learner touches and moves through all of the following bases for learning to happen: (a) concrete experience, (b) observations and reflection, (c) formation of abstract concepts and generalization, and (d) testing implications of concepts in a new situation. In other words, the learners come across a new and concrete experience, observe and reflect on that experience and develop a new idea. They then apply their ideas to real-life scenarios to see what happens (McLeod, 2017).

Alternative Breaks participants reached the concrete experience stage, where they jumped into an experience with no expectations to see what unfolded (Robertson, 1988). The findings of this study support this aspect of the theory as AB participants shared that they engaged in serving communities to address social issues, such as environmental and disaster relief and disadvantaged children's education, without knowing what would happen on site. It is the first time most participants serve the community. Even if they

heard anecdotes and experiences from participants who had already engaged with the community, the first-time members only understood what to expect once they took part in the experience.

Participants think profoundly and lengthily about their experience at the observation and reflection stage. AB participants described that they observed what was happening in the community they served and with the community, non-profit agency, and AB team members involved in the experience. Through their daily reflections at the end of the day, they discussed what they did, observed, and learned from the experience. They also shared how they felt and thought about what they experienced while serving the community. Many participants described how they felt by observing the realities and conditions others live and their daily struggles.

Moreover, AB participants also reached the formation of abstract concepts and generalizations stage, where they constructed concepts based on such experiences. This study's findings show that the Alternative Breaks experience developed behaviors and skills based on the concepts they constructed based on what they experienced and proximity to the social issue affecting their serving communities. For example, findings show that participants were willing to continue to give back, help others, and commit to active citizenship and advocacy. These types of development occurred because they first-hand observed the struggle of others, learned they could make a difference in other people's lives, and realized they could educate others about the social issues affecting others locally and globally. They also developed a sense of belonging, appreciation for the things they have, cultural sensitivity, and respect for others by working with others in the community, hearing their experiences, and observing their realities. Participants could

also construct concepts that enhanced their people, communication, adaptability, self-efficacy, leadership, and problem-solving skills by observing what was happening in the serving community, the people they engaged with, and what they learned from the experience.

Alternative Breaks participants also reached the testing implications of ideas in a new situation stage, where they tried out these ideas or theories in a situation to see what happened. Participants described being more involved in the community and the world's problems. Some participants were willing to take what they learned from their AB experience and take it to other areas beyond graduation. They aimed to join or initiate new organizations that offer community service opportunities when they attend graduate schools. Other participants reported applying the communication skills they developed through their AB experience in other situations to see what happened. They felt more comfortable standing up in big classes and club groups without getting as nervous. They also noticed being able to speak up and have their voice heard in gatherings and meetings. Moreover, they realized being able to listen to other people's perspectives where they get ideas from others and learn from similar or different points of view.

### **Implications for Practice**

The study's findings have a number of ramifications for both research and practice. Since participants in this study described their Alternative Breaks experience as having intensified their desire to continue to help others, give back, and engage in active citizenship and advocacy, higher education practitioners should provide students the opportunity to participate in programs that allows them to explore these ventures. That is why Alternative Breaks programs must continue to place participants in opportunities

that expose them to our world's realities and challenges. Many people must be aware of what is happening outside their environment. So having these AB opportunities to realize their advantages and privilege, get close to others' realities, and work with the people in the communities encourages others to want to give back and continue to help while advancing the assets of the serving community.

Practitioners should continue and expand faculty and staff involvement in Alternative Breaks programs. While the engaged faculty and staff serve as AB site advisors, guide the participants, and play a role in their learning and development, they can also assist in promoting the program and reaching out to more students across the university to get them involved in the AB experience. Practitioners should partner with other campus offices, student organizations, and academic departments to organize information sessions for students to learn about Alternative Breaks' benefits and opportunities and get them to participate. The AB staff should also work with other service-learning and service-based programs outside of CLS to extend AB opportunities to students inclined to help others or to recruit students in fields who have never participated in service-based experiences. They should consider partnerships with other campus offices, student organizations, and academic departments to organize information sessions for students to learn about Alternative Breaks' benefits and opportunities for example.

Eighty percent of the participants in this study identified as Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. One of the reasons for this outstanding participant characteristic in the study is that FIU is an urban, multi-campus, top 50 public, research, and Hispanic-serving institution. Therefore, the Alternative Breaks program was accessible to a significant

minority student population. As indicated earlier in this chapter, the university student population for the 2021-2022 academic year included 64.71% Hispanic, 12.15% Black or African American, 10.17% white, 7.62% Nonresident Alien, 2.60% Asian, 1.99% Two or More Race, 0.05% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.05% Pacific Islander, and 0.67% Not Reported students. Even though the population is over 60% Hispanic or Latino, practitioners should also create efforts to strategically recruit participants from other races and ethnic backgrounds to participate in Alternative Breaks programs. Findings in this study show that only 20% of the AB participant population was Asian, Black or African American, White, or other non-Hispanic/Latino races or ethnicities. Practitioners should work with programs and departments, such as Housing and Residential Life, International Student and Scholar Services, and the Global First-Year program to organize information sessions for out-of-state and international students to learn about Alternative Breaks benefits and opportunities and get them to participate.

For many years, I have noticed there is a gap in gender participation in Alternative Breaks programs where women not only outnumber men in getting a higher education degree in this country (DiPetre & Buchmann, 2013), but also more female students participate in community-based opportunities, such as AB. The findings of this study were similar. Results demonstrate that 70% of the AB participants were female. Therefore, practitioners should also create efforts to recruit male participants strategically. They should work with fraternities and academic programs with high male enrollment, such as Engineering, to recruit men to participate in AB trips. They should also develop strategies and efforts that attract male students to the program without discriminating against female participants. The AB program should also rely on former

male participants who can share their experiences and what they gained from them with fellow male students.

Findings in this study show that 70% of the participants pursued a Biological Sciences major. Many were interested in enrolling in Medical or Dental School after graduation. One of the reasons for this outstanding characteristic is that most of the participants that signed up for the international site of Alternative Breaks knew each other from their pre-med classes and encouraged each other to join the organization. With this in mind, practitioners should also create efforts to recruit participants from diverse majors strategically. Therefore, this is another reason for practitioners to partner up with as many academic departments as possible to organize information sessions to learn about Alternative Breaks' benefits and opportunities and get students in their majors to participate. Recruiting faculty and staff from the academic departments to serve as AB site advisors will also assist the AB program in promoting it and recruiting students pursuing different types of degrees.

Lastly, program access to all student types is crucial if practitioners want participants to engage in these opportunities that expose them to our world's realities and learn from those experiences. Funding is a barrier that prevents students from engaging in these opportunities. Programs such as Study Abroad can get very expensive and may only be accessible to students who can afford them or receive financial aid. Therefore, AB practitioners should develop strategies that assist students in affording involvement in the program. The current AB program partially funds the trips. However, they must also assist participants with various fundraising and sponsorship resources so that students can strategically fundraise the amount needed for their AB trip service experience.

Students in this study reported spending several hours a week for months fundraising for the trip. Many reported these fundraising efforts as extremely tiring and taking time away from their studies and family engagements. Other participants also reported having to pay a non-refundable deposit to begin membership in the program. Both instances create barriers for participants who cannot afford to join the program or who burn out and discontinue their participation because of all the fundraising efforts. These barriers defeat the program's purpose of exposing some participants to our world's realities and learning from them the experience. Therefore, practitioners should develop sponsorship strategies that remove financial barriers to accessing the AB program. They should also remove the participant membership deposit or refund it at the end of the program.

Overall, findings in this study indicate a positive association between the AB program and participants' behavioral development in areas such as helping others, active citizenship and advocacy, appreciation and sense of belonging, and cultural sensitivity and respect. Findings also indicate the program's influence on people, active listening and communication, adaptability, self-efficacy, and leadership skill development. Therefore, practitioners must create spaces, strategies, and resources that encourage easy access to and promote participation in the Alternative Breaks program to all types of students regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, and major. Practitioners should also minimize barriers that impede participation and completion of the AB program. Ultimately, the goal should be to offer the program benefits and expose as many participants as possible to our world's realities and challenges while facilitating learning and personal and professional growth.

## **Implication for Future Research**

As shown in this study, Alternative Breaks programs help develop behaviors such as helping others, active citizenship and advocacy, appreciation and sense of belonging, and cultural sensitivity and respect. It also enhances people, active listening and communication, adaptability, self-efficacy, and leadership skills. The participants described how while engaging in AB and working in the serving community, their lived experiences challenged their worldviews. They learned from the AB programs, host site agents, community members, and their peers. As a result, they developed the behaviors and skills mentioned above.

The first consideration for future study would be to expand research to compare international and national trips. Due to the Covid19 pandemic, the Alternative Breaks program limited its site offerings to one international and five local communities last year. Expanding the research to like pre-pandemic settings when the AB program offered several national and international sites may provide more holistic findings to indicate the level of influence on participants' behavioral and skill development. It may also offer more information to indicate different levels of influence between international and national site experiences in the extent to which participants enhance behaviors and skills. For example, researchers could study the program's influence on participants' diversity and cultural sensitivity. They could also study how the program develops participants' global understanding, social issue engagement, social justice awareness, critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership development.

Future research could also consider a mixed methods case study that includes in-depth interviews, observations, and surveying a large sample size of 150 or more

participants. With the offering of several more FIU AB sites, researchers could strategically administer the pre- and post-AB experience survey to all or most participants at mandatory AB meetings or workshops. The study would also ask more participants to commit to pre- and post-AB experience interviews to explore whether participants who joined the program already had specific behavioral traits and skill sets not reported in this study or developed them because they participated in Alternative Breaks. Lastly, researchers could join some AB sites to observe participants' interactions, learning, behavioral, and skill changes. The goal is that adding in-depth interviews, observations, and more extensive population surveys will produce important data and lead to more accurate or representative results.

In order to generate more accurate or representative results, future research could also include studying Alternative Breaks participant populations from other universities and colleges across the country. This strategy would require staffing and time and add costs but could also lead to comparing each school AB program's impact on participants. Researchers could assess the differences and similarities AB programs have in terms of program access and satisfaction and the overall AB program's influence on participants' learning, behavioral, and skill development.

To continue examining the value-added nature of Alternative Breaks programs in various contexts, researchers could collect and analyze additional data by comparing a control group of AB participants against students who do not participate in AB. Researchers could also compare AB participants to other high-impact practices, such as Study Abroad, to explore differences and similarities in participant outcomes regarding learning, behavioral, and skill development.

Investigating how the Alternative Breaks experience has affected participants' futures is an additional research consideration, given that the AB experience motivates students to continue to help others, act, and play an active part in society. Researchers could include AB in their study to ascertain which choices they affirm to have been influenced by an AB event. Such a study would shed light on how the AB experience influenced participants' ways of living and personal, professional, and career decisions over the long run.

### **Conclusion**

By analyzing and reporting the impact of FIU Alternative Breaks programs on participants' behavioral and skill development, this study aimed to advance the literature on AB programs. The study explored the service-learning experiences extended by the AB program at Florida International University, a public metropolitan research university, to comprehend how this opportunity facilitated participants' learning, behavioral, and skill growth. Findings established that participants experienced behavioral growth in specific areas such as helping others, active citizenship and advocacy, appreciation and sense of belonging, and cultural sensitivity and respect. Results also indicated that participants experienced people, active listening and communication, adaptability, self-efficacy, leadership, and logistics and problem-solving skill development.

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## Appendices

**Appendix A: Florida International University Fall 2021 Enrollment Demographics**  
(FIU Accountability, n.d.).

<b>Fall 2021 Total Student Enrollment</b>					
	Type	Undergraduate	Graduate	Non-Degree Seeking	Total
	Count	39,384	10,309	6,899	56,592
	Percentage	69.59%	18.22%	12.19%	100.00%

<b>Fall 2021 Enrollment by Full-time Status</b>					
Status	Type	Undergraduate	Graduate	Non-Degree Seeking	Total
Full-time	Count	24,993	7,955	993	33,941
	Percentage	63.46%	77.17%	14.39%	59.97%
Part-time	Count	14,391	2,354	5,906	22,651
	Percentage	36.54%	22.83%	85.61%	40.03%

<b>Fall 2021 Enrollment by Pell (Federal Aid) Status</b>					
Status	Type	Undergraduate	Graduate	Non-Degree Seeking	Total
Pell	Count	18,047	222	9	18,278
	Percentage	45.82%	2.15%	0.13%	32.30%
No Pell	Count	21,337	10,087	6,890	38,314
	Percentage	54.18%	97.85%	99.87%	67.70%

<b>Fall 2021 Enrollment by Gender</b>					
Gender	Type	Undergraduate	Graduate	Non-Degree Seeking	Total
Female	Count	22,266	6,318	3,878	32,462
	Percentage	56.54%	61.29%	56.21%	57.36%
Male	Count	17,117	3,984	3,014	24,115
	Percentage	43.46%	38.65%	43.69%	42.61%

Not Reported	Count	1	7	7	15
	Percentage	0.00%	0.07%	0.10%	0.03%

<b>Fall 2021 Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity</b>					
Race/Ethnicity	Type	Undergraduate	Graduate	Non-Degree Seeking	Total
American Indian or Alaskan Native	Count	25	4	2	31
	Percentage	0.06%	0.04%	0.03%	0.05%
Asian	Count	1,007	414	144	1,565
	Percentage	2.56%	4.02%	2.09%	2.77%
Black or African American	Count	4,620	1,270	807	6,697
	Percentage	11.73%	12.32%	11.70%	11.83%
Hispanic	Count	26,512	5,158	4,532	36,202
	Percentage	67.32%	50.03%	65.69%	63.97%
Nonresident Alien	Count	2,648	1,386	520	4,554
	Percentage	6.72%	13.44%	7.54%	8.05%
Not Reported	Count	148	80	192	420
	Percentage	0.38%	0.78%	2.78%	0.74%
Pacific Islander	Count	17	2	6	25
	Percentage	0.04%	0.02%	0.09%	0.04%
Two or More Races	Count	803	250	99	1,152
	Percentage	2.04%	2.43%	1.43%	2.04%
White	Count	3,604	1,745	597	5,946
	Percentage	9.15%	16.93%	8.65%	10.51%

<b>Fall 2021 Enrollment by Residence</b>					
Status	Type	Undergraduate	Graduate	Non-Degree Seeking	Total
In-State	Count	35,189	7,847	6,188	49,224
	Percentage	89.35%	76.12%	89.69%	86.98%
Out-State	Count	4,195	2,455	704	7,354
	Percentage	89.35%	23.81%	10.20%	12.99%

<b>Fall 2021 Enrollment by First Generation Status</b>					
Status	Type	Undergraduate	Graduate	Non-Degree Seeking	Total
First Generation	Count	7,713	80	0	7,793
	Percentage	19.58%	0.78%	0.00%	13.77%
Non-First Generation	Count	31,671	10,229	6,899	48,799
	Percentage	80.42%	99.22%	100.00%	86.23%

**Appendix B: Florida International University Fall 2021 Awarded Degree Demographics (FIU Accountability, n.d.).**

<b>Fall 2021 Awarded Degrees</b>							
	Type	Bachelors	Masters	Specialist	Profes. Doctoral	Resch. Doctoral	Total
	Count	13,288	3,087	32	146	380	16,933
	Percentage	78.47%	18.20%	0.19%	0.86%	2.24%	100.00%

<b>Fall 2021 Awarded Degrees by Gender</b>							
Gender	Type	Bachelors	Masters	Specialist	Profes. Doctoral	Resch. Doctoral	Total
Female	Count	8,101	2,014	26	73	225	10,439
	Percentage	60.96%	65.24%	81.25%	50.00%	59.21%	61.65%
Male	Count	5,186	1,067	6	73	155	6,487
	Percentage	39.03%	34.56%	18.75%	50.00%	40.79%	38.39%
Not Reported	Count	1	4	0	0	0	5
	Percentage	0.01%	0.13%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.03%

<b>Fall 2021 Awarded Degrees by Race/Ethnicity</b>							
Race/Ethnicity	Type	Bachelors	Masters	Specialist	Profes. Doctoral	Resch. Doctoral	Total
American Indian or Alaska Native	Count	6	2	0	0	1	9
	Percentage	0.04%	0.01%	0.00%	0.00%	0.03%	0.05%
Asian	Count	321	101	0	25	17	464
	Percentage	2.40%	3.30%	0.00%	17.10%	4.50%	2.74%
Black or African American	Count	1,484	447	6	11	55	2,003
	Percentage	11.20%	14.50%	18.80%	7.50%	14.50%	11.83%
Hispanic	Count	8,937	1,633	18	57	122	10,757
	Percentage	67.2%	52.90%	56.30%	39.00%	32.10%	63.53%
Nonresident	Count	1,112	353	0	1	94	1,560

Alien	Percentage	8.4%	11.40%	0.00%	0.7%	24.70%	9.21%
Not Reported	Count	42	21	0	3	7	73
	Percentage	0.30%	0.70%	0.00%	2.1%	1.80%	0.43%
Pacific Islander	Count	8	2	0	0	1	11
	Percentage	0.05%	0.06%	0.00%	0.00%	0.03%	0.06%
Two or More Races	Count	259	84	2	4	4	353
	Percentage	1.9%	2.70%	6.30%	2.70%	1.10%	2.08%
White	Count	1,129	444	6	45	79	1,703
	Percentage	8.5%	14.40%	18.80%	30.8%	20.8%	10.06%

## Appendix C: Participant Invitation Handout

### PARTICIPANTS NEEDED!!!

#### An Exploration of the Impact of Alternative Breaks Programs on Students' Behavior and Skill Development



#### Purpose

To describe how real-world, service-learning experiences offered by Alternative Breaks (AB) may prepare you develop behavior and skills.

#### What

**40-minute commitment:** Session 1: 5 mins introduction and 15 mins pre-AB trip survey; Session 2: 5 mins introduction and 15 mins post-AB trip survey, OR

**1-hour and 40-minute commitment** Session 1: 5 mins introduction and 15 mins pre-AB trip survey; Session 2: 5 mins introduction and 15 mins post-AB trip survey; Session 3: 1-hour post-AB trip zoom interview.

#### Why

You participated in AB 2021-2022 and have recent recollection of the experience.

#### Where

Surveys will be collected electronically during AB meetings. Interviews will be conducted via zoom.

#### Researcher

Walter J. Maldonado, Doctoral Candidate  
Florida International University  
(305) 609-8469  
[wmaldona@fiu.edu](mailto:wmaldona@fiu.edu)



Interested in participating in the interview portion of the study? Please, complete this quick survey:

[go.fiu.edu/ABinterview](https://go.fiu.edu/ABinterview)

## Appendix D: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol and Questions

### Interview Protocol and Questions

**Project:** An exploration of the impact of Alternative Breaks programs on students' behavioral and skill development.

**Interview Time:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Place:** Zoom **Interviewer:** Walter J. Maldonado  
**Interviewee:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Chosen Pseudonym:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### Interview procedure

As part of the research study, I ask you to participate in an interview to investigate your experience with an Alternative Breaks site. This study aims to explore Alternative Breaks' impact on your learning, behavioral, and skill development. During the interview, I will ask you to respond to several open-ended questions. You do not have to answer any or all the questions. The procedure will involve recording and transcribing the interview. Your identity will remain anonymous.

#### Informed consent

Please sign your consent to participate in this interview.

#### Questions

- 1) Tell me when you participated in AB and how long your experience lasted?
- 2) What AB site were you a part of, where did you go, and what social issue you focused on?
- 3) What led you to sign up for AB?
- 4) What did you hope to gain from AB when you decided to join?
- 5) Tell me about how your AB experience went. What happened?

6) Looking back at your overall experience, what did AB offer you? What did you learn?

- a) Fundraisers?
- b) Meetings?
- c) Actual trip?

7) What is your most memorable experience about your AB?

8) Please describe what you learned about yourself or in general because you participated in the AB site?

9) How was your experience different from what you expected?

Probing questions:

- a) What struck you about it?
- b) How was that significant?

10) What did you discover about your own behaviors, attitudes, characteristics because of your AB experience?

Probing questions:

- a) A little back, you talked about X behavior, attitude or characteristic. Would you talk more about X? Tell me how you came to know about it? (e.g., *Would you talk more about **Civic Engagement**. Tell me how you came to know about it?*)
- b) Were you able to **gain, intensify, or change** personal behaviors, attitudes or characteristics by participating in AB activities (meetings, fundraisers, events) before serving the community/site? If so, what behaviors, attitudes or characteristics and how?
- c) Were you able to **gain, intensify, or change** personal behaviors, attitudes or characteristics while serving the community/site? If so which behaviors, attitudes or characteristics and how?

11) What soft and hard skills or talents did you gain through your AB experience?

Probing questions:

- a) A little back, you talked about X skill. Would you talk more about X skill? Tell me how you came to know about it? (e.g., *Tell me how you came to know about **Communication** skills and talking in front of a group?*)

- b) Were you able to use skills during AB activities (meetings, fundraisers, events) before serving the community/site? If so, what skills and how?
  - c) Were you able to use skills while serving the community/site? If so, what skills and how?
- 12) What else do you think you learned from this experience?
- 13) After living these experiences with AB, what goals do you have for your near and far future?

### **Closing**

Thank you for participating in this interview. Thank you for taking the time to talk about your AB experience. Again, let me assure you of the confidentiality of your responses. Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at (305) 609-8469.

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Adopted from Savin-Baden, M., & Howell Major, C. (2013). *Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice*. Routledge.

### **Some Additional, Not Predetermined, Questions:**

- 1) You mentioned having to work hard if you wanted to go in the trip. What did you mean by that?
- 2) You mentioned you had opportunities to bond. Please elaborate how these opportunities occurred and what you learned from having them?
- 3) You mentioned you were shocked to see how children lived in the Hoyo de Puchula and Hoyo de Elias communities.
  - a. Please elaborate on what happened and how it impacted you
  - b. What did you learn about yourself from observing how the children lived in these communities?
- 4) You mentioned going on this trip was life changing. Please, elaborate on how it was life changing and what you learned from that opportunity.
- 5) You kept mentioning reflections. Please, tell me what happened during these reflections?
  - a. What did you learn from participating in these reflections?

- 6) You mentioned it was worth going on your AB trip and working with the community. Why was that worth going?
- 7) You mentioned AB allowed you to learn how to be an active community citizen. Please, elaborate on how AB provided you with that opportunity and what you learned.
- 8) You mentioned AB offered you new perspectives. Please, explain.
- 9) You mentioned AB promoted a focus on the social issue rather than the location you were going to provide service when you applied for the program. Why was that important to you?

## Appendix E: Pre-Alternative Breaks Experience Survey

### Pre-Alternative Breaks Experience Survey

Dear participant,

As a Ph.D. candidate working on a dissertation, I am implementing a study on Alternative Breaks' impact on students. Please take a little time to respond to the questions below. Your answers and comments will be anonymous.

Major(s)

Classification (select one):

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Graduate

Most recently served (or to be served) site / community

Length of service (select one)

Express / weekend

Weeklong

Type of trip (select one)

Local / national

International

Funding (select one)

100% self-paid

Partially self-paid / fundraised

100% fundraised

How many times have you participated in an AB program? (select one)

First time

2-3 times

4 or more times

Race / ethnicity (select one):

American Indian / Alaska Native

Asian

Black / African American

Hispanic / Latino

Pacific Islander

White

Two or More Races

Sex / Gender (select one)

Male

Female

Non-binary / third gender

Prefer not to say

For each of the following statements, please check the box that indicates your level of agreement to it.

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
I have an interest in participating in another AB site project in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have an interest in participating in another non-AB service-learning/community-based opportunity in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have an interest in holding an AB leadership position.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of ethical/moral responsibility.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of social responsibility or commitment to public/human service.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a positive attitude toward community involvement/citizenship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have an understanding of social/cultural differences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of appreciation for the things I have.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a desire to help or care for others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have an understanding of the problems or challenges other people or groups face in society.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of responsibility to serve my community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe I can make a difference in my community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of self-confidence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of sensitivity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am open-minded.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I recognize my own prejudices and biases.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to listen to others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I have the ability to take the initiative or be a self-starter.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to persist.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to manage stress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to trust others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of sensitivity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to delegate work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to mentor others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to communicate with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to think critically.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to be creative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to collaborate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to solve problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to make decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to work in teams.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to manage time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to lead others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to set goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to be social.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to adapt to different situations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to network with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to manage conflict.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## Appendix F: Post-Alternative Breaks Experience Survey

### Post-Alternative Breaks Experience Survey

Dear participant,

As a Ph.D. candidate working on a dissertation, I am implementing a study on Alternative Breaks' impact on students. Please take a little time to respond to the questions below. Your answers and comments will be anonymous.

Major(s)

Classification (select one):

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Graduate

Most recently served (or to be served) site / community

Length of service (select one)

Express / weekend

Weeklong

Type of trip (select one)

Local / national

International

Funding (select one)

100% self-paid

Partially self-paid / fundraised

100% fundraised

How many times have you participated in an AB program? (select one)

First time

2-3 times

4 or more times

Race / ethnicity (select one):

American Indian / Alaska Native

Asian

Black / African American

Hispanic / Latino

Pacific Islander

White

Two or More Races

Sex / Gender (select one)

Male

Female

Non-binary / third gender

Prefer not to say

For each of the following statements, please check the box that indicates your level of agreement to it.

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
I have an interest in participating in another AB site project in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have an interest in participating in another non-AB service-learning/community-based opportunity in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have an interest in holding an AB leadership position.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of ethical/moral responsibility.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of social responsibility or commitment to public/human service.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a positive attitude toward community involvement/citizenship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have an understanding of social/cultural differences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of appreciation for the things I have.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a desire to help or care for others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have an understanding of the problems or challenges other people or groups face in society.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of responsibility to serve my community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe I can make a difference in my community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of self-confidence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of sensitivity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am open-minded.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I recognize my own prejudices and biases.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to listen to others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I have the ability to take the initiative or be a self-starter.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to persist.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to manage stress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to trust others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of sensitivity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to delegate work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to mentor others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to communicate with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to think critically.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to be creative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to collaborate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to solve problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to make decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to work in teams.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to manage time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to lead others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to set goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to be social.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to adapt to different situations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to network with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to manage conflict.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## Appendix G: Pre-Post-Alternative Breaks Experience Survey

### Pre-Post-Alternative Breaks Experience Survey

Dear participant,

As a Ph.D. candidate working on a dissertation, I am implementing a study on Alternative Breaks' impact on students. Please take a little time to respond to the questions below. Your answers and comments will be anonymous.

Major(s)

Classification (select one):

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Graduate

Most recently served (or to be served) site / community

Length of service (select one)

Express / weekend

Weeklong

Type of trip (select one)

Local / national

International

Funding (select one)

100% self-paid

Partially self-paid / fundraised

100% fundraised

How many times have you participated in an AB program? (select one)

First time

2-3 times

4 or more times

Race / ethnicity (select one):

American Indian / Alaska Native

Asian

Black / African American

Hispanic / Latino

Pacific Islander

White

Two or More Races

Sex / Gender (select one)

Male

Female

Non-binary / third gender

Prefer not to say

For each of the following statements, please check the box that indicates your level of agreement to it.

Before participating in my AB experience:

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
I had an interest in participating in another AB site project in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had an interest in participating in another non-AB service-learning/community-based opportunity in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had an interest in holding an AB leadership position.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a sense of ethical/moral responsibility.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a sense of social responsibility or commitment to public/human service.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a positive attitude toward community involvement/citizenship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had an understanding of social/cultural differences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a sense of appreciation for the things I have.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a desire to help or care for others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had an understanding of the problems or challenges other people or groups face in society.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a sense of responsibility to serve my community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believed I could make a difference in my community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a sense of self-confidence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a sense of sensitivity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I was open-minded.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I recognized my own prejudices and biases.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had the ability to listen to others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had the ability to take the initiative or be a self-starter.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had the ability to persist.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had the ability to manage stress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had the ability to trust others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had a sense of sensitivity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had the ability to delegate work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had the ability to mentor others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I knew how to communicate with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I knew how to think critically.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I knew how to be creative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I knew how to collaborate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I knew how to solve problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I knew how to make decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I knew how to work in teams.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I knew how to manage time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I knew how to lead others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I knew how to set goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I knew how to be social.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I knew how to adapt to different situations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I knew how to network with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I knew how to manage conflict.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For each of the following statements, please check the box that indicates your level of agreement to it.

After participating in my AB experience:

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
I have an interest in participating in another AB site project in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have an interest in participating in another non-AB service-learning/community-based opportunity in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have an interest in holding an AB leadership position.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of ethical/moral responsibility.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of social responsibility or commitment to public/human service.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a positive attitude toward community involvement/citizenship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have an understanding of social/cultural differences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of appreciation for the things I have.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a desire to help or care for others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have an understanding of the problems or challenges other people or groups face in society.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of responsibility to serve my community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe I can make a difference in my community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of self-confidence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of sensitivity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I am open-minded.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I recognize my own prejudices and biases.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to listen to others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to take the initiative or be a self-starter.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to persist.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to manage stress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to trust others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a sense of sensitivity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to delegate work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the ability to mentor others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to communicate with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to think critically.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to be creative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to collaborate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to solve problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to make decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to work in teams.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to manage time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to lead others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to set goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to be social.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to adapt to different situations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to network with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to manage conflict.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Appendix H: Adult Consent to Participate in a Research Study Form



### ADULT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

*An Exploration of the Impact of Alternative Breaks Programs on Students' Behavioral and Skill Development*

#### SUMMARY INFORMATION

We need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. This form tells you about a research study called An Exploration of the Impact of Alternative Breaks Programs on Students' Behavioral and Skill Development. The person who conducts this research study is Walter J. Maldonado. This person is called the Principal Investigator.

Things you should know about this study:

- **Purpose:** The purpose of this case study is to explore how Alternative Breaks programs may impact your behavioral and skill development.
- **Procedures:** If you choose to participate, you will be asked complete a survey on two occasions. The first survey will be administered to you prior to your participation in an Alternative Breaks opportunity. The second survey will be administered to you after your participation in an Alternative Breaks opportunity. If you also choose to participate in an interview, you will be asked to meet face-to-face with the researcher.
- **Duration:** This will take about 40 minutes to complete 2 surveys (20 minutes per each survey occasion) and/or 60 minutes to participate in an interview.
- **Risks:** The study is of no, or minimal, physical, psychological, societal, or economical risks to you.
- **Benefits:** There will be no benefits to you by taking part of this research study.
- **Alternatives:** There are no known alternatives available to you other than not taking part in this study.
- **Participation:** Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please carefully read the entire document before agreeing to participate.

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this case study is to explore how Alternative Breaks programs may impact your behavioral and skill development.

## **NUMBER OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS**

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of up to 8 people in this research study if participating in an interview and up to 75 people in the pre- and post-AB survey sessions.

## **DURATION OF THE STUDY**

Your participation will involve 40 minutes if participating in the two pre- and post-AB survey sessions and up to 60 minutes if participating in an interview.

## **PROCEDURES**

If you agree to be in the study, we will ask you to do the following things:

### **1. *Pre- and Post-survey Sessions***

You will be asked to complete a survey on two different occasions. The first survey will be administered to you prior to your participation in an Alternative Breaks opportunity. The second survey will be administered to you after your participation in an Alternative Breaks opportunity. On each occasion, I will brief you on the purpose of the study and the confidentiality that is promised.

### **2. *Interview Session***

Should you participate in an interview, you will be asked to meet with me, the researcher in a 1-hour meeting. For your convenience, the meeting will either take place via Zoom. During the 1-hour meeting, I will brief you on the purpose of the study and the confidentiality that is promised. I will also ask you questions, take notes, and record our conversations.

## **RISKS AND/OR DISCOMFORTS**

The study is of no, or minimal, physical, psychological, societal, or economical risks to you.

## **BENEFITS**

There will be no benefits to you by taking part of this research study.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

There are no known alternatives available to you other than not taking part in this study. Any significant new findings developed during the research which may relate to your willingness to continue participation will be provided to you. Should you choose to participate in an interview, you will also be asked to complete a pre- and post-AB survey on different occasions. Should you choose not to participate in an interview, you will only be asked to complete a pre- and post-AB survey on different occasions. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The records of this study will be kept private and will be protected to the fullest extent provided by law. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. However, your records may be inspected by authorized University or other agents who will also keep the information confidential.

## **USE OF YOUR INFORMATION**

We will do our best to keep your records private and confidential. Your information collected as part of the research will not be used or distributed for future research studies even if identifiers are removed.

## **COMPENSATION & COSTS**

We will not pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study. There are no costs to you for participating in this study.

## **RIGHT TO DECLINE OR WITHDRAW**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to participate in the study or withdraw your consent at any time during the study. You will not lose any benefits if you decide not to participate or if you quit the study early. The investigator reserves the right to remove you without your consent at such time that he feels it is in the best interest.

## **RESEARCHER CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have any questions about the purpose, procedures, or any other issues relating to this research study you may contact Walter J. Maldonado at [wmaldona@fiu.edu](mailto:wmaldona@fiu.edu) or (305) 609-8469.

## **IRB CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you would like to speak with someone about your rights of being a subject in this research study or about ethical issues with this research study, you may contact the FIU Office of Research Integrity by phone at 305-348-2494 or by email at [ori@fiu.edu](mailto:ori@fiu.edu).

## **PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT**

I have read the information in this consent form and agree to participate in this study. I have had a chance to ask any questions I have about this study, and they have been answered for me. I understand that I will be given a copy of this form for my records.

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

---

Printed Name of Participant

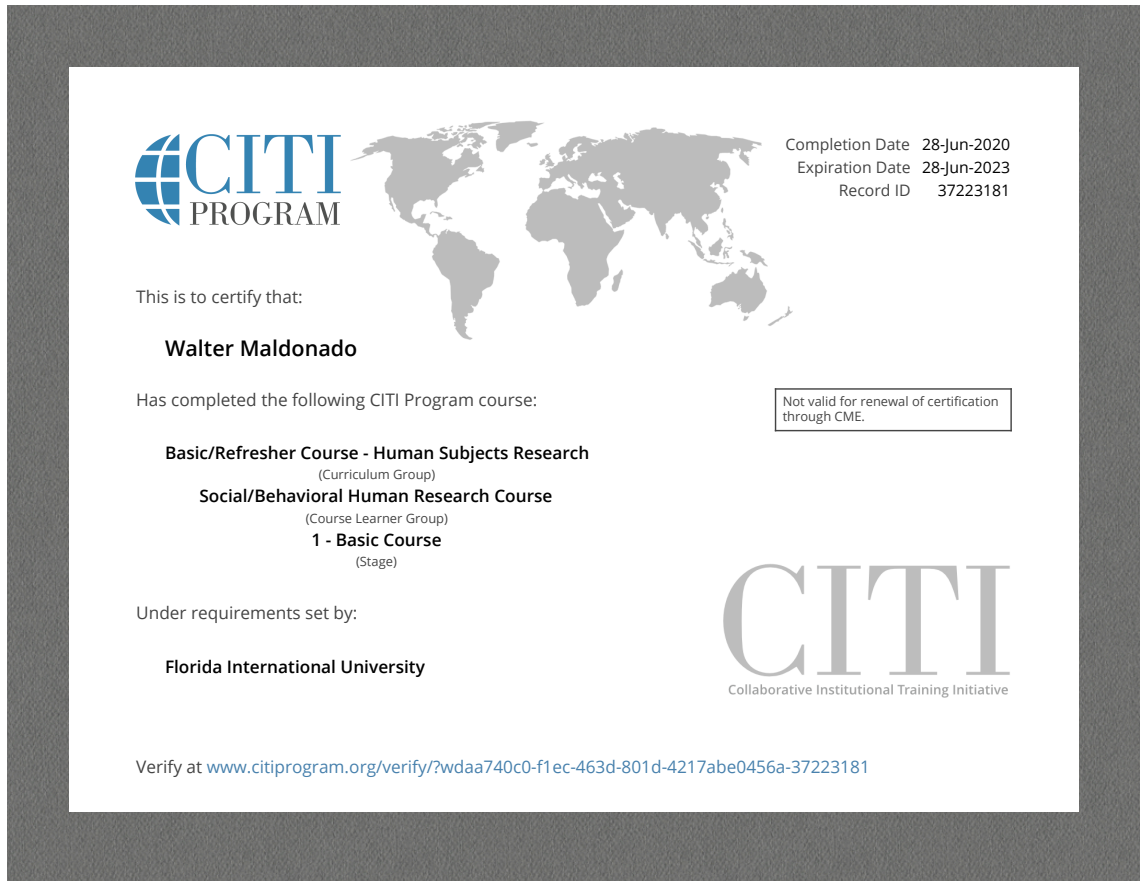
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Signature of Person Obtaining Consent


---

Date

**Appendix I: CITI Program Basic/Refresher Course – Human Subject Research Certificate**



## Appendix J: CITI Program Responsible Conduct of Research Certificate

		Completion Date 23-Jul-2021 Expiration Date N/A Record ID 43690106
This is to certify that:		
<b>Walter Maldonado</b>		
Has completed the following CITI Program course:		Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.
<b>Responsible Conduct of Research</b> (Curriculum Group)		
<b>Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research Course</b> (Course Learner Group)		
<b>1 - RCR</b> (Stage)		
Under requirements set by:		
<b>Florida International University</b>		
		
Verify at <a href="http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w2606972f-50a2-40cd-94ce-1c68bb609815-43690106">www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w2606972f-50a2-40cd-94ce-1c68bb609815-43690106</a>		


## Appendix K: IRB Approval Letter



Office of Research Integrity  
Research Compliance, MARC 414

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** Dr. Douglas Robertson  
**CC:** Walter Maldonado

**From:** Maria Melendez-Vargas, MIBA, IRB Coordinator 

**Date:** November 22, 2021

**Protocol Title:** "An Exploration of the Impact of Alternative Breaks Programs on Students' Character and Skill development."

---

The Florida International University Office of Research Integrity has reviewed your research study for the use of human subjects and deemed it Exempt via the **Exempt Review** process.

**IRB Protocol Exemption #:** IRB-21-0493      **IRB Exemption Date:** 11/22/21  
**TOPAZ Reference #:** 110999

As a requirement of IRB Exemption you are required to:

- 1) Submit an IRB Exempt Amendment Form for all proposed additions or changes in the procedures involving human subjects. All additions and changes must be reviewed and approved prior to implementation.
- 2) Promptly submit an IRB Exempt Event Report Form for every serious or unusual or unanticipated adverse event, problems with the rights or welfare of the human subjects, and/or deviations from the approved protocol.
- 3) Submit an IRB Exempt Project Completion Report Form when the study is finished or discontinued.

**Special Conditions:** N/A

For further information, you may visit the IRB website at <http://research.fiu.edu/irb>.

MMV/em

## Appendix L: Pre-AB Experience Surveyed Participant Demographics

Figure 1. Pre-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Gender

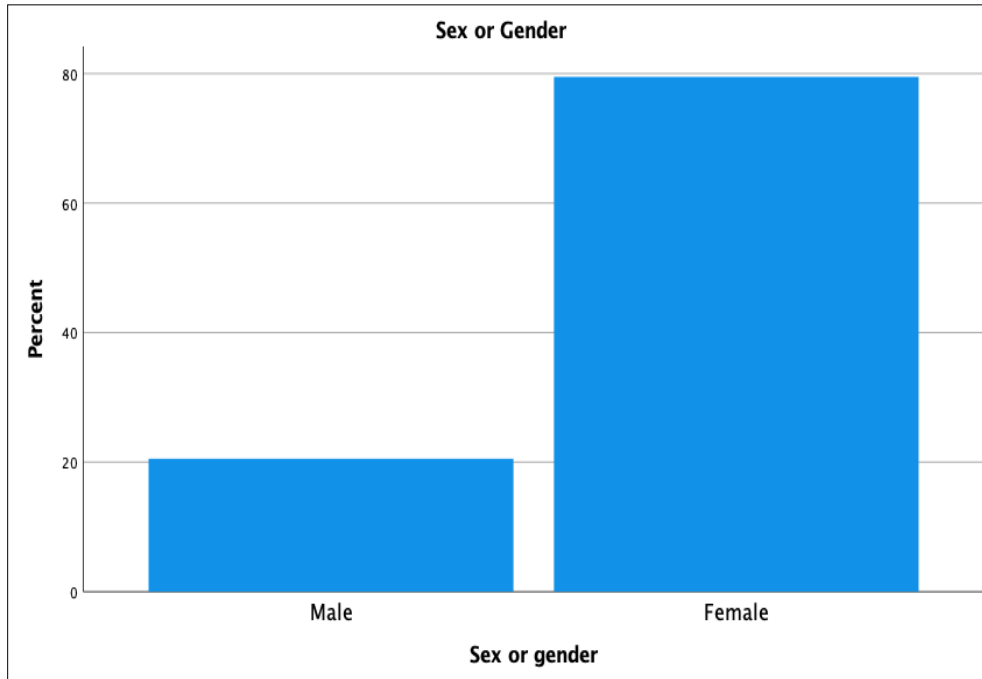


Figure 2. Pre-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Race or Ethnicity

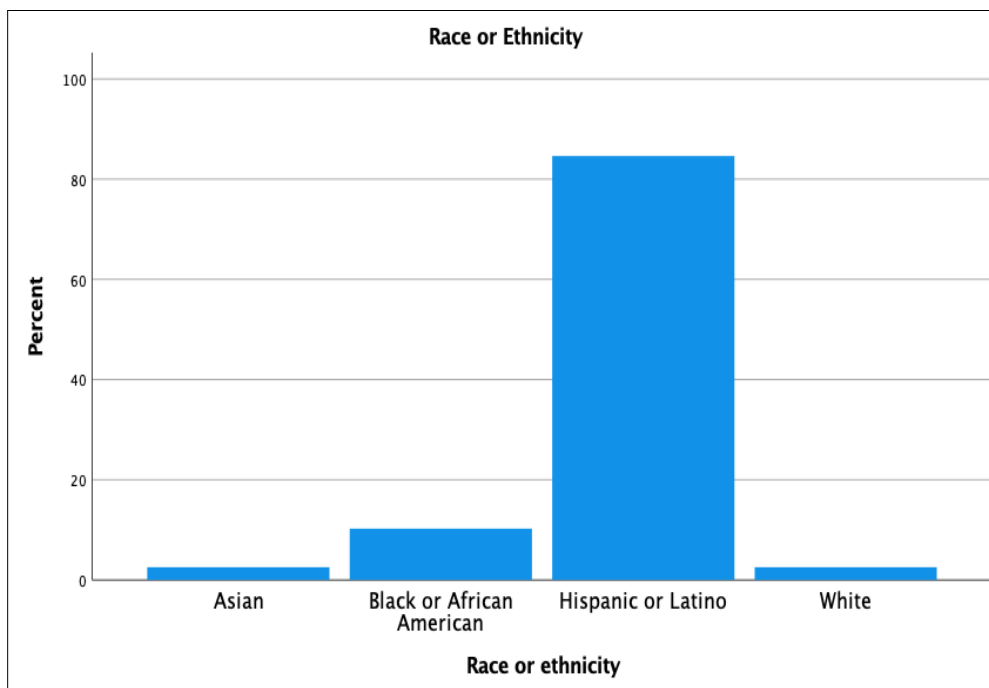


Figure 3. Pre-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Classification

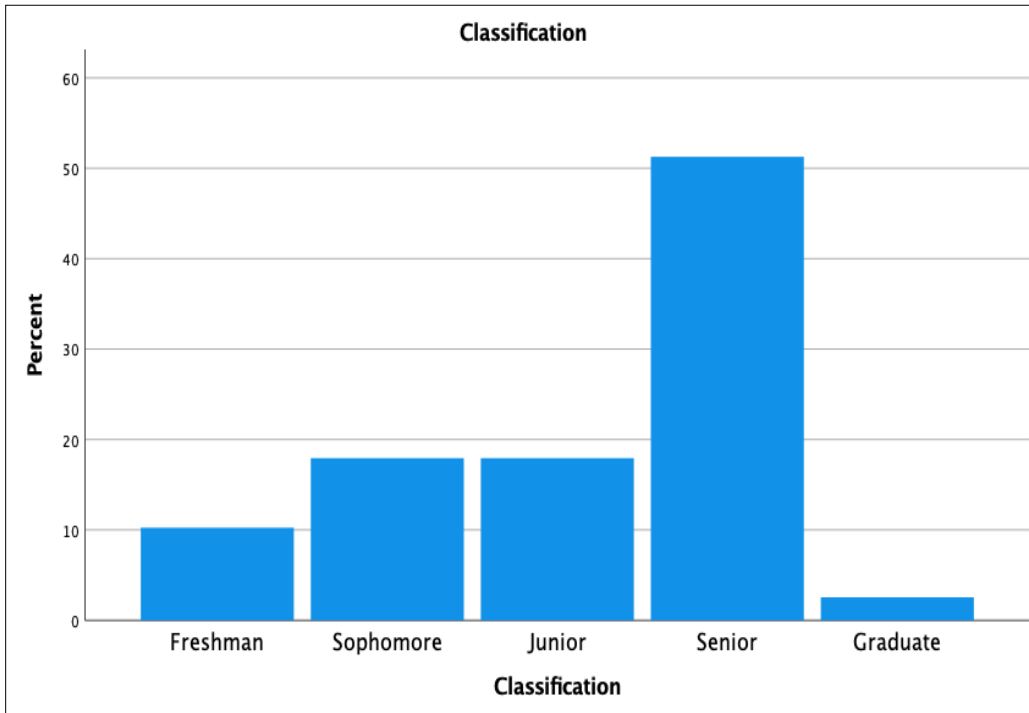


Figure 4. Pre-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Major

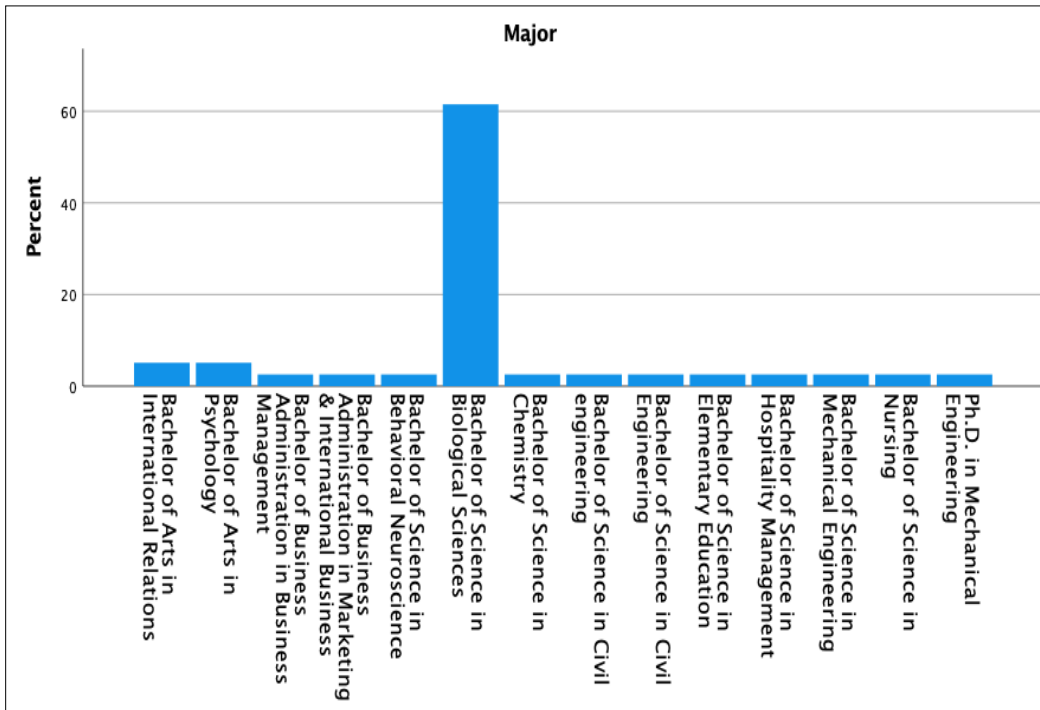


Figure 5. Pre-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Service Length

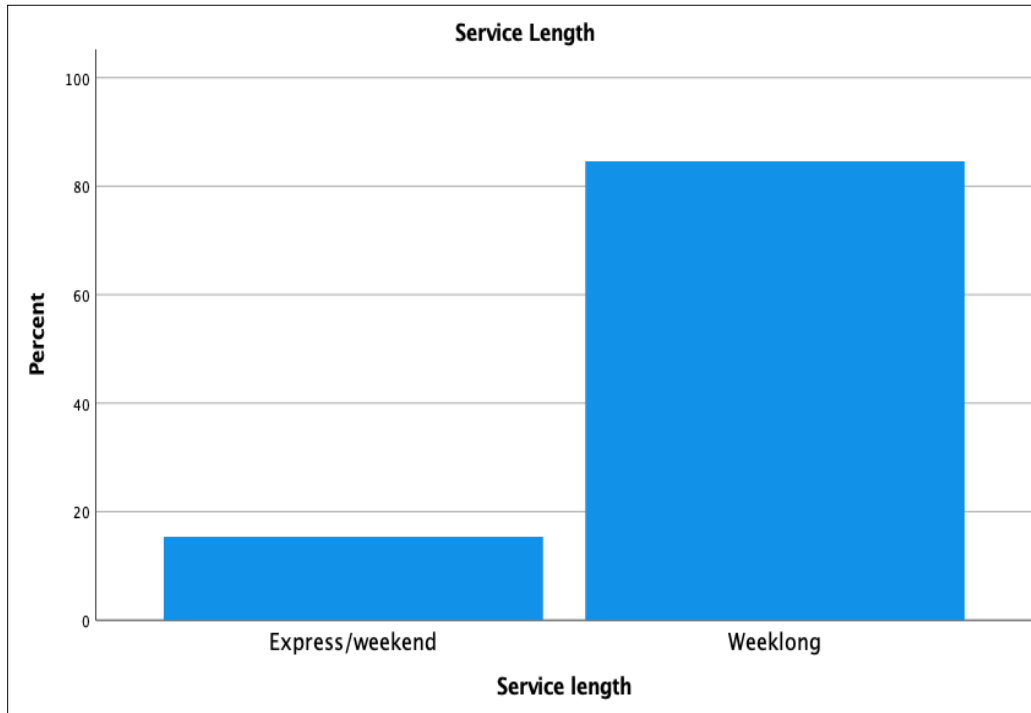


Figure 6. Pre-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Trip Type

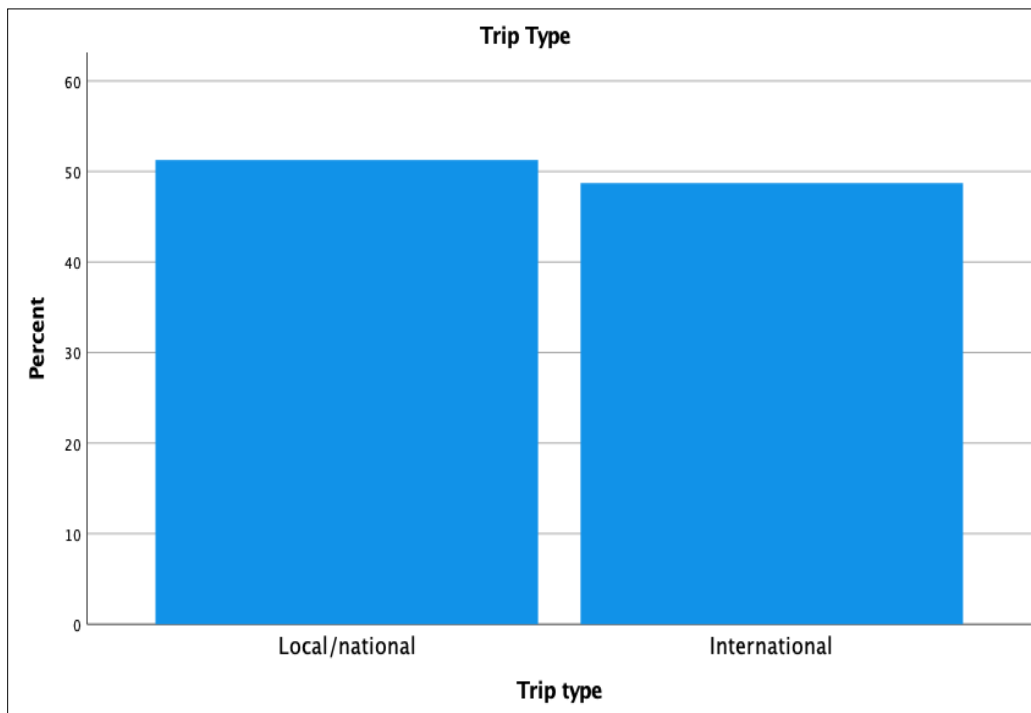


Figure 7. Pre-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Break Type

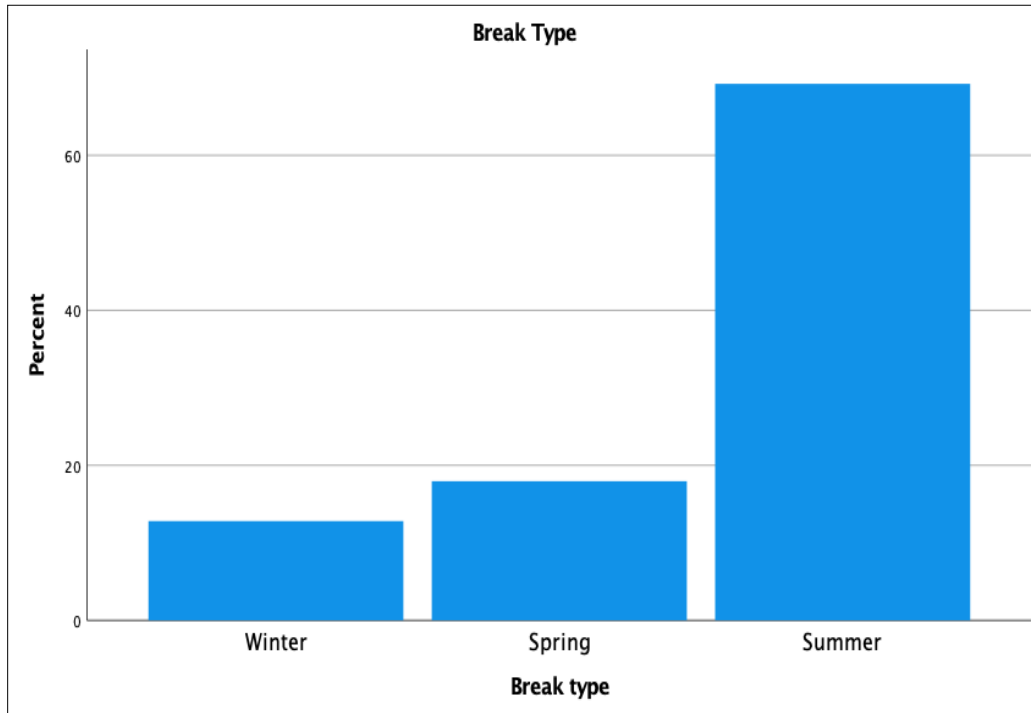


Figure 8. Pre-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Program Recurrence

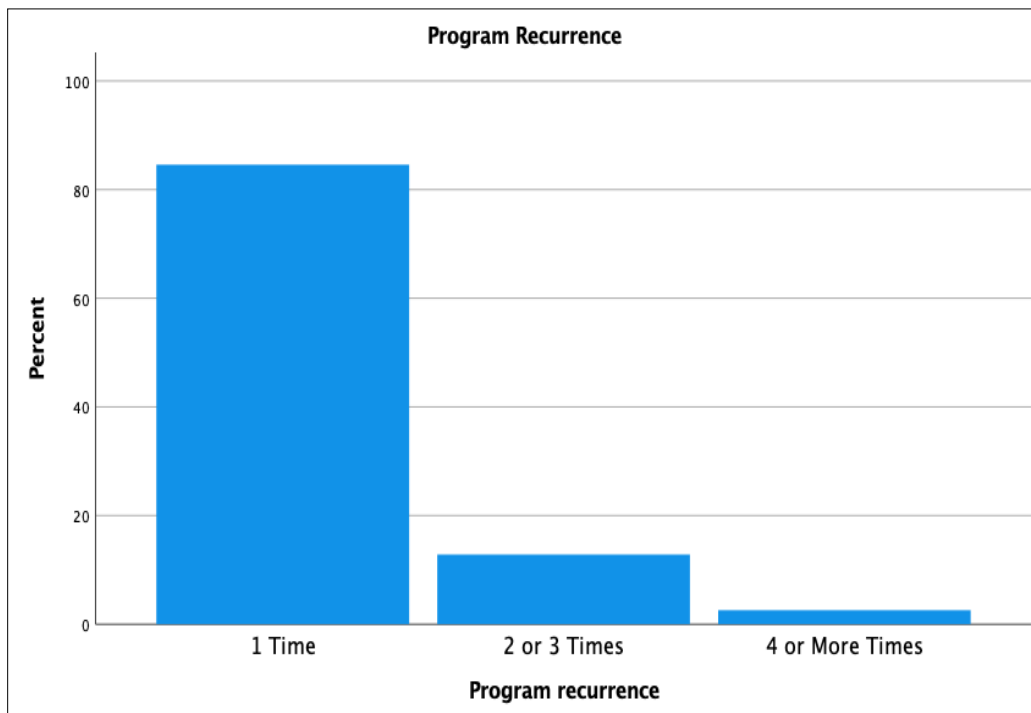


Figure 9. Pre-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Funding

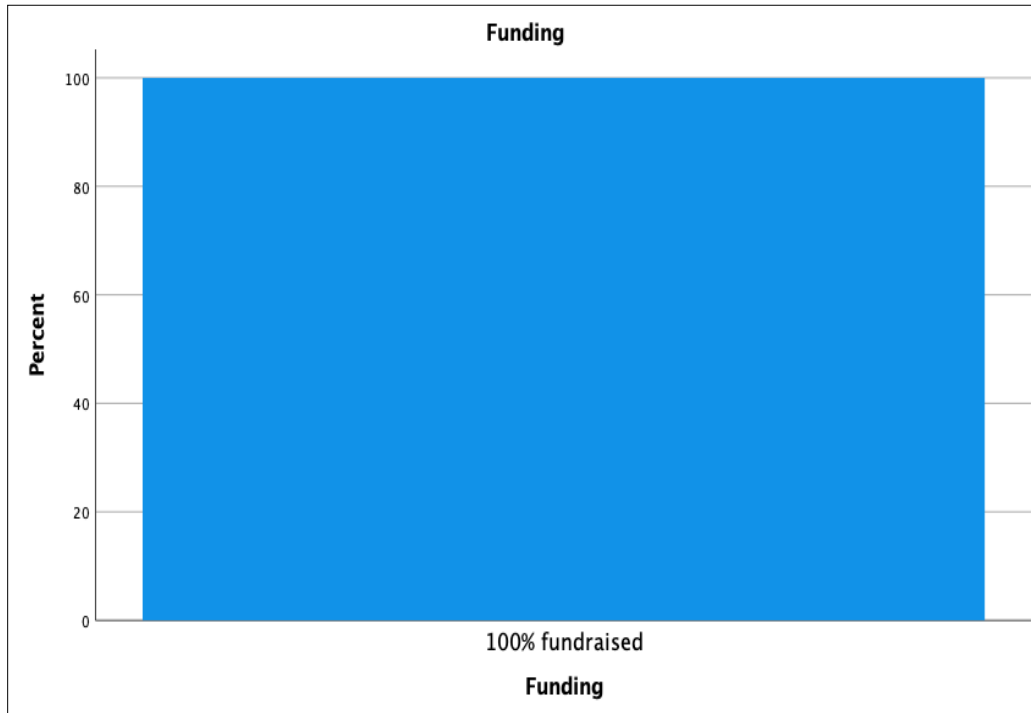
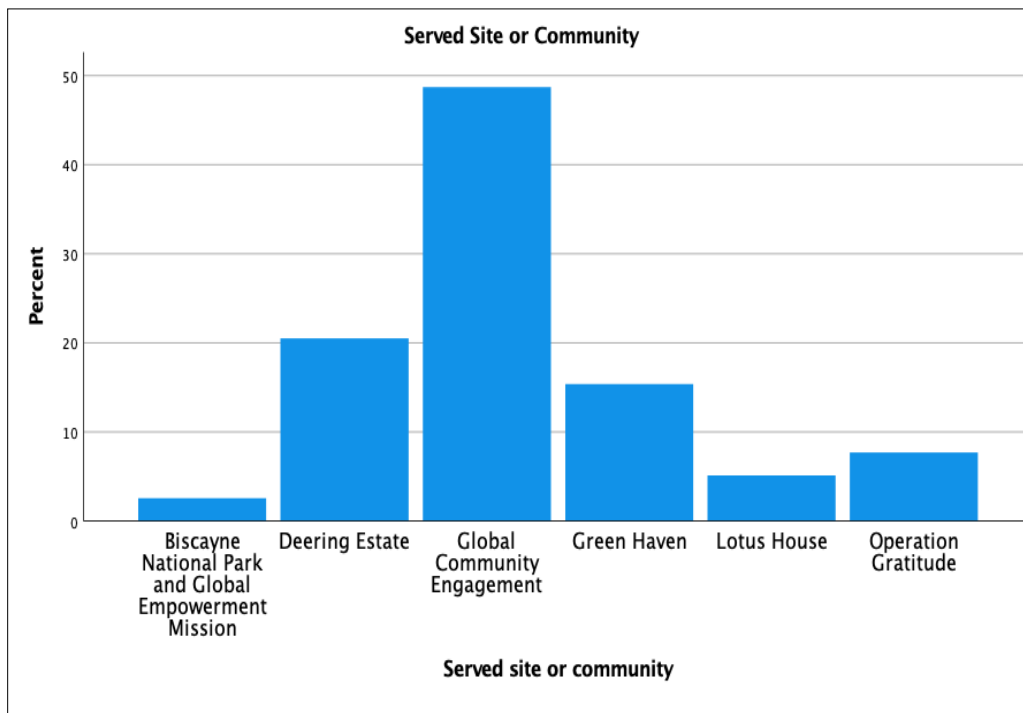


Figure 10. Pre-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Served Site or Community



## Appendix M: Post-AB Experience Surveyed Participant Demographics

Figure 11. Post-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Gender

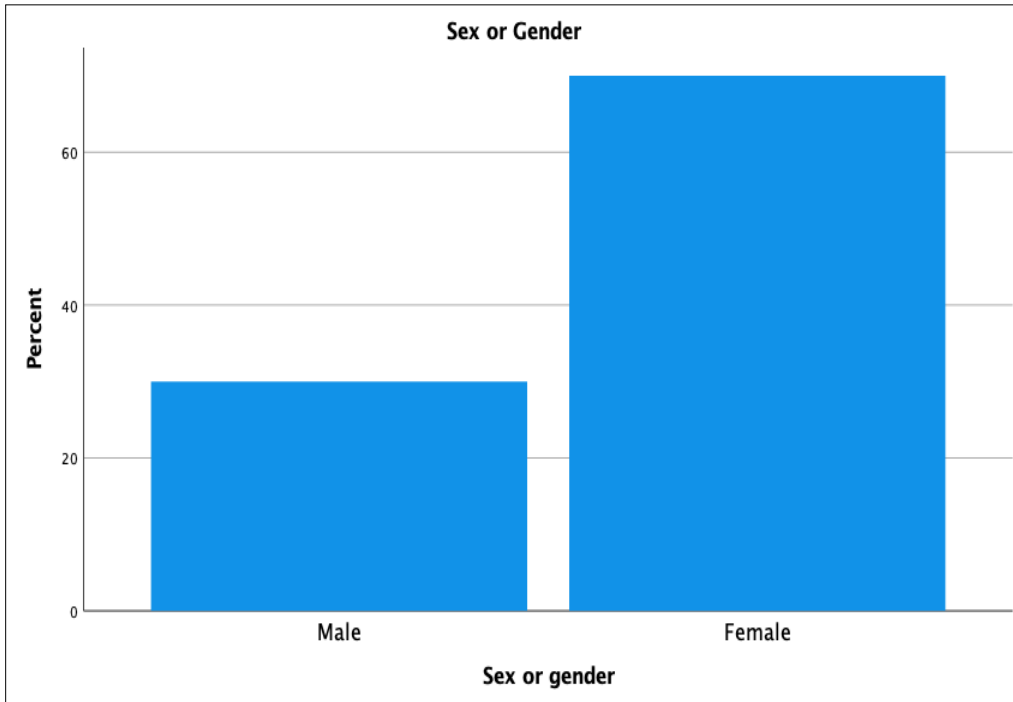


Figure 12. Post-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Race or Ethnicity

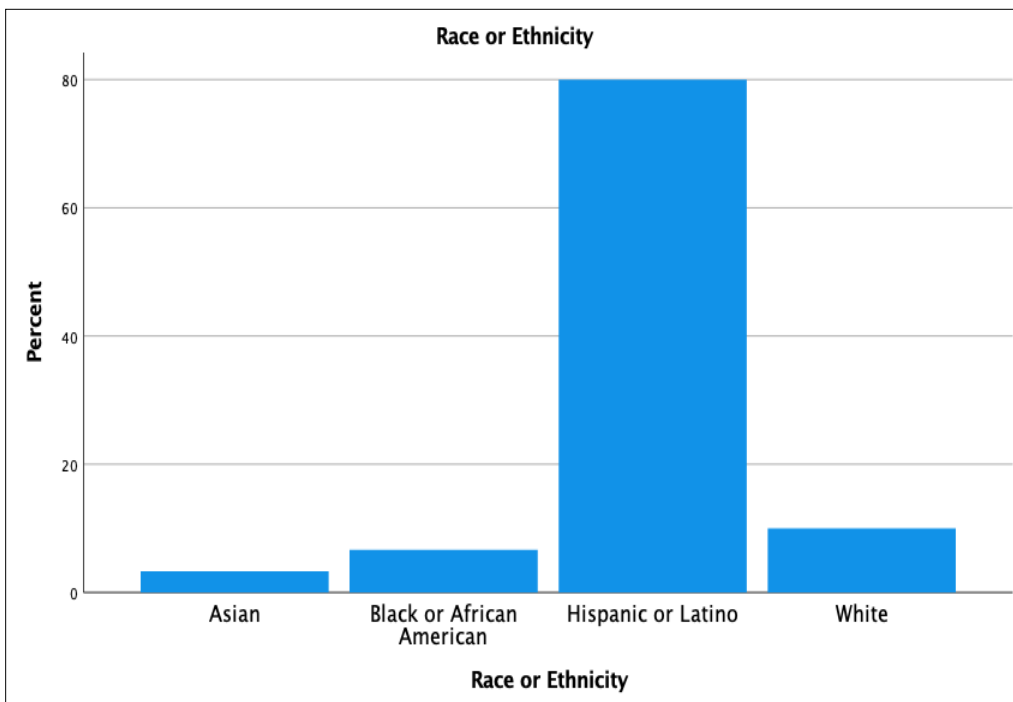


Figure 13. Post-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Classification

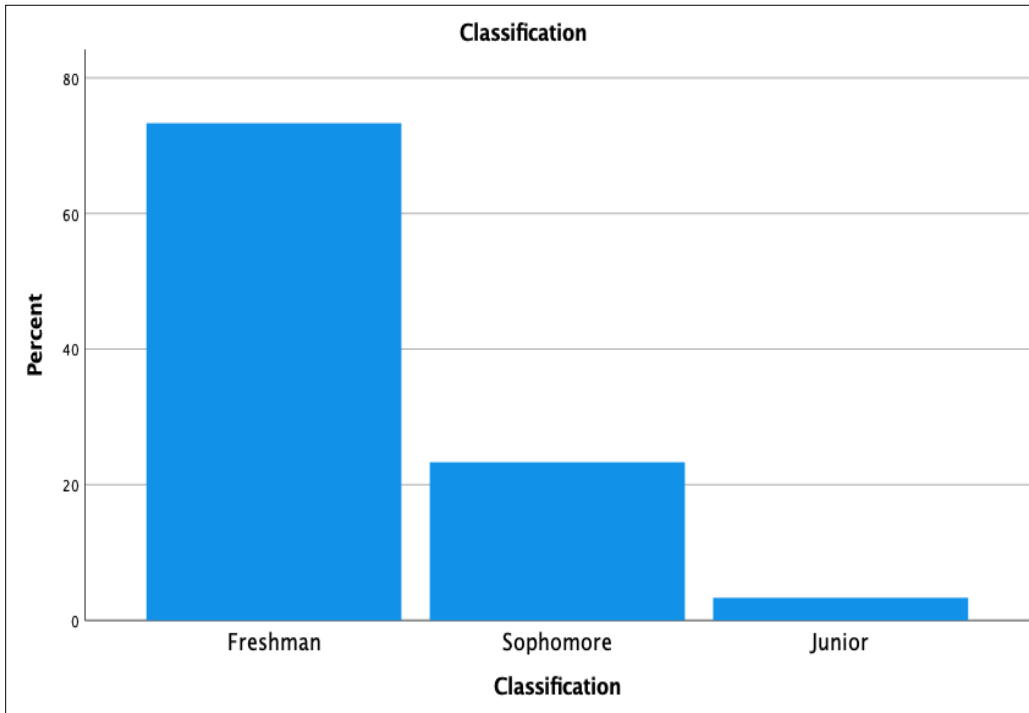


Figure 14. Post-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Major

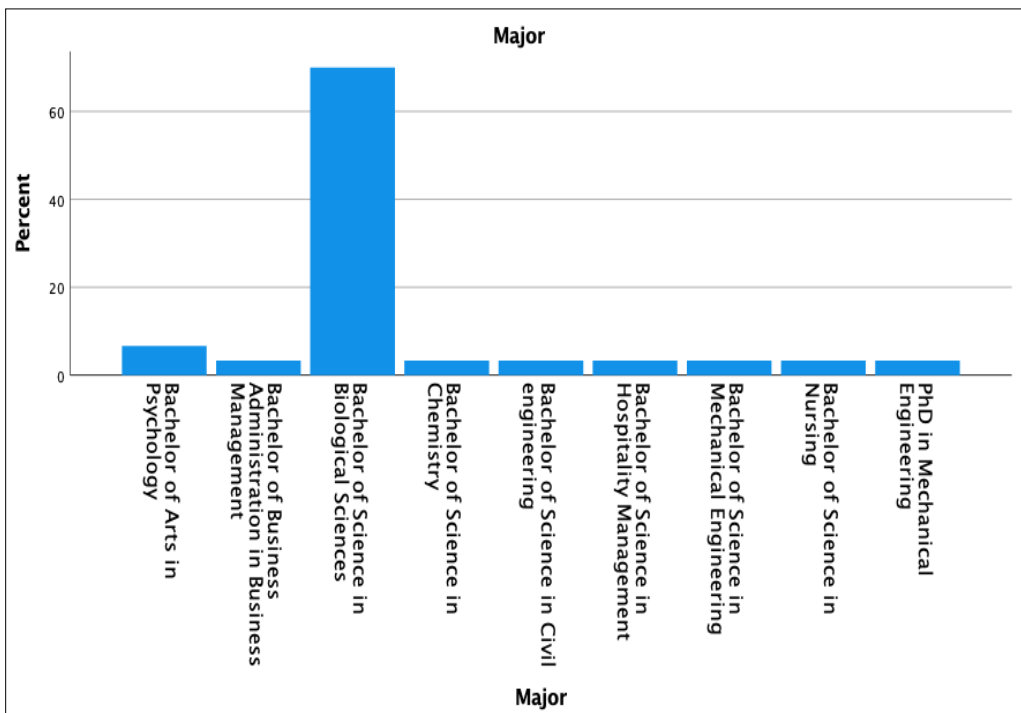


Figure 15. Post-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Service Length

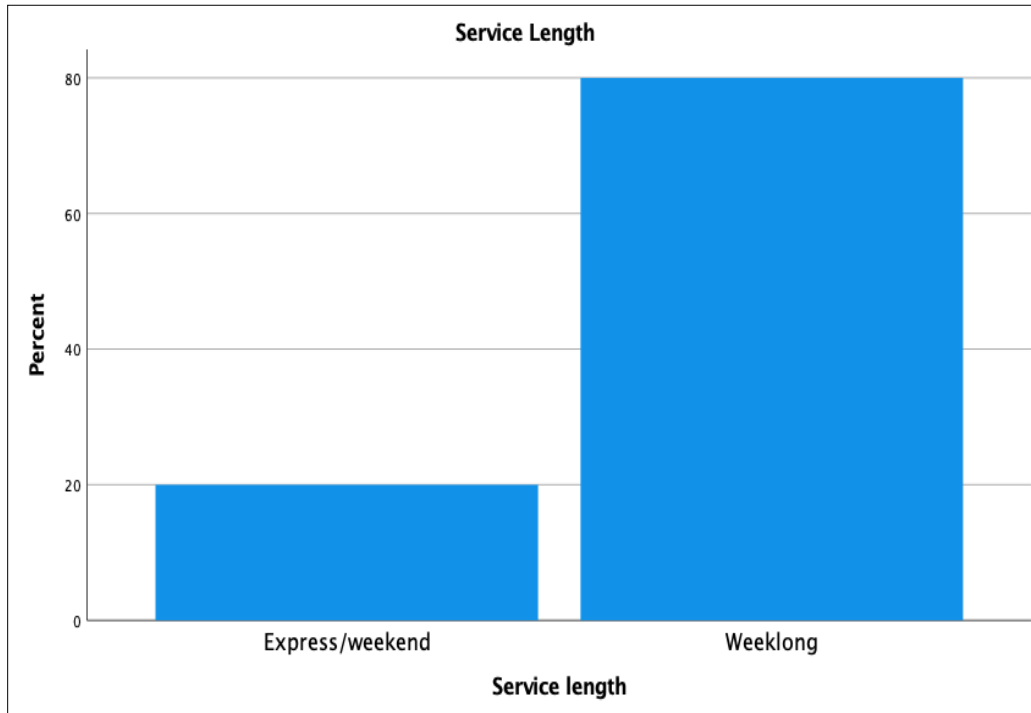


Figure 16. Post-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Trip Type

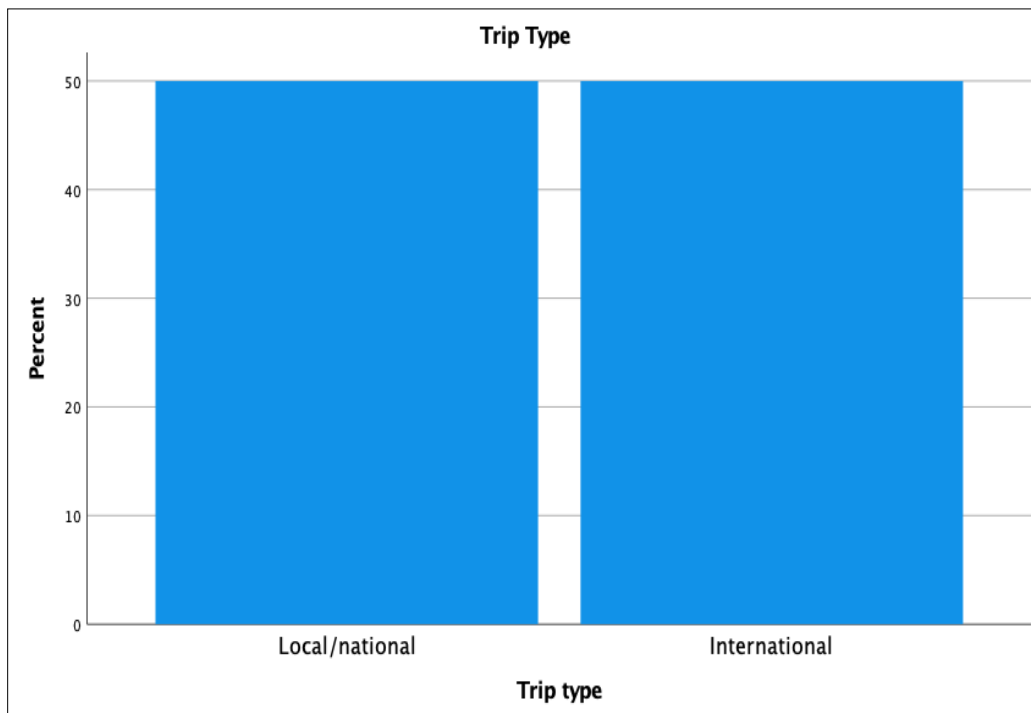


Figure 17. Post-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Break Type

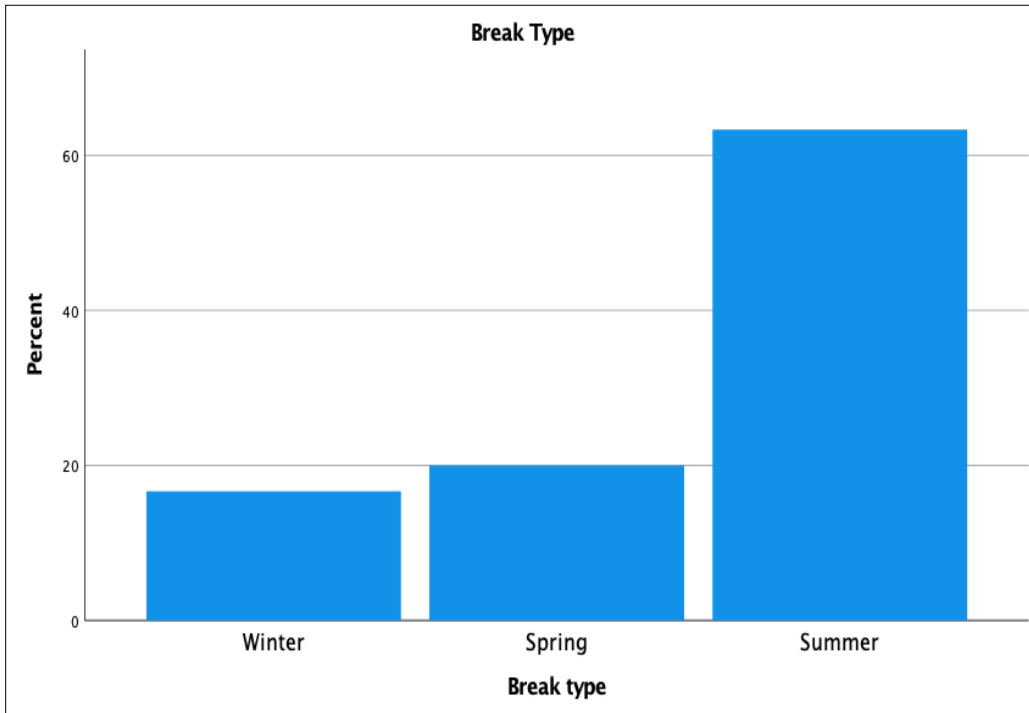


Figure 18. Post-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Program Recurrence

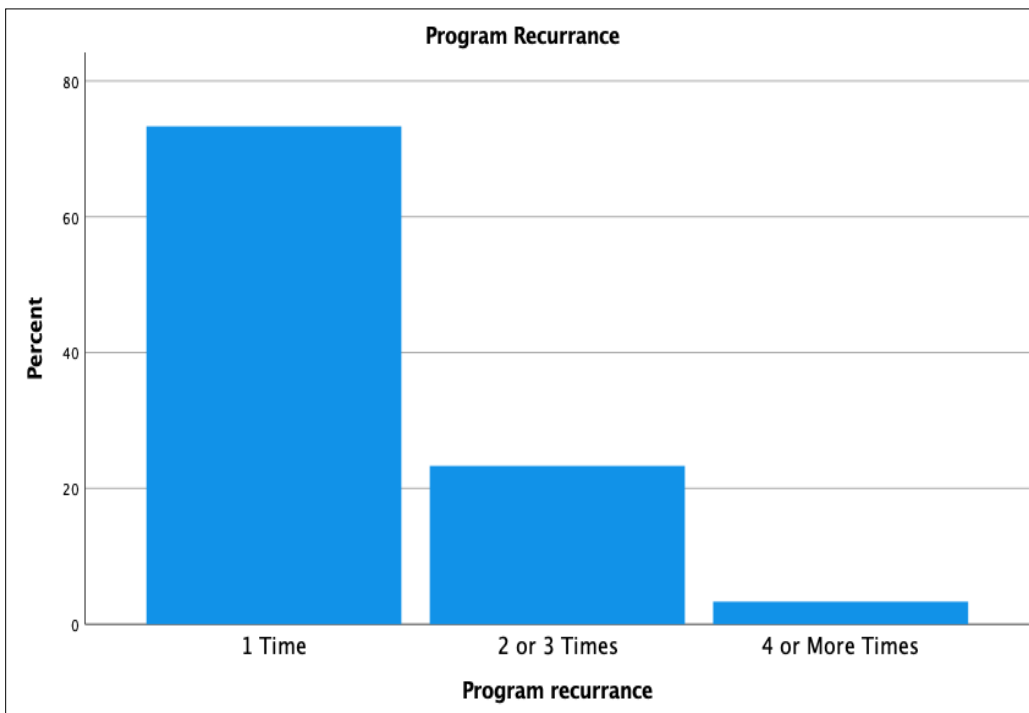


Figure 19. Post-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Funding

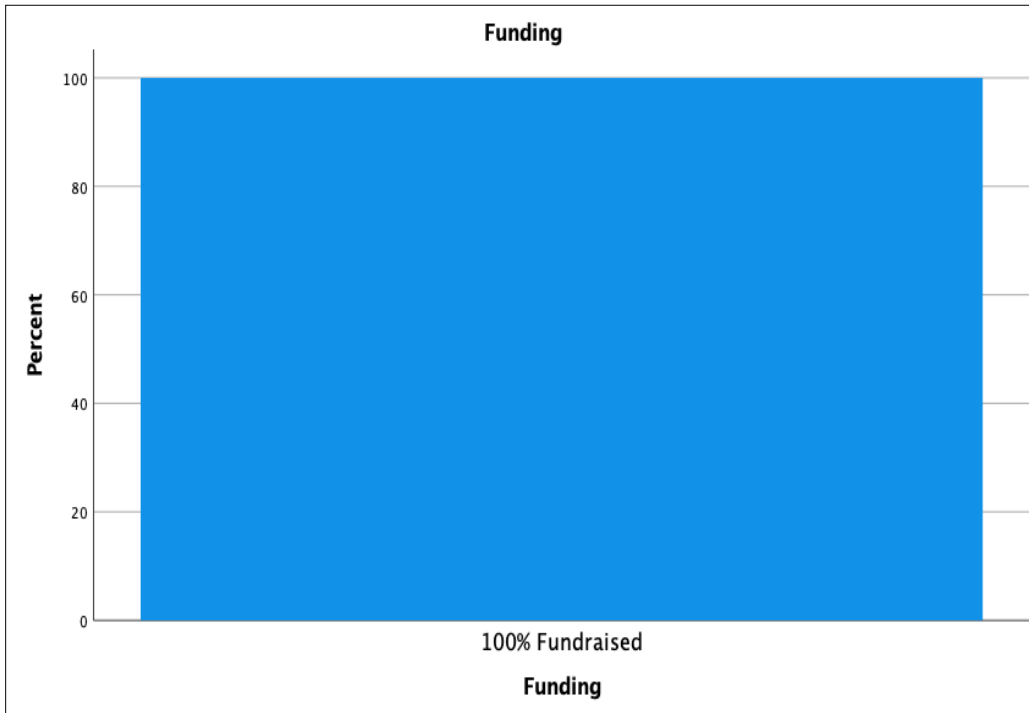
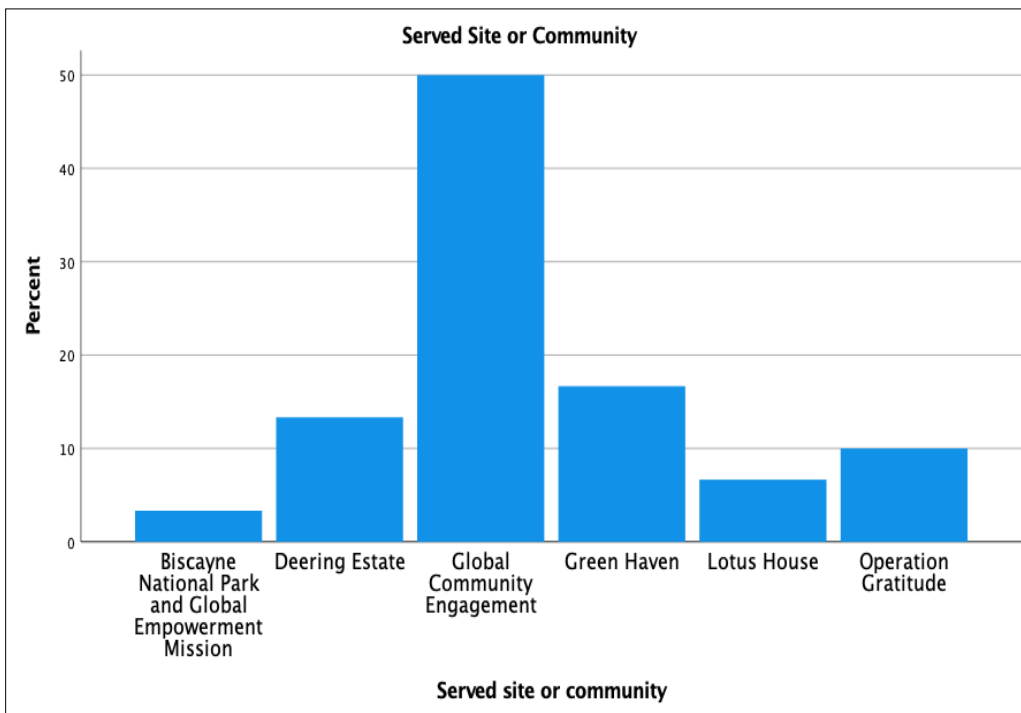


Figure 20. Post-AB Experience Surveyed Participants by Served Site or Community



**Appendix N: Pre- and Post-AB Experience Survey Participant Perceptions on Behaviors**

Level of Agreement	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0
	SD (%)	D (%)	NAD (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
<b>Helping Others</b>					
I have an interest in participating in another AB site project in the future.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	5.1	33.3	61.5
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	6.7	26.7	66.7
I have an interest in participating in another non-AB service-learning/community-based opportunity in the future.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	7.7	25.6	66.7
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	16.7	16.7	66.7
I have an interest in holding an AB leadership position.					
Pre-AB experience	5.1	7.7	33.3	17.9	35.9
Post-AB experience	3.3	16.7	16.7	20.0	43.3
I have a desire to help or care for others.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	2.6	13.2	84.2
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	6.7	90.0
<b>Active Citizenship and Advocacy</b>					
I have a sense of ethical/moral responsibility.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	5.3	26.3	68.4
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	6.7	90.0
I have a sense of social responsibility or commitment to public/human service.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	5.1	30.8	64.1
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	10.0	86.7
I have a positive attitude toward community involvement/citizenship.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	2.6	23.1	74.4
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	6.7	90.0
I have an understanding of the problems or challenges other people or groups face in society.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	7.9	18.4	73.7
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	16.7	80.0
I have a sense of responsibility to serve my community.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	5.3	31.6	63.2
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	6.7	13.3	80.0

I believe I can make a difference in my community.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	8.1	29.7	62.2
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	16.7	80.0
Appreciation and Sense of Belonging					
I have a sense of appreciation for the things I have.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	2.6	18.4	78.9
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	10.0	86.7
I have a sense of self-confidence.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	2.6	7.7	38.5	51.3
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	10.0	16.7	73.3
Cultural Sensitivity and Respect					
I have an understanding of social/cultural differences.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	2.6	28.2	69.2
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	13.3	83.3
I have a sense of sensitivity.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	2.6	43.6	53.8
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	16.7	80.0
I am open-minded.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	2.6	28.2	69.2
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	90.0
I recognize my own prejudices and biases.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	5.1	35.9	59.0
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	23.3	73.3

*Note: SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, NAD=Neither Agree nor Disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree*

*Pre-AB experience survey participant responses = 39; Post-AB experience survey participant responses = 30*

## Appendix O: Pre- and Post-AB Experience Survey Participant Perceptions on Skills

Level of Agreement	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0
	SD (%)	D (%)	NAD (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
<b>People Skills</b>					
I have the ability to trust others.					
Pre-AB experience	5.1	2.6	28.2	30.8	33.3
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	10.0	20.0	70.0
I know how to collaborate.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	2.6	28.2	69.2
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	6.7	10.0	83.3
I know how to work in teams.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	2.6	28.2	69.2
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	13.3	83.3
I know how to be social.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	12.8	30.8	56.4
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	23.3	73.3
I know how to network with others.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	2.6	15.4	35.9	46.2
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	10.0	16.7	73.3
<b>Active Listening and Communication Skills</b>					
I have the ability to listen to others.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	2.6	26.3	71.1
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	16.7	80.0
I know how to communicate with others.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	2.6	38.5	59.0
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	13.3	83.3
<b>Adaptability Skills</b>					
I have the ability to manage stress.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	10.3	17.9	23.1	48.7
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	10.0	23.3	66.7
I know how to manage time.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	5.1	10.3	43.6	41.0
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	6.7	23.3	70.0
I know how to adapt to different situations.					

Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	2.6	35.9	61.5
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	13.3	83.3
<b>Self-efficacy Skills</b>					
I have the ability to take the initiative or be self-started.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	2.6	12.8	28.2	56.4
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	20.0	76.7
I have the ability to persist.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	2.6	12.8	28.2	56.4
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	20.0	76.7
I know how to make decisions.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	2.6	35.9	61.5
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	20.0	76.7
I know how to set goals.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	2.6	2.6	33.3	61.5
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	16.7	80.0
<b>Leadership Skills</b>					
I have the ability to delegate work.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	15.4	38.5	46.2
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	6.7	16.7	76.7
I have the ability to mentor others.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	2.6	7.7	38.5	51.3
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	6.7	16.7	76.7
I know how to lead others.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	21.1	28.9	50.0
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	10.0	20.0	70.0
<b>Logistics and Problem-solving Skills</b>					
I know how to think critically.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	2.6	33.3	64.1
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	20.0	76.7
I know how to be creative.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	2.6	12.8	23.1	61.5
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	6.7	26.7	66.7
I know how to solve problems.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	2.6	38.5	59.0
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	3.3	20.0	76.7

I know how to manage conflict.					
Pre-AB experience	0.0	0.0	5.1	35.9	59.0
Post-AB experience	0.0	0.0	6.7	20.0	73.3

*Note: SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, NAD=Neither Agree nor Disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree*

*Pre-AB experience survey participant responses = 39; Post-AB experience survey participant responses = 30*

## VITA

WALTER J. MALDONADO

Born, Panama City, Republic of Panama

- 2023                      Doctoral Candidate, Ph.D., Higher Education  
Florida International University  
Miami, Florida
- 2007                      M.S., Higher Education Administration  
Florida International University  
Miami, Florida
- 2005                      B.S., Electrical Engineering  
Florida International University  
Miami, Florida
- 2015 – Present                      I.T. Associate Director, Academic Advising Technology  
Florida International University, Miami, FL
- Supervise a team of three Graduation Success Specialists, two Panther Degree Audit & Panther Degree Pathway Business Analysts, and two Academic Advising Case Management Analysts
  - Oversee the daily operations of Academic Advising Module data maintenance team and ensure that PeopleSoft Academic Advising degree audits accurately reflect degree requirements and university policy as stated in the University's Graduate and Undergraduate catalog. Configure degree audit set up on PeopleSoft Academic Advising Module for graduate and undergraduate degree programs
  - Oversee implementation and maintenance of the Panther Success Network academic advising case management and the Panther Degree Pathway interactive major map systems. Develop manuals and training sessions. Facilitate training sessions for advisors, faculty, and staff. Process advisor-student assignments and reassignments, set up advisor-to-program assignment engines and facilitate system customizations
  - Attend university meetings such as the Council of Undergraduate Academic Advisors (CUAA) to provide updates and pertinent information to the University's academic units and programs
  - Monitor progress and project execution to assure that milestones, project deadlines and standards are met within project scope. Confer with project personnel to identify and resolve problems and establish, maintain and execute project communication plans
- 2009 – 2015                      Advising Manager, Academic Advising Center  
Florida International University, Miami, FL
- 2003 – 2009                      Academic Advisor, Electrical & Computer Engineering

	Florida International University, Miami, FL
2001 – 2003	Office Manager, Engineering Advising Center Florida International University, Miami, FL
2008 – Present	Adjunct faculty, SLS 1501 First-Year Experience Florida International University, Miami, FL
2017 – 2020	Adjunct faculty, SLS 1510 Strategies for Success Florida International University, Miami, FL
2013 – 2015	Adjunct faculty, SLS 1402 Discover Your Major Florida International University, Miami, FL
2006 – Present	Advisor, FIU Global Community Engagement
2006 – 2015	Advisor, FIU Dance Marathon
2012 – 2015	Advisor, FIU Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity
2007 – 2011	Advisor, FIU Theta Tau Professional Engineering Fraternity
2005 – 2009	Advisor, FIU Engineering Student Council
2012 – 2022	National Academic Advising Association National and Region IV conference
2021 – 2022	EAB CONNECTED conference
2015	Higher Education User Group Alliance conference
2012	Academic Advising Institute on Utilizing Research and Data to Increase Student Persistence and Retention conference
2006 - 2010	Dance Marathon Leadership conference
2001 – 2005	Hispanic Engineer National Achievement Awards conference
2001	National Association of Engineering Student Councils conference
2021 – Present	Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society
2014	FIU Professional Development Award
2013	NACADA Region IV Advisor of the Year
2012	FIU Advisor of the Year
2007 - Present	Omicron Delta Kappa Leadership Honor Society