Program Evaluation of the Alternative Break Pre-Curriculum with the Office of PittServes

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Universities often offer students the experience to conduct community service during their academic breaks, creating Alternative Break programs. The University of Pittsburgh created a pre-trip training and team building curriculum to engage students prior to their service with communities of focus in 2018. In previous versions of the program, it was made evident that there were levels of under preparedness from the students that could adversely impact the communities, the relationships of the university, and the student's own experience. This program evaluation takes into consideration the best practices stated in literature, many of which are presented by the Break Away nonprofit organization, for comparison of the student's self-reported learning and the staff and community partner's perceived levels of student preparation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures

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1.0 Overview

1.1 Introduction

As a higher education professional, beginning my career in the nonprofit sector, the importance of ethical, culturally humble, and mutually beneficial community service has informed all that I have done in creating and implementing programming on college campuses. In 2014, I was advised that the Office of PittServes should explore the delivery of expanded Alternative Break programs to offer students the opportunity to conduct community service during their school breaks. At that time, and in the years since, there has been a growing criticism of how students and their universities are planning and implementing the community service experiences, sometimes at the expense of the community. In the first years of implementing Alternative Spring Break programs locally in Pittsburgh communities and with national partners, I found that students reported a lack of preparedness for their service activities and a lack of ability to build community within their group or within their community of focus.

Spring Break 2015 provided the opportunity to work directly with 10 students serving in local Pittsburgh communities. During the week, a tragedy occurred within one community of focus, and I saw, firsthand, elements of under preparedness with understanding of our role with the community, our ability to focus on assets, and our commitment to the organizations that had invited us to serve.

It also became evident that while students were immersed for a short time (typically 5-7 days), there was little continued effort for the focus area or the community of focus, after their "break" ended. In my efforts to best understand how to facilitate these experiences, I was able to

attend a faculty seminar in 2016 with United Planet, an organization that offers volunteering experiences in over 30 countries with a focus on immersion for the short and long-term experiences of the volunteers. This seminar took place in Ecuador, exploring the city of Quito and the community of Chilcabampa. Leveraging this experience, a pilot program was created to engage 13 students selected for the first PittServes Spring Break experience in Ecuador. Students met weekly for eight weeks prior to their departure for team building, personal and professional development, and trip-specific content. This pilot provided a foundation for the planning and implementation of the 2018 pre-trip trainings that occurred with all students participating in Alternative Spring Break and Alternative May Break.

1.2 Problem Area

Universities across the United States have been working toward offering opportunities for students to engage in communities for decades. Sumka, Porter, and Piacitelli (2015) define Alternative Break programs as "short-term, student-run immersion service trips" (p. 8). These trips may occur over spring, fall, winter, Thanksgiving, or intersession, and can include local, national or international opportunities. Alternative Break programs often include student leadership development, reflection opportunities, intentional community service, and community immersion.

Typically, Alternative Breaks are facilitated by a university's service office or student civic engagement office, which falls under Student Affairs, community relations, or an academically-based civic engagement office. These programs, while not offering credit, can offer the students

an experiential learning opportunity, and if implemented intentionally, can provide personal and professional development to the student.

Equally fueling the desire for Alternative Break programming are student interest in traveling (even locally) to new communities and institutions' interest in promoting student civic engagement (Dempsey, 2010). This desire for programming, if not appropriately matched with preparation for entry into communities, can result in a less effective (at best) and harmful (at worst) service experience for both the students and the community. This can result in damage to the university's reputation at the same time.

Research on effective Alternative Break programs highlights the need for universities to create mutually beneficial partnerships with communities and conduct orientations to best prepare students to serve (Sumka et. al, 2015). There is also evidence that personal and civic training, reflection, and preparedness to enter communities must be facilitated prior to, during, and after service experiences to ensure community engagement is effective (Sumka et. al, 2015; Grant, 2011).

Consulting the research of Lobb (2012) at a large, public research university in a mid-Atlantic state, universities have the ability to enhance an existing Alternative Break programs to reach more students and foster a culture of personal development through service. As awareness of the benefits of this perspective grows (Lobb, 2012), so does the interest in engaging students in Alternative Break opportunities. This is a promising shift, as multicultural education is a framework that addresses the barriers experienced by low-income students and students of color in typical collegiate programming (Grant, 2011). In contrast to Eurocentric education, a multicultural perspective is one in which no one way of viewing the world, politics or ideology is considered to be the standard – there is not one that can "represent the full truth and value of human

life" (Grant, 2011, p. 550). Alternative Break programming allows for, and in many ways necessitates, that students interrogate their privileges, assumptions and world perspective. This opens the door for students from marginalized backgrounds to more freely speak to and connect with their own experiences while engaging in service to others.

A lack of preparation of students and community partners can lead to miscommunication regarding what success looks like in these short-term experiences. Some programming encourages student reflection, which requires students to interrogate their privileges, assumptions and world perspective. When programming fails to address these areas, students of privilege and marginalized students alike have the opportunity to cause harm to a community, while thinking they have just done good and boosted their resume at the same time.

With the growing interest in what has been coined "voluntourism," agencies can also contribute to the problem of lack of preparedness. The nonprofit community hosts must also identify their role in preparation and reflection of activities. While the organization may see some immediate benefit to partnership, the ability to build a sustainable project and maintain the relationship with the university must be created thoughtfully and in collaboration with the larger community.

1.3 Inquiry setting: PittServes / University of Pittsburgh

The site of the program is localized to the University of Pittsburgh's Alternative Break programs. As the Director of PittServes from 2014 – 2018, I, as the researcher, had oversight responsibility, direct contact with participants, and the feedback of community partners throughout the tenure. These communications and observations led to the conclusion that the students were

ill prepared for their service experiences in terms of understanding of program requirements and activities, understanding of their own demeanor in the service setting, and a lack of communication amongst their team about requirements and reflections. Student debriefs and direct conversations provided the understanding that a pre-trip program should be implemented to support the students in the process to ensure learning and maintenance of community relationships.

The University of Pittsburgh is a state-related institution in Pennsylvania with five campuses. The largest campus, located within the Oakland neighborhood of Pittsburgh, is home to over 19,000 undergraduate students and roughly 12,000 graduate students. To support students, the Division of Student Affairs provides resources, programming, and opportunities to all students, under the Vice Provost and Dean of Students. The Division includes the Wellness Center, Residence Life, the Career Center, Disability Resource Services, Student Life, Pitt Arts, Campus Recreation, Cross Cultural and Leadership Development, and PittServes. Over 175 employees support the Division of Student Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh.

This study is an evaluation of the Alternative Break programming in the Office of PittServes at the University of Pittsburgh. PittServes was created in 2014 to address the growing participation in community engagement of students through Student Affairs. The Office reports to the Vice-Provost and Dean of Students and has a primary focus of engaging students in sustainability, education, and community development as it relates to community service.

The Office of PittServes engages students in meaningful service to the community on a local, national, and international scale. Eight full-time employees support the initiatives within the office, in addition to AmeriCorps VISTAs and student employees. The education programs engage over 200 students who serve at least twice per week and have a strong tie to the office itself. The PittServes programs include:

- Alternative Break programming, offered during Fall Break (October), Spring Break (March), and Summer Break (May).

- Signature Days of Service (Pitt Make a Difference Day, MLK Day of Service, Orientation Day of Service, and Be a Good Neighbor Day) which engage students and student organizations in direct service opportunities.

- Jumpstart, an AmeriCorps program, which engages university students in Pre-K literacy development.

- America Reads Challenge, an afterschool literacy program in local elementary schools.

- The Pitt Pantry, an on-campus food pantry to support food-insecure students.

- Thriftsburgh, a student-run thrift store to support sustainability initiatives.

- The Student Office of Sustainability, student-led sustainability programming.

At the time of this study, the University of Pittsburgh was in the process of opening the first Community Engagement Center, under the Office of the Chancellor. Community planning, advisory boards, and university supports were convened in 2017 – 2018 to field opportunities for a physical community space for community engagement. This was to take place in surrounding Pittsburgh neighborhoods. Homewood and the Hill District were identified as areas of focus for 2018, and plans were implemented to begin construction in each neighborhood.

The University of Pittsburgh also offers study abroad opportunities through the University Center for International Studies division. These credit-bearing opportunities include coursework and travel experiences to students in 75 countries world-wide. While service-learning courses are offered through the Office of Study Abroad, there are significant variations from an Alternative Break experience. The Study Abroad service-learning programs are six-weeks, one semester, or

year-long opportunities that provide students credit, coursework, and a connection to community service opportunities.

The Alternative Break programs are logistically coordinated by PittServes staff members in coordination with community-based agencies and nonprofit partners. Students apply and interview with staff and student leaders who will participate in the trips. The Alternative Break program only offered national trips (Washington, DC and Cumberland Trail) until 2014. In spring 2015, the program expanded to provide students the opportunity to serve locally (in Pittsburgh), and in 2017, an international Alternative Spring Break to Ecuador occurred.

Through collaboration with the Alternative Break Advisory Board (eight selected students who are past participants), trip locations are selected with community partners and vetted for potential expanded collaborations. In the 2017-2018 academic year, nearly 100 students participated in eight individual trips (locally, nationally, internationally) throughout the year. These numbers include a Fall Break opportunity, which is out of the scope of this study, and six trips offered over Spring Break, engaging over 80 students in local, national, and international week-long, immersive service experiences. Additionally, PittServes expanded to Alternative May Break in 2018, offering a 10-day experience in Iceland for eleven students.

The Office of PittServes piloted a pre-service curriculum in 2016-2017, as part of the Ecuador program. In 2018, all programs included required attendance at pre-service training sessions. The curriculum implemented focused on the ethics of Alternative Break, how to serve responsibly, understanding privilege, and fostering a team atmosphere for critical reflection. Students ranged from first-year undergraduates to graduate level students. All participation was voluntary and a participation fee was charged per trip, with need-based financial aid available.

The Alternative Break programs in 2018 included both pre-programming and intentional reflection during the service experience, which will be evaluated to understand the success of the program and opportunities for future development. Students who participate in Alternative Break programming most often have participated in community service and philanthropy programming in the past. However, many had not explored the implications of their service through reflection.

The immersive experience of Alternative Break programming supports students of all demographics to experience civic engagement through a new lens. Through intentional programming, PittServes leverages the excitement and interest in this programming to also facilitate individualized learning through pre-curriculum and service for student development. The Office of PittServes strives to develop programming that is more responsive to student and community needs through a grounding in a multicultural education framework. Alternative Break programming may allow underrepresented students to build community more easily and connect their passions to communities other than their home community or the Oakland community.

In my role, I was deeply embedded in the planning and implementation of the Alternative Break programming within PittServes. Responsibilities included: the creation, recruitment, and selection of the Advisory Board; collaborative creation and implementation of the pre-curriculum; and relationship management with the community host agencies in the communities of focus. As a staff facilitator in the selection of student participants for each of the Alternative Break trips that occurred in March 2018, and as a trainer of March and May trip pre-trainings, I interacted with each student participant prior to their departure and through a debrief following the Spring Break trips. While serving as the Director of the Office of PittServes until April 2018, my role supported the staff facilitators for each trip in their planning and execution of the local, national, and international experiences. Personally, I am interested in this program evaluation as the program

has the opportunity for growth and reaching better outcomes for students to experience this co-curricular activity as a crucial area of their learning while at the University. As I am no longer employed by the University of Pittsburgh, distance and time add to the perspective of how the program can evolve and improve for the sake of the students, the community partners, and the university. Personal experience led me to care deeply about the individual preparation of students who are serving in organizations and communities. As a previous employee of a medium sized nonprofit, I had experience and interaction with groups of students desiring to do community engaged work. As I began my work with the University of Pittsburgh, I leveraged the literature in the field, local experts, and nonprofit feedback to impart the importance of ethical community service with adequate communication, preparation, and connection with the community. In 2015, PittServes was implementing a local Alternative Spring Break program when a tragedy happened in that community hours after our students left for the day. Students reflected on the news reports and I was aware that we had not done enough to prepare the students to understand the assets of the community, dedication to people within the community of focus, and how to navigate a crisis situation. This was an awakening for me that we as staff needed to do better to ensure that we were facilitating meaningful Alternative Break programming with students and supporting their critical reflection of the privilege we have in communities and the trust that is being granted to us as we enter communities for short periods of time. It is important to understand that annually we could point to areas of success within the program, a more thorough evaluation was important for the improvement of the program.

1.4 Stakeholders

In addition to the University of Pittsburgh itself, the stakeholders of this study are those who engage with and benefit from the Alternative Break programming. Stakeholders include nonprofit organization staff and clients, residents of the communities served, student participants, University of Pittsburgh staff engaging in programming, and the student Advisory Board. Each stakeholder participates at varying levels and at different times throughout the year with different goals and anticipated outcomes.

The University of Pittsburgh is itself a stakeholder for the programming, as the success has a direct impact on the student learning, the community relations, and the overall reputation of the University. Each program and relationship has the potential to enhance or detract from the legacy of the university, locally, nationally, and internationally.

The communities served include the Hill District and East Liberty, in Pittsburgh; Washington, DC; Cumberland Trail, Tennessee; Quito, Ecuador; and Reykjavik, Iceland. Each community of focus is connected through a nonprofit agency that directly partners with the University of Pittsburgh. These partners provide content to the students regarding the history, present day resources, community needs, and the issues of focus that are specific to each trip.

The student participants included both undergraduate and graduate level students who had an interest and an expressed passion to serve communities during their academic breaks. Both international and domestic students participated in the experiences. The range of personal and community knowledge is broad among the students who participated, much in part to the application and selection process, ensuring a diverse representation among each cohort of students. Student interests are also wide-ranging, as some students may be more focused on the opportunity to travel, while others are focused more on the specific task or content area of the programming.

The demographics skewed primarily toward women, but reflected a diverse array of socio-economic statuses, LGBTQ identities, and racial / ethnic demographics.

Staff leaders are typically Student Affairs professionals who have an interest in facilitating the experience for students. Staff who are not part of the Office of PittServes are required to meet periodically with PittServes staff members to discuss trip logistics, facilitation practices, and review content for reflection and dialogue. As a result, staff who facilitate and participate in the programming should be able to support the evaluation of the problem of practice and connect with students and community partners directly.

The Alternative Break Advisory Board consisted of eleven students with Alternative Break experience. These students were past participants of Alternative Break programs who have shown a commitment to community service. Following their 2017 Spring Break service experience, students were invited to apply to serve on the 2017-2018 Advisory Board. Upon selection, students were asked to commit to training sessions, monthly meetings, recruitment events, fundraising, and team leader responsibilities during and after each trip.

Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky (2009) describe the diagnosis of stakeholders as imperative to understanding how change and the political landscape will be impacted. Those stakeholders who will be interviewed are each listed on Table 1 to describe their relationship to the program, preferred outcomes, loyalties, and potential losses of each group.

Table 1. Alternative Break Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Relationship to the program	Preferred outcome	Loyalties	Potential losses
Student	Active participant – often feeling as though they are giving something up by participating	Positive experience, learning, resume builder, personal development	University, self, group, personal ideals	Sense of comfort, identity, security, time, money
Community Partner	Host to service projects, provide community orientation, intended to receive benefit from service.	Tangible benefit to their organization or community, resulting from service activities. Increased advocates for their org or community.	Community, organization	Harm done to community through intentional or unintentional ignorance, lack of project completion, unnecessary project work, time, money

Table 1 continued

Staff	Serve as a facilitator and manager of programming, safety, reflection, and daily logistics during the trip.	Safe and productive week of service that promotes mutually beneficial engagement and service.	University, students, community partners	Time, power, security, comfort, sense of authority
University	Assumes liability of safety, trips can serve as a reputation enhancer or detractor, promotes as a student experience for co-curricular achievement in recruiting students.	Marketing / photo ready reports for promotion of investment in communities and opportunities for students.	Board of Trustees, students, public	Reputation, money, status, resources
Alternative Break Advisory Board Members	Past participants, student leadership opportunities	Leadership opportunities, resume builder, effective community service experience	University, self, group, personal ideals	Time, money, comfort

1.5 Problem of Practice

The problem of practice is that University of Pittsburgh students are under-prepared to serve in communities during Alternative Break programming, causing experiences for both students and communities to suffer. This problem can lead to issues, such as missed opportunities for student growth, potential for community harm, creation of over-inflated student savior complex, and damage to the university's reputation. This problem is not unique to the University of Pittsburgh and may be present when students serve in any location. A lack of student, staff, and/or community partner preparation can lead to only short-term benefits, projects that are not useful to the community, or lack elements of mutual learning. This perpetuates the concern that Alternative Break programming may be more of a "photo opportunity" than an impactful experience of civic engagement.

The issue for the University of Pittsburgh, while anecdotal, was the lack of preparation of students in past program years. Students provided feedback as to the pre-service experience lacking communication with staff and student leaders, a misunderstanding of tasks and benefits to the community being served, and concerns regarding physical strenuousness in remote areas during the service. Due to these issues, PittServes often struggled to fill trips and saw some students withdrawing from the experience very near the departure dates.

The poor student experience reflected poorly on the Office of PittServes and Student Affairs as a whole. Students who felt under-prepared are less likely to return or to encourage other students to participate in programming. A negative student experience can also impact the relationship with the community partner, especially if students are ill prepared, lack self-awareness, or are not strong in reflection of service activities. Community partners also benefit

from engagement with the process of a pre-service curriculum, as they can understand the broad learning goals and expectations of the established program.

1.6 Inquiry Questions

To evaluate the existing pre-departure training within the Alternative Break program, the following questions will be asked to understand if the pre-curriculum addressed the needs of students to be prepared to serve. These questions must be examined from many different perspectives, and by the various stakeholder groups, to understand how we might best prepare students and staff to be effective during short-term community service programs and minimize the damage to communities and the university's reputation.

Inquiry questions include:

- How does the PittServes curriculum and accepted best practices align with recommendations from the field, for Alternative Break programs?

- Which experiences within the Alternative Break pre-trip curriculum do students, staff and community partners define as most supportive of student learning? Which are perceived as less supportive?

- How do students indicate how they incorporate their learning into their Alternative Break service trip?

These questions focus on the experience and themes that were intended to support the student preparation for participation in Alternative Break service programs. With this, the program evaluation will determine if the goals of the program curriculum were effective in addressing the problem of practice.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

"We need to have a conversation about the culture of 'doing good' around the world, and the debates that we're having need to engage and demand accountability of every volunteer and organization" (Jesonika, nd). The importance of the review of literature and best practices as it relates to community service programming is crucial to the successful implementation of community / university partnerships. The focus of this review of literature is to address research compiled to understand the problem of practice of the preparation of college students for Alternative Break experiences. I will provide an introduction of how Alternative Break programs were created and evolved over time. This includes program history, successful models, perceived benefits to students and communities, and negative impacts of Alternative Break programs. Subsequent sections will consist of a review literature focused on the recommended themes of programming and individual content areas of the program that is being studied.

Because Alternative Break had its early beginnings in the 1960's, the history will be reviewed to understand the origins and evolutions of what universities promote as Alternative Break opportunities for their students. Reviewing these models within this evaluation provides best practices of Alternative Break programs, to be compared to existing training for the program. Various university models and civic engagement contexts will be discussed, as each Alternative Break program is distinctly different by nature of location of host community, participant backgrounds, group dynamics, facilitated debriefing, and day-to-day experiences.

2.2 History of Alternative Break

Alternative Break refers to a model of programming that Sumka, Porter, and Piacitelli (2015) define as, "short-term, student-run immersion service trips, [intended to] catalyze new thought and action among students through education, direct service, reflection, and commitment to future action" (p. 8). Niehaus and Kurotsuchi (2015) more loosely define Alternative Breaks as "opportunities for small groups of students to travel to a different city, state, or country to participate in a service-learning project during their academic break" (p. 134). In her dissertation, Niehaus (2012) presents similar elements of Alternative Break programs and also includes themes of questioning of one's own values, strengthening compassion, desire to continue service, and questioning future career paths. Further focus on the program model and in what Niehaus (2017) labels "high-impact practices" (p.53), she notes that "Alternative Break programs are one way to bridge two high-impact practices – service-learning and diversity/global learning" (p. 53).

These short-term, service-based experiences may vary in their curricular components, locations, programming, or length of service. Regardless of these variables, authors are finding that Alternative Break programming is a viable opportunity for students to expand their personal and educational experiences while supporting community need (Kisker, 2016; Niehaus, 2015; Mann, 2016). Universities may vary in focus, including "high-impact practices" (Niehaus, 2017) or social responsibility (Kisker, 2016). The literature focuses both on the impact of the experience for the student, and in some cases, the preparation that leads to successes (or failures) of the project in the host community.

Vanderbilt University is cited as the first example of Alternative Break programming in the 1960's, as medical students leveraged their academic training to support low-income Appalachian communities (Sumka et al., 2015). In 1969, a conference was held to discuss service-

learning in college settings. This was hosted by the Peace Corps, VISTA, and the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and focused on the encouragement of community service, funding, and the planning and implementation of faculty-participatory service-learning programs at the university level (Sumka et al., 2015). Another early example of Alternative Breaks came from Boston College, where students hosted a 1979 spring break service trip to the Appalachian region, which included fundraising and service to the community. This program has since grown into an expansive university opportunity, with over 450 volunteers annually. This program embraces learning outcomes that include:

1. Recognize two principles of Catholic Jesuit education contained in material or information they were given during the course of the program.

2. Identify two moral/ethical principles communicated during the input phase of the program and apply one of those principles to a field experience from their week of service.

3. Articulate two or more goals for service in one or more domains of their lives: family relationships, friendships, college community, local community, the United States, and the global community (Boston College).

Sumka et al. (2015) describe additional programming created at Vanderbilt University in the 1980's to challenge students to do productive community service during the spring break period. They engaged students in a variety of trip experiences to serve during their week off from coursework. Vanderbilt continued to be at the forefront of Alternative Break programs, as two student leaders created a guide for student leaders (Sumka et al., p. 26) and subsequently created the national nonprofit, Break Away, in 1991 (p. 27). Today, Break Away is a national non-profit agency that partners with over 200 universities to implement Alternative Break programs.

Sumka et al. (2015) cite *Assessing Service-Learning and Civic Engagement: Principles and Techniques*, by Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, and Kerrigan, as a model for ensuring program outcomes are meeting stated goals. This includes the assessment practices that include qualitative and quantitative data collection through survey tools, focus groups, interviews, informal assessment tools, staff advisor observations, and program-wide events. Sumka et al. make the distinction between service-learning, community-based research, and Alternative Breaks to feature the importance of the "co-curricular service-learning" (p. 16) experience that incorporates elements of the practice, but are more unique and provide additional benefits to students.

2.3 Successful Program Models

The program models for each Alternative Break program are likely to be defined by the leadership team within each institution. Connecting the program model to the stated benefits of community service for university students and community partners can create a more meaningful and beneficial experience. The article, "*Community service: what's in it for you?"* (Saftner, 1998) consists of an explanation of how students can leverage community service experiences to achieve higher rates of success academically and professionally. Saftner (1998) cited additional researchers who found service programming increases retention and graduation rates for undergraduate students. Sumka et al. (2015) asserted that the term Alternative Break is defined as "short-term, student-run immersion service trips" (p. 8). This definition, which is generally used across universities, provides differentiation from other academic or Student Affairs sponsored opportunities for travel or education during fall, spring, intersession, or summer breaks.

Sumka et al. (2015) presented four elements of programming that set Alternative Breaks apart from other forms of community service or learning. These elements are described as, "focus on active citizenship, implementation of the eight components of quality alternative breaks, an emphasis on root causes and systems, and mutually beneficial community partnership (p. 9). Using their own methods of program evaluation over the past 25 years, Break Away has finalized the eight components of a quality alternative break, as:

1. Strong Direct Service

2. Alcohol and Drug Free

3. Diversity and Social Justice

4. Orientation

5. Education

6. Training

7. Reflection

8. Reorientation

     (Sumka et al., 2015, p. 21)

Research focused on trip development and pre-trip education varies and ranges from single pre-trip meetings to full curriculum components. Sumka et al. (2015) identified the preparation of students' understanding of privilege and oppression, local and/or host community dynamics, and social justice training as key components of a pre-trip curriculum for Alternative Break trips.

The connection of service-learning and diversity or global learning (Niehaus, 2017) through Alternative Break programming implies a structured model of educational activities, debrief and reflection, and service to the community. Niehaus (2017) confirmed a high correlation to positive outcomes for students through the immersive service experiences of Alternative Breaks.

Niehaus explored relationships between the student experiences with Alternative Breaks and the reported gains in student learning post-programming. Her focus on social justice and diversity, while narrow in scope, show gains for individual students. She discussed the various demographics of students who are entering this experience, their base knowledge, and the long-term expectations of students, post-Alternative Break experience.

Pre-service curriculum, in-service training, and reflection are necessary for building strong programs for student development. The structure of programming can include incentives for participation or scholarships to ease the financial burdens of participation (Sumka et al., 2015). Programming examined by Marks (2012) at University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee provided a framework to create responsive programming to encourage a sense of community among students and with the host communities. Grounding her work in Citizen Capital and Civic Identity Development (CCCID) Theory, Marks (2010) research on community service programming can be applied broadly to Alternative Break programming. Her 2010 study of an existing community service scholarship program found that the program enhanced community building and learning outcomes, specifically for low-income students (Marks, 2012). Engaging in conversation and intentional activities to connect students' civic identity with their academic programs created stronger ties to the community service and to one another. The inclusion of public presentations of learning (Marks, 2012) moves the student beyond the very personal aspects of learning to being able to translate their experience to broader constituencies. Another beneficial program attribute that Marks (2012) cites is the connection to personal passions – examined through her 2010 surveys, interviews, and observations (Marks, 2010). Engaging students in programming that is already a point of interest (environment, education, etc.) will deepen commitment and long-term investment. As the students evolve in their own understanding of their

passions, they also have the opportunity to build networks with others passionate about the same topic area, thus addressing peer and professional connection barriers (Marks, 2010).

Niehaus and Kurotsuchi (2015) used the National Survey of Alternative Breaks data in their 2015 study to affirm that students evolve through the immersive, short-term experiences. They also site that students benefit from the opportunity to engage with others that may not normally fall within their social circle. As Alternative Break programs are typically open enrollment or open application, the opportunity to engage with new peers / students provides a different experience than other extra-curricular or co-curricular offerings on a college campus. Sumka et al., (2015) describes the participant selections methods as varying and open to tailoring for each school's program structure and culture. The models include (Sumka et al., 2015, pp. 269 – 270):

- *Application and Interview* – A process by which staff and site leaders build diverse teams by collecting applications and conducting interviews. This is more time-intensive and can be impractical for large programs.

- *Application Only* – Short-answer questions collected from all interested participants and reviewed by staff or site leaders. This method allows for intentional selection by student or staff leaders, but may be less time intensive.

- *First-Come, First-Served* – The open enrollment of students who volunteer and potentially pay a deposit to hold their space. Often used with very short-term Alternative Break experiences or in programs with lower interest and involvement.

- *Lottery* – A random selection of participants, which can be done online or in person. This requires a diverse applicant pool, as there is no intentionality in the selection.

- *Hybrid Model* – Utilizing both an application process and a lottery opportunity to allow for students to be selected for their application content, and also a lottery for students who are interested but may not pass the application process.

Sumka et al. (2015) suggested that recruitment for student site leaders should include a variety of attributes. These include interest in and experience with community service or social justice, skills in working with diverse groups, skills in communication/logistics/facilitation, ability to work with a partner and ability to stand alone, curiosity and humility, and enthusiasm and professionalism. Benefits of strongly selected student leaders can include the opportunity to recruit a diverse cohort for each Alternative Break opportunity.

2.4 Perceived Benefits of Service-Learning

Research data suggest that engaging in service-learning programming contributes to participants' growth and enhanced academic-achievement (York, 2013). Several scholars evaluated service-learning, which can be a component of curricular Alternative Break programming, with community immersion adding additional learning opportunities to a traditional semester long course (Marks, 2012; Rhoads & Neururer, 1998; Samuels, 2013). Mann and DeAngelo (2016) found that the alignment of Alternative Break programming with service-learning courses supported change in the perception of self and a change in the perception of others.

Varying levels of education or types of universities may influence the individual experience of service-learning and civic engagement. Kisker et al. (2016) found that community college students, while possibly having less research conducted on their experiences, contributed

to community service and civic engagement work at similar rates to their peers at four-year universities.

The positive outcomes identified for international service-learning tend to be very focused on the student or participant. It is the assertion that the sense of global citizenship and increased cultural humility are the positive benefits to students within Alternative Break programs (Sumka et al., 2015). The global learning focus of the international programs is said to raise awareness and promote increased student learning. Sumka et al. (2015) noted that international service learning may take the form of a "study abroad, service learning, or international education" experience (p. 301). If done well, the community can also benefit from the experience. Outcomes include stronger mutual understanding, reduction of boundaries, and addressing poverty gaps. The student or participant learning within International Alternative Breaks can gain knowledge to assist with their understanding of systemic issues abroad and at home. The experience itself has the opportunity to provide learning outside of the classroom and can influence the empathy, understanding, and future work of students (Sumka et al., 2015).

2.5 Negative Impacts of Alternative Breaks

The many critiques of international service learning also recognize the gains in student learning, but note that it is often one-sided and lack the reciprocal benefits to the communities of focus (Banki, 2017; Hasanova, 2017; Jesionka, nd; Kushner, 2016). Use of the term "voluntourism," utilizing volunteering as a way to enjoy the benefits of tourism, is often associated with international service opportunities, and can extend to national or local opportunities as well (Sumka et al., 2015). Sumka et al. noted the often surprised reactions of students or staff when

presenting the potential risks or negative implications of international service learning. Perpetuation of colonialism and exploitation of communities are also potential facets of international service opportunities.

Jesionka (nd) and Banki (2017) each provided lists of additional critiques, including a lack of focus on what is needed within host communities, unskilled volunteers, a neglect or misunderstanding of culture and customs, a focus on financial contributions, and a devaluation of the existing knowledge of members of the community. While Jesionka (nd) focused on the realities of the issues with programming itself, she also provided that it is not solely the fault of the travelers when conducting voluntourism. These acts are fueled by a larger, more complex system that includes the Alternative Break models within universities. By nature, these projects may not offer sustainability, and Jesionka challenged individuals who desire to participate in service travel to understand why they are interested and how the acts of service directly impact the communities of focus.

An article in the *New York Times Magazine*, tilted "*The Voluntourist's Dilemma*" (Kushner, 2016), gives an example of a group of tourists who spent thousands of dollars in travel and accommodation to lay bricks for the building of a local library. This occurred while experienced Haitian construction workers looked on as they could have completed the work in a more timely fashion and been paid for the day of work. Kushner (2016) provided additional examples from his time living in Haiti of buildings constructed by voluntourists that then were left unfunded and unable to be operational schools, with no teachers being hired and a lack of sustainable funding to remain open. Additional critiques of both international and national service trips can be found with regard to perpetuating dependency, rather than supporting education (Banki, 2017). Even despite criticisms, Banki notes that with proper communication and

protective measures, international service can have positive outcomes, but requires much work and partnership between the participants and the host community.

2.6 Recommended Themes of Preparation Programs

The pre-curriculum training components implemented in PittServes' program focused on community service, leadership, and content specific to each Alternative Break trip. Each area below was featured as an independent training and should have been revisited during service, reflection, and post-service activities.

2.6.1 Asset Based Community Development

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) are credited with the foundations of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) from their work at Northwestern University. Their research suggests that the five basic steps of ABCD include mapping assets, building relationships, mobilizing the community's assets, convening broad groups, and leveraging external resources (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 345). Connecting the themes of the development work of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) to service experiences, Alternative Breaks have the potential to move to a more reflective experience for students, thinking of the communities as areas that possess their own resources and assets, rather than only deficits.

Asset Based Community Development has been used as a framework for international learning programs (Webber et al., 2018), service fellowships (Schmitz, 2011), and alternative break models (Hartman & Kiely, 2014). Schmitz (2011) stated, "the primary community-building

26

strategy of ABCD is to help local residents, especially in low-income or otherwise marginalized communities, identify, contribute, and connect their assets with each other to create citizen power that strengthens communities, democracy, and social justice" (p. 15). Using ABCD as a model within Alternative Break programs supports student learning and development from the framework that they are not there to save the community, or are better than the community. With this focus, it supports the student understanding that places that are traditionally labeled as "poor" or "underserved" also have skills, talents, resources, and knowledge – all assets (Schmitz, 2011).

A focus on community assets assists in the mobilization of individuals and organizations to address issues within a given area or with a given community of individuals (Green & Haines, 2012). Green and Haines (2012) discussed the relationship between external individuals addressing community needs and the increased dependency on external resources to enhance community assets. Challenges come in the definition of community, the reliance on external sources, location and regionalism, and the understanding of growth in comparison to development.

Green and Haines (2012) align public participation (the inclusion of individuals, not only those limited to citizenship or ownership within the community) with community growth and a focus on assets. This concept, connected to programs such as Alternative Break, identifies the assets of students and staff as valuable contributions to a community. Strauss (2011) shared that these experiences also offer the participants a broader view of society, and are part of the appeal for students, to remove them from their isolated university setting.

2.6.2 Power and Privilege

The constructs of privilege (Fitzgerald, 2014) will be very evident in location-based Alternative Break programs. The act of a group of university students traveling to a community

that is likely not their home community, introduces elements of privilege. Pre-trip trainings often include discussions of the power, privilege, and community, thus presenting the reality of the [white] savior complex (Straubhaar, 2015). Conducting trainings focused on the dynamics between dominant and marginalized populations (Fitzgerald, 2014) and the understandings of identities, targeting, and community impact, assist in student awareness and increased dialogue (Goldbach, 2017).

Straubhaar (2015) asserted, "there is a great deal of personal transformation that must be undergone by socially privileged individuals who decide to join in progressive work towards radical social action alongside marginalized groups or peoples" (p. 381). The consideration of Alternative Break programs as progressive work and as opportunities for personal transformation encourages students and staff to see the program as more than service *to* a community, but rather an experience *with* the community of focus. Implementing trainings for students to understand their intersections of privilege and the privilege that the community may hold, provides valuable context for the experience.

2.6.3 Student Leadership & Team Building

Garcia-Pletsch and Longo (2016) contended that over the past three decades, student leadership has been removed from the planning process of Alternative Break and other service-based programs on university campuses. While the planning of the actual program may or may not offer student leadership or team-based opportunities, the pre-curriculum and actual service experience can consistently offer the student development. Garcia-Pletsch and Longo (2016) cite examples of University of Massachusetts-Amherst and Providence College where students serve as trip leaders, assist in the facilitation of curriculum, logistics, and team building activities.

Quick (1992) suggested that many benefits from focused team-building impact the outcomes and output of groups. He asserted that increased communication and collaboration, strengthened efficiency of resources and efficiency, enhanced decisions and solutions, and stronger long-term commitment are all results of team-based approaches (p. 13). Activities considered 'team building' can support students' individual connection to the group and also facilitate leadership roles and responsibilities.

2.6.4 Reflection

Break Away defines reflection as "any process in which participants mentally (what is understood) and emotionally (what is felt) synthesize direct service and the learning components (education, orientation, and training)" (Sumka et al., 2015, p. 153). This practice, engaging students in regular reflection, extends beyond their pre-training and throughout the service experience. Sumka et al. cited the works of service-learning practitioners and researchers on their theories or tools for enhanced student reflection (p. 165). Sumka et al. contended that Alternative Break programs have the opportunity to implement reflection of training, service, and team dynamics to engage students in critical review of their experiences and their impact. Reflection is an opportunity for students to debrief their daily experience and also take leadership roles, by serving as the lead facilitator. The recommendations of Sumka et al. include reflection styles of "The Five C's", "What? So what? Now what?" and "Head, heart, and feet" (pp. 156 – 160). The varied formats of reflection can support varied learning and communication styles for all participants. Stanford University has published a trainer's agenda for a debrief model of "I like, I wish" to support additional personal reflection of individuals. This method allows participants to

29

write first their own thoughts, prior to sharing or being influenced by the group-think that may occur in a debrief session.

2.7 Conclusion

Alternative Break programming has varied and evolved over the decades since its implementation at Vanderbilt University. Presently, the opportunities for student development and community support are both relevant and possible through a structured experience of Alternative Break programming through colleges and universities. The literature provides examples of successful implementation and an understanding of how the programs themselves may falter or fail the community it intends to benefit. With tenants of service-learning and community development, Alternative Break programs can be created and implemented to greatly enhance a student's educational experience, leadership opportunities, and understanding of global and systemic concerns.

The use of models of Asset Based Community Development, power and privilege trainings, team building, and reflection can strengthen the learning and outcomes for Alternative Break programs. Literature on each of these areas provides in-depth understanding of their structures and implementation methods, as these topics are not limited to only the context of Alternative Breaks or higher education programming. By incorporating elements of community development, cultural competency, and broad leadership, there are opportunities to further develop student learning and leadership. Each area, when well-developed, can support and strengthen a structured Alternative Break program.

The review of this literature provides a framework for constructing the PittServes Alternative Break pre-service training. In evaluating the PittServes program, this literature is important for not only building a strong pre-program, but also for acknowledging the potential negative impacts of service in communities that are not the students' home community. Ensuring that the successful models of programming and the potential negative impacts are reviewed and accounted for in the planning, training, and implementation of the program is incredibly important. Through the inquiry questions, this evaluation will be done to understand if this program does in fact properly prepare the students for their Alternative Break service experience.

3.0 Methods

The methods chapter begins with a statement of purpose of the study and the research questions this study addresses. This chapter consists of a review of the evaluation approach, the study context and participants, and the design of the inquiry instruments. This chapter also addresses the data collection and analysis, as well as the limitations of the study. The appendices include the interview protocols that were implemented with subjects of the study.

The purpose of the evaluation is to understand if the intervention of the pre-curriculum implemented with the Alternative Break programs in PittServes was successful in addressing the problem of under-preparedness of students. This program evaluation reviews the training that was implemented for the Spring and May Alternative Break programs. This timely review of the program provides the current PittServes staff with an evaluation which is both early in the program's history and following my departure from the University of Pittsburgh. With a version of the program piloted in 2017, 2018 served as the first year for the full Alternative Break program to include the curriculum. Reviewing in 2019 supports future enhancements to the program, as the offerings for these experiences may continue to grow in popularity. It is necessary for the university to have quantifiable data related to student engagement (hours served, partnerships created, tasks accomplished) as well as feedback on how well student preparation resulted in mutually beneficial programming. This feedback is necessary to increase the quality, effectiveness, and impact of the programs.

This study provides an understanding of which programmatic elements students reported as strong learning opportunities, where community partners and staff found evidence of preparedness or under-preparedness, and what opportunities for improvement exist within the

program. The recommendations may both strengthen the existing programming and expand the Alternative Break programs within the Office of PittServes to meet students' needs and community partner demand. The study includes representation from local, national, and international trip participants so that the diversity of their experiences is represented and provides collective insight into the experience of the students as a whole. With seven trips during the study period, the information represents an understanding of how the students were prepared for service within communities that were not considered "their own."

3.1 Research Topic & Inquiry Questions

The research topics and questions of this study focus on the problem of student preparation for participation in the Alternative Break service programs through the Office of PittServes. Related directly to the 2018 program curriculum, this program evaluation supports ongoing improvement efforts of the University of Pittsburgh's non-credit bearing, short-term, Alternative Break service trips that occur in Pittsburgh, nationally and internationally. The Office of PittServes implemented the same training themes in 2019, providing consistency to the preparation of students for Alternative Spring Break. May Break was implemented locally by PittServes in 2019.

The study's inquiry questions were explored through the literature review and will be tested through the remainder of the study. The inquiry questions are:

- How does the PittServes curriculum and accepted best practices align with recommendations from the field, for Alternative Break programs?

- Which experiences within the Alternative Break pre-trip curriculum do students, staff and community partners define as most supportive of student learning? Which are perceived as less supportive?

- How do students indicate how they incorporate their learning into their Alternative Break service trip?

3.2 Approach & Methodology

Best practices for program evaluation are used to understand which elements of the PittServes Alternative Break pre-service curriculum were successful. Worthen, Sanders, and Fitzpatrick (2004) describe program evaluation as having the purpose of "render[ing] judgements of the value of a program" (p. 9). Program evaluation can be implemented across the entire Alternative Break programming, with all participants. Implementation of this approach within educational programs has supported curriculum evaluation, outcomes evaluation, and successful achievement of metrics (Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 2004). Research indicates that evaluation should be used to assist the decision makers in understanding if goals are being met and if changes should be implemented (Abert, 1979).

The decision to select program evaluation over other methods of inquiry was due to the reflective nature of the research. The structure and effectiveness of Alternative Break programming through the Office of PittServes was evaluated using qualitative methods (Abert, 1979). The use of qualitative data gathered through a program evaluation can support future iterations of programs with the enhancement of successful programmatic elements and the revision or exclusion of those that are reported as unsuccessful. A document review and multi-stakeholder

interviews were conducted to collect data, test how well the principles of effective programming were implemented by PittServes in their Alternative Break programs, and determine whether the utilized principles addressed the problem of practice.

The collection of information regarding the impact the pre-service curriculum has had on the individuals, and thus the communities, has the opportunity to support more impactful programs for future years. PittServes staff can use this program evaluation to better understand the effectiveness of the pre-service curriculum as reported by the students and the staff trip leaders, and the insights can support better decision-making around programming. Understanding the impact of the program provides an opportunity for all Alternative Break programs through PittServes to further develop and can serve as a model for experience-based excursions throughout the division of Student Affairs. This use of program evaluation assessment can also strengthen staff understanding of which evaluation questions need to be asked of participants in future evaluation efforts (Powell, 2006).

This program evaluation prioritizes an understanding of programmatic successes and opportunities for improvement. The system that has created the need for this research has traditionally based programmatic success on the number of student participants and number of communities served, rather than the impact of the service and the length of the relationships with specific community partners. Acknowledging the need for the university to have quantifiable results for student engagement while also having a strict focus on how preparation and mutually beneficial programming can increase effectiveness and quality of the programs is imperative. After one year of implementing curriculum-based student preparation, there is the opportunity to assess which program components had the most impact on student development and preparedness. The logic model in Figure 1 provides an overview of the understood issues, activities, and

anticipated outcomes for the Alternative Break program. Each of the activities was designed to address an aspect of the problem of practice and ensure that students were more prepared to serve during their Alternative Break trip. If administered effectively, the activities should have resulted in the linked outcomes.
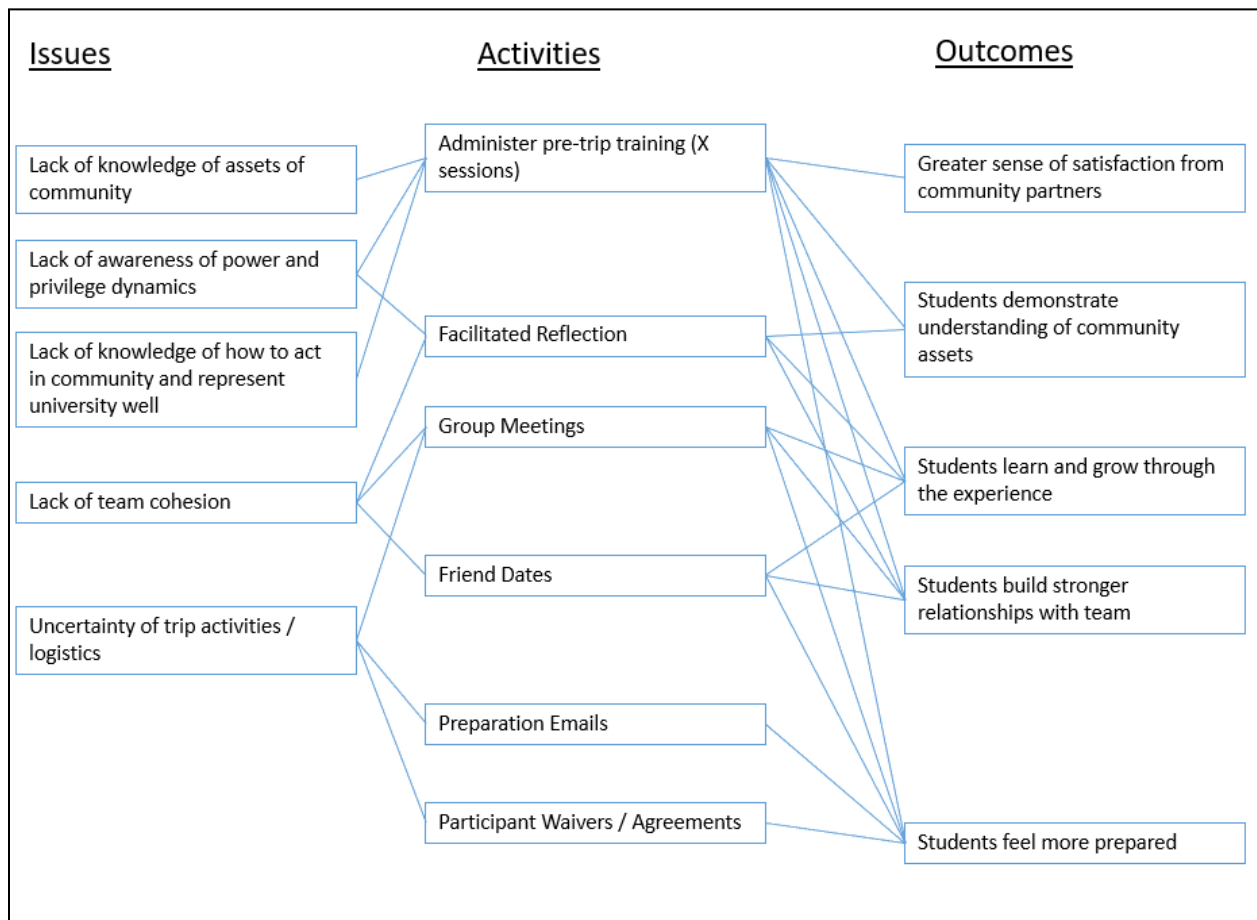
Figure 1. Alternative Break Logic Model

Understanding the logical design of the pre-service training and activities is important for conducting an effective evaluation. Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer (2015) described the stages of planning and designing useful evaluations as a "valuable learning strategy for enhancing knowledge about the underlying logic of programs and the program activities underway as well as

about the results of programs" (p. 8). Wholey et al. outlined four objectives. which guide this program evaluation:

1. Describing program activities.

2. Probing implementation and targeting.

3. Measuring program impact.

4. Explaining how and why programs produce intended and unintended effects.

This program evaluation takes each of those steps to ensure the findings will be useful and practical for implementation by the program staff.

Objective one, describing the program activities, includes questions such as "who does the program affect—both targeted organizations and affected populations?" and "what activities are needed to implement the program? By whom?" This program evaluation is affecting primarily the university, the student participants, and the communities of focus. The previous chart notes the activities within each training session and their relation to the best practices stated. To understand the effectiveness, the interview protocols are structured around the best practices and gather information from students, staff, and community partners to understand the effectiveness of the implemented program activities. A strength of the program evaluation is the timing, as this is the first full cycle of programming that included the pre-curriculum for all student participants. This early stage evaluation is intended to support growth and improvements to the program.

The second evaluation objective, probing implementation and targeting, strives to determine the extent to which a program has been implemented as intended (Wholey et al., 2015). The stakeholder interviews reveal whether and how effectively those planned activities understood from the document review, were carried out. This is achieved by aligning the student and staff interviews with the findings of the document review, regarding program content and what the

37

intended learning outcomes were for each session. Additional considerations presented in this section by Wholey et al. focus on the contextual factors that affect the program outcomes and the management challenges of the program. These areas will be addressed by the community partner and staff interviews to understand how other factors may have influenced the program's ability to meet its intended outcomes.

Third, Wholey et al. identified how to measure program impact. They share four key research questions which inform this objective, but a few are out of scope for this evaluation. Here they include questions:

- Has implementation of the program produced results consistent with its design (espoused purpose)?

- How have measured effects carried across implementation approaches, organizations, and/or jurisdictions?

- For which targeted populations has the program (or policy) consistently failed to show intended impact?

- Is the implementation strategy more (or less) effective in relation to its cost?

This evaluation focuses on the first question, "Has implementation of the program produced results consistent with its design (espoused purpose)?" The others remain of interest (e.g. disparate impact of the program by sub-populations) and will become more relevant for the program in future years once there is a larger pool of data with which to evaluate the program.

The fourth and final evaluation objective listed by Wholey et al. is "explaining how and why programs produce intended and unintended effects" (p. 29). Attempting to answer "how" and "why" for this program will be informed by synthesizing feedback from all sources. At this stage, Wholey et al. warn of bias and the understanding of inclusion and exclusion criteria (p. 683). In

the reporting for the interview findings, understanding the root causes of what is deemed successful or unsuccessful is the purpose of the study. This required understanding of what was being said and not being said in relation to the training program and to limit personal bias in the evaluation.

This study will also use a transformative epistemology (Mertens, 2015), acknowledging the link between myself and the participants. Because I was the individual who created the curriculum and delivered a portion of the trainings, the student participants, staff leaders, and community partners very likely had interaction and direct communication. These social connections may contain elements of power, trust, goodwill, or cautious communication, given the deep connection to the programming. Since I, as the researcher, am no longer employed by the University of Pittsburgh, my distance from the programming may reduce or mitigate any harmful power dynamics. It is likely that the student participants who I interacted with over the four years of employment at the University may still see my role as relevant to the program. Community partners may also make that connection, and for national and international partners additional factors considering the role at my new university also works to facilitate Alternative Break programming and opportunities, which could lead to future partnership.

In the transformative paradigm, it is important to recognize the privilege that I hold, as the researcher. Personally, I carry privilege as a cisgender, white woman. My age and education level may also impact the dynamics for the participants, and possibly for community partners as well. For those individuals (participants or community partners) for whom English is a second language, the power dynamic may exist as all written communication and oral interviews were conducted in English. As a woman in a same-sex relationship, the connection with LGBTQ participants may be more at ease or comfortable based on their understanding of personal identities which were shared during the pre-service training with participants, on power and privilege. Through

interactions, trainings, and feedback sessions, identities and histories were shared that encouraged all participants and facilitators to understand their own cultural identities.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews and document review were the methods for acquiring data related to program impact. The collected data were evaluated to determine how well students felt the pre-training prepared them to serve. Students' perceptions of their preparedness were tested against staff and community partner perceptions of student preparedness to see how strongly they are aligned. These methods will be further described in the subsequent Data Collection / Instruments section. The Analysis section will include a description of how the data will be analyzed to identify themes from the stakeholder feedback to inform program effectiveness and opportunities for improvement.

The applied inquiry plan in Table 2 was created to further elaborate on Wholey's et al. four step plan and provide the reader with an understanding of how each method connects to analysis and the anticipated evidence to be found.

Table 2 Alternative Break Applied Inquiry Plan

Question	Method	Analysis	Evidence
How does the PittServes curriculum and accepted best practices align with recommendations from the field, for Alternative Break programs?	Document Review	Reviewing existing documents from PittServes Alternative Break programs that detail program design, such as: - Pre-service training agendas - Logic models - Community partner agreements - Student evaluations - Student / Staff reflections	Evidence was expected to include common themes and shared understanding of programming outcomes and goals. The participants own words and reactions will allow for an understanding of what preparation they felt they had and what was additionally needed.
	Review of scholarly research	Defining what has worked in other settings that have similar structures and programs to PittServes. Define how universities have managed logistics effectively.	The evidence of what has worked in the field in various pre-programming models.

Table 2 continued

Question	Method	Analysis	Evidence
Which experiences do students, staff, and community partners define as most supportive of student learning? Which are perceived as less supportive of student learning?	Reviewing past documents, including past participant evaluations, will allow for understanding of past successes of the program and where opportunities for improvement exist. Through creation of an interview protocol and conducting interviews with students who participated in both the 2018 pre-service training and Alternative Break service programs, as well as community partners and staff members who interacted with the students during their Alternative Break service experience.	Seeking historical relationships of success, reviewing past participant evaluations for what has been viewed as successful and what has been viewed as needing improvement provides understanding of program successes. Documents will include: - Student evaluations - Participant debrief notes - Program partner feedback - Staff debrief notes Comparing optional participant demographic data with results offers additional understanding of how programs are being perceived by participants.	Used to identify what programming areas are most effective for all students and if there are variations between specific demographics of students.

Table 2 continued

Question	Method	Analysis	Evidence
How do students incorporate their learning into their Alternative Break service trip?	The twenty-one qualitative interviews conducted (with students, staff, and community partners) focused on how students displayed their learning and directly asked the students about their continued service and how they approach service differently after having participated in the program.	Students were asked how their training was helpful in practice and what lessons translated into changes in behavior.	Anticipated evidence will display which community partners have seen development in student's participation, attitude, engagement, and learning. With all community partners, the gauging of successes of Pitt student engagement will provide information regarding the benefits to partnership with the University of Pittsburgh.

3.3 Institutional Review Board Approval

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was submitted for review with the support of Dr. Jean Ferketish, chair of the dissertation committee. On February 14, 2019, the Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the program evaluation application as exempt through the administrative review process. The research was able to begin as an exempt study in an educational setting.

3.3.1 Participant Recruitment

Three types of participants were recruited for the study, including students, staff members, and community partners. The recruitment of each group included outreach via email or by phone as available (only relevant to staff members), to describe the request and provide information regarding the study. Respondents were asked to complete a confidential doodle poll to note their availability or to respond by email message confirming their willingness to participate. Each of the participant groups is discussed below with more detailed information regarding the recruitment and selection processes.

3.3.1.1 Students

The opportunity to join the study was offered only to students who participated in the 2018 Spring and May Alternative Break service experiences at the University of Pittsburgh and were not currently participating in the 2019 Alternative Break program. This was done in order to not skew the data in favor of what people were most recently trained in, versus which experiences

from the 2018 program year were most impactful and lasting. A random number generator was used to determine the order in which students were contacted and stratified the selections by trip location. This removed any bias from the selection and ensured a diverse pool of students who were participating from the different trip locations. Over 30 eligible students were contacted by email with an invitation to voluntarily participate in the study. This outreach resulted in responses from twelve students, nine of which were eligible to participate as students who participated in the 2018 training and service program but were not currently attending trainings for the 2019 trips. Nine student interviews were completed representing experiences from local, national, and international trips. All student participants were registered University of Pittsburgh students in the Spring 2018 semester, and range from first-year students to graduate level students across the Pittsburgh campus of the University of Pittsburgh. No rewards or incentives were offered for participation in the study.

All students interviewed were asked qualifying questions to ensure they participated in both the 2018 pre-training implemented by PittServes and an Alternative Break trip (locally, nationally, or internationally) and were not currently participating in PittServes' pre-training for the 2019 Alternative Spring Break trip. Students were generally positive about their experience and had not previously expressed concerns or frustrations with their experience. No other demographic traits or characteristics were apparent from those who responded with willingness to participate. The timing of the interview provided intentional focus on students one-year out from the program, to identify their longer-term implementation of themes learned to address the full scope of the inquiry questions. The interview was standardized, using the protocol presented in Appendix A, probing and clarifying questions were used to encourage students to expand upon some of the responses they offered.

3.3.1.2 Community Partners

Email correspondence was used to the organizational email addresses provided at the time of the program, to invite participation. Each person was identified as someone who interacted with the planning with PittServes staff or was given as a point of contact from inquiry to the organization. Each community partner was asked for an interview and responded via email or confidential web doodle poll to schedule their interview time. Through correspondence, it was confirmed that the community partner had engaged in the Alternative Break programs (Spring '18 & '19 or May '18) to be interviewed and compare their perceptions of student preparation and the implementation of student learning within the communities of focus with the perceptions of the students and program staff. The community partner staff prioritized for interviews were those who were present with the students at least daily, and had regular interaction with the students in service, interpersonal, and reflection contexts. Each of these participants were interviewed by phone and audio was recorded to be transcribed. PittServes staff who served as trip leaders assisted in identifying which community partners met the selection criteria.

Barriers experienced in the outreach included lack of response or a response that noted an inability or unwillingness to participate. Seven individuals were contacted, representing community partners from the 2018 program to request interviews initially. One of the 2018 partner organizations declined to participate due to their ongoing involvement with many Alternative Break programs. They noted that they would not be able to provide information specific to Pitt students, as they interacted with over 120 other schools / organizations in 2018. Three organizations provided no response at all. Finally, an interview was conducted with the two community partners from one of the international Alternative Break site(s). Following this low response rate, the additional 2019 community partners were contacted to strengthen the

information received within that additional outreach, and a partner who had interacted with students in both 2018 and 2019 agreed to participate. While the intent was to contain the study to the 2018 curriculum, the inclusion of 2019 partners provided the opportunity to understand more in-depth feedback from more diverse perspectives. Despite a low initial response, the important voices of community partners were obtained by altering the sample size and including individuals who worked with Pitt students over the course of two years. Table 3 contains data about the partners interviewed and organizations represented.

Table 3Alternative Break Partner Interviews

Year	Number of Partners Interviewed	Number of Organizations Represented	Notes
2018 Only	3	3	Three partners that interacted with three different groups from the 2018 program
2018 / 2019	1	1	One individual engaged with PittServes students in both 2018 and 2019, and thus provided response based on interaction with both groups.
2019 Only	2	1	The two partners represented one organization

3.3.1.3 Staff

Staff leaders from the 2018 Alternative Break were contacted via email and by phone. Each of these staff members had worked directly with me for the implementation of the 2018

Alternative Break program and attended trainings as available and served with students during their Alternative Break trip. Of the eight possible staff members who served as leaders on the 2018 Alternative Break trip, six were able to schedule the phone interview. Staff leaders were interviewed regarding their experience and their perceptions of student preparation for their service during Alternative Break trips. These individuals represented local, national, and international experiences, and there was representation from the Spring Break and May Break cohorts. Staff members were all familiar with PittServes, and were actively involved in Student Affairs programming and PittServes service activities. Staff members were all young professionals and were less than five years into their careers at the University of Pittsburgh. Each of these participants was interviewed by phone, with audio recorded and transcribed.

The barriers to the ability to interview the final two staff members who were eligible were due to relocation or travel restrictions that they cited when declining the request for an interview within the timeframe noted. The additional two staff members noted their willingness to be interviewed, but lacked the ability to do so within that time frame.

3.3.1.4 Summary of participants:

Table 4 displays the number of individuals contacted to request an interview. Of that pool of individuals, some agreed (see number interviewed) and others declined, were ineligible, or provided no response at all. Some students were removed from the initial contact list, due to their participation in the 2019 program or their role as a planner for the Alternative Break experience.

Table 4 Alternative Break Interviews

Demographic	Number contacted	Number Interviewed
Student	31	9
Staff	8	6
Community Partner	13	6
	TOTAL	**21**

3.4 Data Collection / Instruments

Data collection occurred in two ways to support a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of the training in addressing the problem of practice. A document review and one-on-one semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted, with program participants. Documents were retrieved from PittServes files and my own personal records of the program to be reviewed. Each of the interviews was audio recorded and I transcribed each, to enhance the relationship to the data.

3.4.1 Document Review

A review of program documents created during the planning, implementation, and debrief stages support understanding in the program evaluation. Documents reviewed include curriculum outline / agendas, participant applications, notes from mid-point student reflection sessions and feedback, and post-trip student evaluations. A brief description of each type is listed below:

- Curriculum outline / agendas – the written plans and agendas for available for the pre-service trainings. These were reviewed for an understanding of what occurred and how they mapped to the best practices stated and the interview responses of students and staff members. Reviewing these documents assists in describing program activities, as stated in objective one of Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer (2015).

- Participant applications – each student interested in participating in the Alternative Break experience submitted an application electronically that included essays, contact information, and optional demographic information. This was reviewed for an understanding of the diversity of interested students in the program. This directly works to address objective one from Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer (2015) in understanding the targeted populations.

- Mid-point student reflection feedback – Students from all Spring Break trips were asked to provide feedback on their training experience prior to their departure for their community of focus. This direct feedback from students was given in a timely manner, using the Start-Stop-Continue model (described within the data analysis section), to understand their reactions to the training separately from their reactions to their service experience. As Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer (2015) note in objective two, in understanding if the program agendas were implemented as intended, this feedback is focused solely on the training, rather than the full Alternative Break service experience.

- Post-trip evaluations – Students were asked to complete electronic feedback via Qualtrics, stored in Microsoft Excel. Questions regarding their experience, perceived learning and implementation of the training topics while serving were included. While questions varied from Spring to May, similar questions were asked and themes could

be analyzed from student responses. These evaluations provided timely feedback regarding the student's experience during service and their immediate feelings of preparation for their trip. These evaluations were reviewed for themes to better understand Wholey, Hatry, & Newcomer (2015)'s third objective of measuring program impact.

3.4.2 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with student participants, community partners, and staff members, to best understand the experiences, reactions, and ongoing learning from the PittServes pre-service curriculum. Protocols were created for each interview group to collect participants understanding of core themes of trainings, reactions to experiences, and ongoing experiences as the training relates to community service. Each protocol was created with similar questions, linked to the best practices that were highlighted in the literature, to understand student's perspectives of their learning and the reflection of staff and community partners for how that learning was demonstrated during community service. Each protocol was tested individually. Two students who had participated previously in a pilot version of the pre-training and were not eligible for the study, were interviewed as testers of the protocol. This was to identify if there were phrases or questions that caused confusion or were leading for students. Each student then provided feedback after the interview occurred, regarding their understanding of the protocol and suggestions to improve the interview for future student participants. The staff and community partner protocols were each piloted by one person respectively, who had previous experience planning or participating with Alternative Break programs through other universities. The pilot

supported an understanding of language, jargon, and increased need for connection to student questions, to ensure quality information was collected.

Each person was asked specifically about the four themes, and how well students demonstrated an understanding of the concepts, to determine the effectiveness of the core themes of the training. The four themes are Asset Based Community Development, team building, power and privilege, and reflection. Students were also asked to reflect on which trainings and activities were most informative and enjoyable. Responses varied widely by respondent, ranging from "I don't remember" to detailed responses of their memory of a specific training, or how information conveyed during the training impacted a student during the service experience or since their participation in Alternative Break.

Posvac (2011) stated that the less formal structure and the ability to request clarifying information can provide the researcher with greater depth of understanding. "Good interviewers possess interpersonal skills and common sense that permit them to obtain the information needed while maintaining the goodwill of the person interviewed" (p. 99). Aligned with the six stages of successful interviews, presented by Posvac, the interviews were conducted in an interpersonal nature to gather information and build rapport. The importance of the interviewers' preparation is also noted by Posvac, to ensure that maturity, interpersonal communication, and "polite persistence" is employed to ensure interviews yield the most useful data. The additional steps required include: "developing rapport, asking questions, probing for more information, recording answers, and ending the qualitative interview" (p. 153-156).

As part of each interview process, we began with informal conversation regarding the individual's week, updates on their personal and professional paths, or more individualized goodwill-building conversation based on their previous relationship. I also had the opportunity to

share personal stories of my own, as appropriate or as inquired by the interviewees. All interviews included a preamble regarding confidentiality, right to withdraw from the study, and a confirmation that it was both ok to record and proceed with the interview. Seven of the student interviews were conducted in person and thus hand written notes are available in the files. The final two student interviews, all staff, and all community partner interviews occurred via telephone. Each file, audio and transcription, were de-identified with a participant code and stored separately from the schedule of interviewees. Participants were not asked to identify themselves in the recording and were only asked to confirm which trip and year they participated. Identifying markers were removed from the transcript to protect the identities of participants.

The protocols for each participant group are listed in the appendices for reference of the reader. As noted, each protocol was piloted with an individual who has implemented Alternative Break programs at other universities and revised for clarity and effectiveness. All community partners interviewed (Spring Breaks '18 & 19, and May Break '18) were able to respond to the same protocol, as the students were trained in the same themes of pre-training during the 2019 program.

After review, the student protocol included, "What did you learn from participating in the Alternative Break pre-trip training?", "What did you find most useful from the training?", and "What was your favorite part of the pre-trip training?" These three questions were asked to provide the self-understanding of not only what the students liked, but really what brought them increased learning and related to their trip preparation. Staff and community partners were similarly asked, "What were areas where you saw the students as well prepared or underprepared during their service?" to provide an understanding of how students were prepared to serve and if it related to the student's self-evaluated learning and preparation. Each participant group was asked questions

focused on the four specific trainings for reactions and evidence of preparation with Asset Based Community Development, team building, reflection, and power & privilege. Staff and community partners were asked for ways in which they would like Pitt to prepare students better in the future. To further explore the protocol and analysis, charts 10 -12 are included within the Analysis section.

3.4.3 Summary of participants

The interviews included students and staff from 2018 and community partners from both 2018 and 2019 to add richness to the data. Table 5 contains a review of the individuals interviewed for the study:

Table 5 Summary of participants

Group	Spring '18	May '18	Spring '19	Total
Students	8	1	0	9
Staff	5	1	0	
Community Partner	4	0	2*	6
TOTALS	**17**	**2**	**2**	**21***

*One community partner represented both Spring '18 and Spring '19 due to their 2-year participation. This individual is only represented in the Spring '18 numbers, but is important to note their dual participation.

3.4.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis section consists of a review of how I analyzed the data and what information was learned from the analysis. The grounded theory, "generating theory grounded in the data themselves" (Saldana, 2016, p.301) and coding methods used within the document review and qualitative interviews provides information that will further be explored in charts focused on the information gathered, the summary of analysis, and illustrative quotes.

In documents that required coding, "In Vivo" coding of themes– the use of "short words or phrases from the participants own language" (Saldana, 2016, p. 294) – was implemented for focused coding and was conducted to understand the themes across all groups of interviewees and in specific documents. Using "In Vivo" coding, I was looking for words or phrases from the transcribed interviews and the documents reviewed that included direct student language (that they wrote or verbally gave). This coding was used to respect and honor the student's own language and their perceptions of how they found the experiences. Coding of each of the data sources within the document review was completed in a manner to support understanding on a scale of no impact to high impact as it pertained to the student preparation and relationship to best practices. "In Vivo" coding was important to not only understand what the participants were saying, but also what they were not saying or not understanding in the interview process. The concepts of training were included as they were titled in the preparation of the program, the in vivo coding supported understanding of when students had examples of their own learning or responded with "I don't know".

3.4.4.1 Document Review

During the document review, the relation between the pre-service program design, the best-practice themes of the trainings and the coded interview responses were examined and compared to the stated best practices in the literature. Documents reviewed included the applications for all students to the Spring and May trips in 2018, the pre-selection interview communication and readings, agendas for the pre-curriculum meetings, and student feedback collected immediately prior to and following the Alternative Break trip.

Documents were reviewed using initial coding to understand if PittServes created documents met the expectations of best practices of literature. In this case, it was considered if the document aligned well, somewhat, or not well to meet the intended impact of the best practice. The documents included only the documents that used participant feedback or language (applications, evaluations, start-stop-continue feedback). "In Vivo" phrases often connected directly to best practices and the respondent's positivity or negativity toward the levels of preparedness that was achieved.

3.4.4.2 Agenda for student trainings

The agenda for student trainings included a focus on personal and professional development as well as team building and preparation for travel. Table 6 provides an overview of the structure of the trainings for the Alternative Spring Break pre-trip program.

Table 6 Alternative Break Agendas

Session	Topic	Activities	Connections to Best Practices
1	Welcome, introductions, paperwork	Overview of expectations Signing of participant agreement Additional paperwork Team introductions Overview of trip from past participant Team ice-breaker activity	Alcohol and Drug Free Orientation
2	Asset Based Community Development	ABCD training and reflection Q&A Team Conversation Activity reflection	Education Reflection
3	Power & Privilege	Privilege Gallery Small group reflection Q&A	Diversity & Social Justice Reflection
4	Self-Discovery	I am Poems Reflection of Friend Dates Written reflection	Education
5	International connections / Ecuador	Skype with in-country partner Language reflection Ecuadorian history	Orientation Education Reflection

	(this additional session was only provided to the students traveling to Ecuador)		
6	Feedback and final thoughts	Start-Stop-Continue Trip-specific team time Final logistics	Reflection Training Education
Service Day	MLK Day of Service	Cohort based service Reflection	Strong direct service Reflection Training
*The May Break trainings followed a very similar structure, yet used less frequent and longer sessions to achieve the goals.			

3.4.4.3 Application and selection process

Throughout the application and selection process, students were encouraged to share their demographic data, their approach to service, and their desire for the location of service in order to promote the program's intentional focus on diversity and social justice. The application included the following questions, in addition to contact information:

2018 Alternative Break Application Questions:

- Why are you interested in serving as a member of the 2018 cohort of Alternative Spring Break? (Please submit no more than 300 words.)

- Choice Rank of Trip

- Why did you select your top choice?

- Please describe your most recent community service experience. What went well? What could have been improved? (Please submit no more than 300 words.)

- Diversity is important to the creation of a strong cohort of community servants. Please note areas that you identify with. (Optional) - Selected Choice / Other Text

- Please note any questions you have at this time.

The applications for both Alternative Spring and May breaks from 2018 were reviewed for consideration of how diversity of student demographics are seen in the interest and participation for Alternative Breaks. Of the 209 student applications, 141 or 67% noted an element of diversity within the optional field. Table 7 contains the options students had to select from, including an "Other" open text box.

Table 7. Applicants for Spring and May Break 2018

Person of Color	40
First Generation College Student	32
Originally from City of Pittsburgh	31
LGBTQ	30
Other	28
International Student	21
Individual with a Disability	10
No Response	68
	n=209

The agreements students signed were reviewed to confirm alignment with the best practice of "a drug and alcohol-free experience" (Sumka, Porter, & Piacitelli, 2015, p. 87). The document review of the student agreement provided confirmation that the students did sign a statement of agreement that the trip would be both drug and alcohol free, for the entirety of their time with Alternative Break. The following language was included in the agreement: "I, [INSERT STUDENT NAME] wish to participate in the Alternative Break Program at the University of Pittsburgh [LOCATION SITE] service site during Spring Break 2018. I understand that my participation in the Alternative Break program includes pre-training and service, and the week consists of community service, daily reflection, team building, and opportunities to experience local culture and sightseeing as appropriate. I understand that Alternative Break is an ALCOHOL AND DRUG FREE experience and that some trips may limit or restrict tobacco use." The full agreement can be found in Appendix G.

The best practices of education, orientation, and training presented by Sumka et al. encourage "site specific educational sessions… [to] provide participants with the historical, political, social, and cultural context" of the trip, in addition to "orient[ing] participants to the mission and vision of the organization(s)", and "build[ing] the skills needed to most effectively carry out task and projects during the trip" (p. 80-87). These areas of best practices were a focal point of the student interviews, to best understand how the students felt prepared with these varied concepts.

Within orientation Sumka (2015) discussed the connection to the organization(s) students are serving with and connecting students to their mission and vision. This also allows for an increased connection for longer term understanding of the underlying issues, identifies opportunities for continued connection, and identification of larger systemic issues. This will directly address the feedback of students regarding a lack of understanding of the area or the organizations they were serving in during their breaks. Training, as Sumka et al. articulated, is the "plan[ing] of training for the break team to build the skills needed to most effectively carry out task sand projects during the trip" (p.87).

3.4.4.4 Start-Stop-Continue Feedback

To understand the success on the best practice areas, the documentation from the Stop-Start-Continue feedback session provides additional information about students' pre-service experiences related to diversity and social justice, education, orientation, training, and reflection. Using this model of obtaining feedback, in which participants individually noted what they would start (or add) for future iterations of the trainings, what they would stop doing, and what they would continue doing, feedback was collected to get individual thoughts and feedback. All information was stored electronically and reviewed to identify themes in feedback specific only to

61

the training, rather than the service experiences. During their final training prior to departure for Alternative Spring Break in 2018, students were prompted to consider their full experience from the time they were accepted into the Alternative Break program until that day. This feedback was anonymous, and each student was to visit each poster and note their personal preferences of what the program staff should start to implement, stop implementing, and continue implementing in future iterations of the pre-trip curriculum. The notes were transcribed and filed in March 2018. Themes of the three categories are coded below from the document review.

START:

11	Increased team building		1	Enhance selectivity within selection process
9	Provide Trip Specific Detail		1	Provide food at trainings
5	Training Ideas / Topics			
3	Increase advertising / marketing			

Thirty responses were collected from students as to what they felt PittServes should start doing within the pre-curriculum sessions. The eleven responses that encouraged increased team building referenced increased friend date requirements (assignments provided that between sessions students get together one-on-one or in small groups to learn more about people they do not already know), having more group activities that are specific only to their groups, and informal / outings with their group. This collection of responses differs from the best practices concepts, and focuses primarily on the student bonding experience of the training, rather than the practical application or social justice trainings. The nine trip specific notes focused on logistics and travel

62

instruction. This correlation connects directly to the best practices of education and training, as both focus on the site-specific content and skills based trainings that should occur. The students' desire for these focused trainings requires increased capacity and provides potential for student leadership development.

STOP:

5	All activities being structured
3	Logistics (location / time) of trainings
1	Irrelevant training topics

The stop section of feedback had far fewer comments provided, offering only nine ideas that fell into three categories. Five of the nine comments were in the theme that there was a desire for less structure within the trainings and a desire for more trip-specific activities (rather than large group activities). Stop comments also included feedback of the shifting of room locations and times. The final comment offered that trainings were irrelevant to their specific trip. These comments show that while there is a desire for more flexible training, the low number of comments within this area show that students generally were pleased with the training program.

CONTINUE:

10	Specific training topic
6	Friend Dates
4	Volunteering
3	Group Activity

Twenty-three responses for continued activities were noted by students, with direct mention of specific trainings occurring ten times. These topics included cultural competency, voluntourism awareness, impact of service, trip-specific connections (via Skype), and there included mention of broadly continuing to have the training be part of the program. Six comments noted friend dates specifically, four commented on continuing to have the group volunteer together as part of the pre-curriculum (MLK Day), and three noted to continue the group activities as part of the program. In reviewing the "Start" and "Stop" first, it was anticipated that continue may include group activities and trip-specific content, which is what was most evident. These areas should be a focal point of the future, as the students noted enjoyment and learning from these activities that are shown in Table 8.

Table 8 Students' favorite activities

5	More trip-specific information		2	Enhance selection process
4	Sensitivity training		1	Establish group norms / ground rules
3	More trip-relevant skill training		1	Provide cost overview
3	Adjustment to training schedule		1	Build historical content from year-to-year
3	Increase team building			N=21

The themes following coding provided five "more trip-specific information" and three "more trip-relevant skill training." These two themes call attention to the need for trainings to be tailored more toward each specific trip, rather than general and inclusive of all students participating in local, national, and international trips at once. The consistent feedback from

students pre and post trip show that there is a desire for more tailored trainings to better prepare them to serve with focus areas, specific communities, and with physical projects.

The training themes that emerged from the Start-Stop-Continue feedback can be mapped to best practices in literature, including education, orientation, and training (Sumka, Porter, & Piacitelli, 2015). These areas included content that students described as inviting guest speakers, environmental training, language lessons, and survival skills training. Based on student descriptions, definitions are as follows:

- Guest speakers – speakers from the community partner organizations or content experts regarding the specific focal themes that each group will be addressing (homelessness, environmental, community development, etc.). Guest speakers have the ability to provide the elements of education and orientation for the participants, to focus on key themes of service or community-specific content.

- Environmental Training – training for the specific groups that will have an environmental or eco focus during their time serving. This includes the understanding of the causes and needs of these communities as well as trainings that would include practice with hiking, trail tools, digging, excavating, etc. Sumka et al. consider training as skill specific lessons to prepare students for their service, this best practice aligns to a better prepared group of students.

- Language Lessons – for trips that were in communities where English was not the first language, students noted request for increased language instruction (i.e. Spanish classes). This also maps to training as noted by Sumka et al., to better support the ability for students to be successful while completing service projects.

- Survival skills training – training for wilderness activities and basic first-aid skills for those groups that are serving in rural or international locations. With both training and orientation, Sumka et al. could map this specific skill to the preparedness best-practices for students participating in service.

3.4.4.5 Training Schedules

The training schedule was reviewed to better understand the education, orientation, reflection, and training best practices components (Sumka et al., 2015). Table 9 contains information incorporated from Table 6, session activities and connections to best practices, and is an elaboration for the program, where a lack of connection to best practices has been found.

Table 9 Training Best Practice Connection

Activities	Connections to Best Practices	Lack of Connection to Best Practices
Overview of expectations Signing of participant agreement Additional paperwork Team introductions Overview of trip from past participant Team ice-breaker activity	Alcohol and Drug Free Orientation	Education – trip-specific content regarding the issue-specific service themes, social justice issues, and history were not included. Orientation – an understanding of community partner's mission, vision, and key audiences was not included.
ABCD training and reflection Q&A Team Conversation Activity reflection	Education Reflection	Orientation – an understanding of community partner's mission, vision, and key audiences was not included.

66

Table 9 continued

Activities	Connections to Best Practices	Lack of Connection to Best Practices
Privilege Gallery Small group reflection Q&A	Diversity & Social Justice Reflection	
I am Poems Reflection of Friend Dates Written reflection	Education Reflection	Reflection – while connected, the individual and small group process did not assist in the training and facilitation tactics that support staff or student leaders in more productive reflection sessions.
Skype with in-country partner Language reflection Ecuadorian history	Orientation Education Reflection	*This was only available to the students traveling to Ecuador. This content meets best practices, yet was not consistent for all trips.
Start-Stop-Continue Trip-specific team time Final logistics	Reflection Training Education	
Cohort based service Reflection	Strong direct service Reflection Training	

3.5 Data Analysis

The interviews were conducted with three categories of interviewees who all held distinct roles within the Alternative Break trips: student participants, staff leaders, and community partners. Themes that were gathered from the coding are listed as majority or minority opinions and in cases where the responses do not have definitive themes, themes of positivity or negativity toward the preparedness levels were considered. The data were analyzed and coded question by question to understand key themes, outliers, and additional questions for exploration. Bernard, Wutich, and Ryan (2017) list five steps for analyzing the text of interviews: "(1) discovering themes and subthemes; (2) describing the core and peripheral elements of themes; (3) building hierarchies of themes or codebooks; (4) applying themes—that is, attaching them to chunks of actual text; and (5) linking themes into theoretical models" (p. 54).

In Vivo coding was used as the beginning strategy to code the responses to the one-on-one interviews. This strategy was used to identify themes across all twenty-one interviews to be able to understand how effective the training was for preparing students for service during Alternative Break. Each group was asked questions around the training themes to provide understanding of student's preparedness or under preparedness. The students provided feedback regarding their experience in the pre-curriculum and their experiences and preparation levels shortly after returning from their trips, while staff and community partners were asked about the student levels of preparation and ways in which they demonstrated this.

The protocols for both students and staff were aligned to ensure that an understanding of the ways in which students were prepared or underprepared could be reviewed from both perspectives. Data analysis was conducted after the interviews were recorded and coded. Following transcription, documents were reviewed individually question by question and coded

68

through written and typed notes. Deductive coding was used to analyze the content of the semi-structured interviews in which respondents were asked to assess the students' understanding and implementation of the specific four training topics (Asset Based Community Development, reflection, power & privilege, and team-building). Additionally, an inductive coding process, aligned with grounded theory, was used to code the less structured portions of the interviews. Grounded theory "is the qualitative analysis process whereby a theory is derived to portray the view 'grounded' in the participant. This is done through an iterative process, where emerging categories are constantly compared to data extracted from the interviews" (Miller, 2013). Deductive coding was used to identify themes of preexisting data through the document review. By looking at concepts emerging from literature and prior data sets and methods, it will be possible to generate coding themes from previous surveys.

Common open-ended questions were asked of each stakeholder group in order to enrich the analysis and have multiple perspectives about how the Alternative Break programming influenced student preparedness for the service experiences. Each stakeholder was asked to reflect on how well the students demonstrated attributes reflective of the concepts they were introduced to during pre-service training. Responses to each item were aggregated within stakeholder populations and tested against each other to see how perceptions of student preparedness varied by group.

Throughout the data analysis process, the goal was to identify both strengths of the programming and opportunities for improvement. The study supports the ability to identify which concepts and key learnings students grasped the best, and how their experience with programming through PittServes supported that learning. To best display this information, appendices H-J provide an overview of each of the questions asked and a summary of the analysis, as well as direct

participant quotes. The focus of each table is on the specific group of interviewees (students, staff, and community partners). Each question has corresponding quotes from participants to assist with the understanding from the summary of analysis.

From the data, I was able to discover the themes that could lead to clearer understanding and formulate recommendations for the Office of PittServes. There were varied levels of understanding or recollection of some trainings from the student perspective, and staff members varied in their perceptions of the ways in which students were prepared. When asked about specific trainings, students were less likely to be able to recall the training by name and provide examples of ways in which they were prepared based on the training. However, generally when the four training topics were presented to students through additional questions, the students were able to provide reflection or critical feedback that mapped to these four areas. The following three sections feature what was found from the data, categorized by students, staff, and then community partners.

3.5.1 Students

As I reviewed the responses of the students, I was able to understand themes regarding the students' experience and pull some outlying information that will support continued growth of the program. The overview of each interview question and illustrative quotes are provided in Appendix H for further understanding of the themes.

The importance of hearing varied and diverse perspectives through the interviews also informed my process for summarizing the responses. As each individual has their own lens and personal experience, it was very important to me to honor the views of each interviewee while also pulling themes where they could be found. Areas where students felt particularly passionate

regarding a positive or critical experience was an opportunity to explore more of how to evolve this program.

I found that the majority of students noted that awareness of privilege and bias was at the forefront of their learning. This was noted by specific mention of the power and privilege training activities, specific readings, and the conversation and reflection of each group regarding their space within the communities of focus. Within questions regarding specifically what the students learned and what they found most useful, illustrative responses of the power and privilege content was reoccurring and support the claims that a very important part of the pre-trip program is focused on student's own awareness of their own privileges and how they will connect with the communities of focus. A student commented, "I learned how to evaluate my service and be less introspective and more of how they see my service. I wasn't the one to decide if I was helping or hurting, that wasn't my choice."

Trip specific information was an important factor of the students' preparation and often noted as a key factor in what they would have added to their training and what would have made them better prepared. When asked what was most useful, a student noted, "[When we] spoke to someone who had been on the trip before and learning about their experience and some tips to make us more comfortable." Students' desire for more specific information to their trips (vs. the general knowledge of ethical and effective community service) aligns with the best practices stated in the literature. Asking what additional content PittServes could provide, included responses such as "hiking," "more physical training," and "better preparation for what we would be doing throughout the week." One student summed up their response with, "I would add a lot more trip specific training. I know a lot of the pre-trip training was pretty broad so it could cover informing

71

everyone form all the different trips. I wish we did learn more about our trip specifically and more things that would help us on our specific trip."

A consistently positive response regarding the students' experiences were their ability to build community with their peers that they would be serving with. This was illustrated by one student, "I oddly found it most useful to get to know everyone," and another, "I also thought that meeting with the group we were going to be with was extremely helpful so we could build connections ahead of time".

I also found an important facet in the students' responses to how they have since engaged in community service and how they have (or will) do so in the future. While not all students have participated in community service, this shows that the link to ongoing service was not a high priority for all students. However, the majority of students did note that any future community services will focus on the deeper connections to the community or the nonprofit agency they are serving with, compared to how they participated in service activities prior to their Alternative Break experience. A student noted, "In the future I will evaluate if it is a necessary need. I would really like to do something that is helpful instead of making myself feel good", illustrating well that the consideration of community was factored into their experience.

3.5.2 Staff

Staff members are employees of the University of Pittsburgh who assisted in the implementation of the 2018 Alternative Spring and May Break programs. Each individual served as a trip leader for service and reflection experiences. Each staff member had varying levels of participation within the pre-trip trainings. As with the student interviews, I found it to be important

to understand the themes of each question while also acknowledging that each staff member had varying levels of their own training and preparation for the Alternative Break program.

The majority of staff members noted that students were well prepared for positive interactions with the community and the flexibility with which they approached the week of service. A staff member noted, "I felt that students were more prepared than I thought they would be." Another commented, "I would say they were fairly prepared. I think they were prepared in the sense that they reflected on what service was to them, that this wasn't just a social or recreational trip." The varied levels of training were touched on by each staff member, which reinforced my understanding that there were areas that students were well prepared and areas that lacked in preparation, offering opportunity for further program development within the pre-trip curriculum.

I found that staff themselves had drastic interpretations of their own levels of preparation for the trips. While some felt very well prepared to lead reflection and manage group dynamics others did not. There were also varied responses in preparation for managing the logistics of travel and service with community partners. Staff shared, "I felt pretty prepared, we had a schedule ahead of time. I kind of knew at least generally where we would be each day even if the timing shifted a little bit. [Although], I think I would have liked to participate in more of their pre-group meetings." Another noted, "For me I was prepared knowing that larger picture. I did feel a little unprepared in moments when it came to individual students. So for students that (and I got to know them a bit more during the trip) but students that had health issues and they would write somethings on their forms – and I was like how do I deal with this? What would happen if something happens with persons mental health anxiety, depression, what would I do?"

As staff members were asked to consider when they say evidence of students displaying preparedness based on the trainings the most common response was the focusing on assets that students displayed while in community. Staff frequently mentioned students' asset based approach or direct connection to the Asset Based Community Development training module. Comments included:

- "I think the biggest one is the concept of an asset based mindset and asset based approach. Because a lot of times in our debrief and facilitation at the end of the evening."

- "I saw them display some insight on what is service, what does service mean to them. The group that I interacted with were pretty open to discuss their history with service, how service was a role in their life. Umm, so I think a lot of them had reflected on that piece even before starting the alt break trip."

- "So I think, also it was ABCD of course… that was the first training which I would say is a skill I saw the students display throughout the course of the trip. We had great conversations facilitated by student leaders with our community partners. About what opportunities it had and opportunities where we could come and fill in."

- "ABCD, was something that they utilized. We went to [the city] for one day. So they actually spent some time walking around and trying to identify assets. So that part was actually incredibly helpful. Everywhere we went, I had students say 'I'm trying to look at this with that glass half full mentality – and not, wow, this is kind of gross'."

3.5.3 Community Partners

The third group of interviewees, Community Partners, were employees or trained volunteers of the host organizations within the communities of focus during the Alternative Break

service experiences. These individuals were screened to ensure they interacted with the students during their service experiences, however, there were varied levels of interaction dependent on the partner. The community partner interviews were conducted to gather feedback regarding the perceptions of the individuals in-community who worked with the Pitt students throughout their Alternative Break experience. Community partners were asked about students' preparation, and it was consistently reported that students were underprepared for the site-specific tasks, knowledge, or physical demands of the projects / service work. Community partners were asked about the same training elements the students were asked about (Asset Based Community Development, reflection, power & privilege, and team-building), and while consistently partners were not able to provide examples of preparedness here, they also did not note under-preparedness in these areas.

As the community partners were not included in the pre-trip training, their responses were used to compare their perceptions of how prepared students were with the perceptions of students and community partners. One noted, "I don't think that anything we asked them to do required any specific expertise. So it's not as if they came in with any kind of any kind of huge advantage over someone who wouldn't be prepared. But they did seem prepared to ask good questions about what it is that we do. And they were also prepared to do whatever it was that we needed done. They were eager and willing to do it." As shown in the detailed information within Appendix J, community partners felt that students were most prepared to participate in service, were eager to learn, and were open-minded. Enhanced reflection was noted as an opportunity for growth, as community partners offered, "During reflections they tended to get very quiet. When we had them partner up for things they would speak to each other 1:1, but whenever we tried to do full-group discussions it was very, very quiet." Another partner shared, "I think it was funny, because a lot

of them would be very inquisitive during the day and then we would come to our prepared reflections and this honestly might have been our fault too – maybe. It might have been our fault too that the reflections weren't interesting enough so a lot of times it was us trying to prompt them to say something, and so throughout the week, it was probably 4-5 people who would ever talk during the reflections maybe through the reflections and if they had to. Honestly, that was just shyness and maybe it was the end of the day and maybe they were tired." Finally, another commented, "I don't measure participation just in terms of how much you talk. I measure participation in how you are actively listening, are you following along, Are you following along with the reading and prompts and does it look like you are thinking about it." Their perceptions of the preparedness levels as it relates to the best practices or the specific training modules were less clear, as some may not have been familiar with the terminology or the relationship to their organization / community.

While community partners noted complementary anecdotes about the students' engagement with their service projects, the majority were not able to provide specific ways in which they desire the students to be more prepared by the PittServes staff. "Learning more about specifics about each community. I think that would be really important just so that students come in with some ideas." The desire for future partnership was inclusive of expanded community-specific information, training tied directly to the activities students will be participating in, and future connections for ongoing service. There was a small theme that also included an interest in knowing what the students had been trained in and possible participation in those trainings. A specific partner commented, "One important part about their sessions would have been for us have known what their sessions were about when planning their schedule, we did some learnings of our own. I think things like gentrification would have been a great thing to cover and even just really

76

what it means to do service. And what it looks like and the different forms that it can take on. And even more of the history of [the community] would have also been interesting. We covered most of that, but it took away from time we would have been doing service, had we not been covering that." This expanded connection will require increased capacity for implementation, but was found to be of interest by the community partners either in person or via technology in the future.

The process in which I took to review and compare the responses of community partners aided in the development of my personal understanding of areas of growth and the formulation of recommendations for continued success and opportunities for improvement. Each comment and response was also considered alongside long pause answers or lack of answers to understand how students, community partners, and staff reflected on the preparedness levels of students and opportunities for program development.

3.6 Limitations

Limitations of the evaluation include my involvement as the implementer and the researcher of the program, as well as the timing of the evaluation. I created and implemented the pre-training curriculum and served as the facilitator for nearly all modules for Spring Break and several modules of the May Break. This may have influenced the responses of the students and staff who connect the curriculum to me as an individual, when they are being asked about the pre-training that occurred in the weeks prior to the service trip. Additionally, because the training was implemented in varied levels, the students in the Spring Break trips experienced different facilitation and implementation of the training than the May Break students, as a portion of the

training was led by a colleague within PittServes, who implemented the curriculum over day-long sessions, rather than weekly, short sessions.

The timing of the community partner evaluation did pose a limitation, as the 2018 partners were being asked to participate in interviews based on their interaction with the students between six and nine months prior. This timing and distance from the program proved to be a significant barrier, and therefore their feedback is limited in this study.

4.0 Findings

This summary of findings consists of elements of the PittServes Alternative Break pre-service curriculum were effectively implemented and had their intended impact, and which elements need to be strengthened to fully prepare students to effectively engage in Alternative Break service opportunities. Chapter III contains an explanation of the methods used to gather and analyze data from administrative records, student program participants, staff, and community partners. This chapter consists of a discussion of the findings based on those analyses, organized and outlined by each inquiry question.

Aligned with the three inquiry questions, this section begins with a discussion highlighting findings related to how well the PittServes pre-service curriculum reflected established best practices. Next, the programming elements that successfully supported student growth and development are presented, along with those which require more development to be fully effective. Finally, the ways in which students demonstrated evidence of their learning in their service experiences will be provided.

4.1 Inquiry Question 1

How does the PittServes curriculum and accepted best practices align with recommendations from the field, for Alternative Break programs?

Components of the PittServes pre-service curriculum and feedback from program stakeholders are evaluated against the eight components of a quality Alternative Break program

identified by Sumka, Porter, and Piacitelli (2015). The review of the PittServes training curriculum and program documents indicated that each of the eight elements was included in the pre-service program design. The stakeholder interviews and completeness of the program documentation helped to gauge how well each aspect was implemented. Table 10 contains a brief summary of findings, listing each of the eight components Sumka (2015) identified and the information gathered that provides evidence of positive implementation or the lack of successful implementation to show comparisons between the PittServes pre-curriculum and the stated best practices.

The program evaluation revealed that PittServes is well aligned with best practices in the areas of Diversity and Social Justice and received mixed responses regarding Reflection. The aspects that need improvement include the Education, Orientation, and Training components. Strong direct service, Drug and alcohol-free experiences, and Reorientation are best practices of Alternative Break programs, which PittServes did address; however, they are not explicitly included in this inquiry questions of this study since the focus was specifically on the pre-service training program. The narrative following Table 10 is a detailed explanation of the findings related to each component.

Table 10 Alternative Break Findings

Components of a Quality Alternative Break	Evidence of Positive Implementation	Evidence of Lack of Successful Implementation	Finding
Diversity and Social Justice	Application form Pre-Interview Readings Power & Privilege Training Project specific connections, trainings, readings Student interview response		Students found a strong connection to the power and privilege training and the content was reinforced through reflection
Education	Pre-Interview Readings Project specific connections, trainings, readings	Student interview responses Student post-evaluation responses	Mixed responses were provided regarding education, mostly varying between Spring and May break. There is an area of growth for PittServes.
Orientation	ABCD	Student interview responses Student post-evaluation	This finding provides mixed notions, as it is evident that students and community partners had varied levels of understanding of the term itself, yet were able to provide examples through their narrative that supported examples of when students did display ABCD framework.

Table 10 continued

Components of a Quality Alternative Break	Evidence of Positive Implementation	Evidence of Lack of Successful Implementation	Finding
Training	On-site trainings (during service)	Student interview responses Student post-evaluation	Best practices may include training prior to arrival for skills based. This is an area of improvement for PittServes, as community partners are interested in increased skills training.
Strong Direct Service	MLK Day of Service (pre) Weekly service schedule during trip		It was found that while not part of the initial curriculum, students generally enjoyed participating in the MLK Day of service as a team building activity and as part of their preparation. A finding includes the opportunity for PittServes to enhance this aspect as part of the curriculum.
Alcohol & Drug Free	Student Agreement (signed at first group meeting)		This was achieved by the student agreement and discussions facilitated by staff.

Table 10 continued

Components of a Quality Alternative Break	Evidence of Positive Implementation	Evidence of Lack of Successful Implementation	Finding
Reflection	MLK Day of Service (post-reflection) Stop-Start-Continue debrief prior to Alt Spring Break Journaling Daily reflection		Mixed findings are present for this area. Students were able to provide examples of their reflection, while staff and community partners see this as an area for improvement.
Reorientation	Post-break meeting	Additional opportunities for engagement as a group. Student interview data regarding service post-trip.	This was not within the scope of the study, but is a strong opportunity for development within the PittServes program.

Eight components of quality Alternative Breaks from Sumka, Porter, & Piacitelli (2015).

4.1.1 Diversity and Social Justice

Diversity and social justice as a best practice is the intentional focus on ensuring access to the program is not limited and students are reflecting on their own privilege. Program documents (e.g. student applications, training materials) provide evidence that there was positive intentional effort to engage diverse populations of students and infuse trainings related to further exploration of social justice. Additionally, PittServes was successful in including the tenants of this best practice into training.

Findings were gathered from the application data, as students were asked to self-report aspects of their identity which would contribute to a diverse class of students, and the self-reported diversity fields ranged across race, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, nationality, and hometown. No further diversity data were collected through the interview process, but the application responses indicate that the program was successful in recruiting a diverse cohort of students in 2018. Over two-thirds of students who provided a response to the demographic questions noted at least one category of diversity. These categories included being a person of color, LGBTQ, First Generation College Student, International Student, Individual with a disability, and were able to select other and self-identify. As a predominately white institution, over 70% of students in the student body identify as white. With only 10% identifying as Asian, 7% as Black or African American, and 4.2% as Hispanic. The University's international population was 4.8% in 2018. The applicant pool reflected closely to the University's demographics, with international students being more highly represented in the applicant pool than the overall university percentage.

Bringing together a diverse group of students does not guarantee that the training would include social justice and diversity, or that students will understand or embrace the concepts of inclusion and equity. It is also not to be assumed diversity of a cohort, without intentional discussion of cohort/community dynamics, will enhance the relationship with the community partner. Part of the pre-service training was designed to build student awareness of the concepts of power and privilege and how they play a role in their relationships with each other as well as the communities in which they would serve. The effectiveness of this effort was evaluated in the interviews. Students, staff, and community partners were asked about levels of preparedness regarding the power and privilege training that was implemented in the pre-service training. The first question of the interview was open-ended and did not guide students to one training over the other; students were simply asked, "What would you say you learned from participating in the pre-trip training sessions that occurred prior to your trip to [community]?" These unguided responses from students had a strong theme of power and privilege, as nearly all of the students specifically identified power and privilege or made reference to topics that would be placed into this category.

Illustrative quotes from students' responses to question one included, "How we had to be aware of our privilege going into a different community and trying to be aware of maybe some like – umm – disconnect that there might be there, we might know to engage going in." As this student displayed a new awareness for disconnect, another noted that the trainings, "kind of broke that down and made us think 'ok this is where I stand, this is my perspective. How am I biased towards – like ok, I have a higher education – everyone should have higher education, right?' I mean that's not necessarily true. I may be at one level, they may be higher or lower in education than me." As this student continued to explore their awareness of their privilege, the student expanded on how that may show up in communities of focus, and continued, "when talking to

85

people don't be condescending (which I'm not in the first place) but realizing that people come from different background and perspectives. And not everybody is the same. So we wanted to break this down and be sure we started at a baseline understanding of 'ok we are all different – make sure when we approach people and talk to people we don't come off as condescending and we don't say certain things that may hurt them based off their background.' That was one of the good experiences I learned from the training."

For further illustration of this point, another student commented, "We learned about the diversity that was going to be within our communities. I thought it was cool because we did it with [our group] and the people staying in Pittsburgh and various locations. It applied to everywhere we went. So we could still do it as a whole group. I appreciated the diversity within the community. I think that was helpful."

And finally, a student noted, "A lot of what I learned was centered on when you are going to a new [community] to do service, a lot of what they said they see is white privilege / white savior complex…. You are going to save them and bring what you know into their [community] and to assimilate them to be better. A lot of the pre-trip training was trying to crush that. What I learned was just how present it was even if not even consciously thinking about the privilege I have."

The very prominent findings of privilege as it related to students' learnings adhere to a recognition that the best practice of social justice was present and contributing to the learning and awareness of the students.

Additionally, when asked "What trainings did you draw upon while serving during Alternative Break?" five of the nine students provided examples that would be coded as power and privilege. The themes of students recognizing their own power and privilege within their group

and within the service sites support the training best practices of diversity and social justice and correlate with Sumka, Porter, and Piacitelli's (2015) assertion that diversity and social justice "prepare participants to be more effective, strategic, and sensitive in their community work and beyond" (p. 86).

Community partners and staff members were asked to assess the students' level of preparedness as it related to an understanding of power and privilege, to ensure that the training translated into action. Staff and partners provided very limited feedback, commonly stating that they could not comment on that, or that they did not recall observing positive or negative evidence of this dynamic. This may indicate a concern regarding the staff or partners' own training and understanding of the concepts of power and privilege.

4.1.2 Education, Orientation, and Training

The learning components of education, orientation, and training are foundational to a pre-trip preparation program, to ensure that students understand their roles, the connection to the community, and are well prepared to perform the service. Analysis of student, community partner, and staff feedback displayed themes of students being under-prepared for the actual service tasks, physical activity requirements, and language barriers provide ample opportunity for trip-specific training and activity to better prepare the students for their service. Regarding educational best practice, there is also opportunity to enhance the issue based education to directly enhance the student's understanding of the main focal issues of their trip. One student noted in their interview that "knowing more about the issues we are tackling and the community we were going into would have been …more beneficial beforehand." This same concept was provided by several staff members, including one who noted that it appeared to her that the students had never been exposed

to some of the specific issues and people facing those issues. Additionally, three of the six staff members noted that there was confusion of students around the landscape of rural, suburban, and urban homelessness, which was expressed by the questions that were being asked of with the community partner and of the staff members.

It is reasonable to assume that staff members were not feeling well prepared themselves to implement all aspects of the program, given the mixed findings of staff feedback. As the staff member's experience with similar programs did not provide a relationship to feeling more prepared or their perceptions of students' levels of preparedness, it may benefit the program as a whole to provide a training track for staff leaders to focus on the training themes, focus on logistics, and communicate their areas of confidence. It is also suggested that staff are provided a pre-assessment to understand what levels of preparation they currently possess and areas where they do not feel confident in their current training. One staff member did note a desire for participation in the curriculum topics, prior to participating in the trainings alongside the students. A limitation of the staff feedback is the time variation from when they agreed to serve as staff leaders and providing feedback for this study. It appears that staff were unable to separate their feelings of preparation leaving for the trip, from what circumstances occurred while with the group. Thus, very specific recommendations for preparation were provided from trip leaders and not generalizable for the entire group.

The post-evaluations that students completed in the weeks following the return from their Alternative Break experience were included in the document review. In written post-evaluations, students were asked how PittServes could have better prepared them for their Alternative Break Experience. The document review of these two evaluations included 21 student responses that spoke to themes of specific training topics, with the majority focus being on training of location

and skill specific content being needed prior to departure. This immediate response to their service experience correlated to the sentiments of the students who were interviewed nearly one year later, regarding ways that they wish they had been better prepared to serve.

Through the interview process, each student had specific feedback regarding their training and site-specific information that they felt would have improved their experience within the program. Staff interview data resulted in two codes when asked how students were underprepared. These two areas were in regards to cultural / intellectual preparation and location-specific information. Each staff member interviewed noted one or both of these areas, which now show to be themes surrounding opportunities for better preparation of students. Similarly, community partners interviewed were asked for areas of under-preparedness while most did not immediately offer areas, the two that did have input to this question noted that the students could have been better prepared for the tasks that were asked of them as well as for the physical aspects required of the trip (hiking / manual labor). The two areas that staff and community partners note when first providing their unprompted evaluations map directly to the best practices of education, orientation, and training. One community partner offered, "they do not seem to show up knowing what they are about to be doing." Although, when asked if this was specific to Pitt students, the community partner noted that it was most students they interacted with (from many universities).

Aligned with the orientation, partners consistently noted that they would be interested in and willing to support training that connected them to the students prior to the week of service. Quotes from students reinforce the desire to be involved, and were noted during inquiry regarding preparedness levels, what else Pitt can do to prepare students, and when asked for any additional feedback. "Some of the prep I'd want them to have, would best be given by [their organization], and not by Pitt. I don't know of anybody at Pitt who has the kind of knowledge about the

89

neighborhood that we have," commented one student. Another spoke of possible additions including, what would have been an important part of their sessions "would have been for us to have known what their sessions were about when planning their schedule. I think…gentrification...and even more of the history of [the community]." (When further asked if the organization would be willing to engage in the training before hand, the interviewee responded positively.)

4.1.3 Strong Direct Service

Strong direct service is the best practice regarding the community service work that students participate in *during* their Alternative Break experience within the community of focus. The finding directly related to this best practice is that while it was not included as part of the PittServes pre-curriculum, the opportunities for service that students found as a group prior to their service week were impactful. The inclusion of strong direct service as part of the Alternative Break pre-trip program best practices was not intended to be a focal point of this study, as the research was aimed at understanding the preparation of students to serve. However, because part of the Alternative Spring Break pre-training students were encouraged to serve together as a cohort during the University's Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, students did reflect on the importance of service in their preparation. One student commented, "I thought what we did on the MLK day of service was really useful for when we were over there. Because we got to kind of learn about everyone's work ethic, and how they work in a group." While not all students referenced the community service they participated in prior to their trip, when this service was discussed, it was included as a positive aspect of preparation, citing that it served as a team building mechanism for the group prior to their week of service.

90

Additional findings related to community partner themes, connect to strong direct service in the preparation for students to be physically ready to participate in their activities. The community partner that simply requested hiking to be added to the training aligns with the physical preparation that two students also noted for their desired additional trip preparation. This connection of physical service provides the opportunity to enhance the students' preparedness and foster a stronger team culture.

4.1.4 Alcohol and Drug Free

Alcohol and drug free best practice is the act of promoting and ensuring that all participants understand that the full Alternative Break experience (pre-trip training and service) is zero tolerance for any alcohol or drug presence. The finding includes the document provided that required all students to review and sign an understanding of the policy to ensure all students were informed. Additional findings regarding this best practice are because at no time during the interviews (students, staff, community partners) was there mention of alcohol or drugs being present or a problem. As noted, students signed a personal agreement noting that they would be responsible for their own travel home if found to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. No student, community partner, or staff interviews mentioned this as an area of preparedness or under-preparedness, or of something they would like to be included as part of Pitt's responsibility, which likely is related to an absence of the issue occurring.

4.1.5 Reflection

"During the trip, participants critically reflect on their experiences and synthesize their direct service with what they learned in pre-trip education" (Sumka, Porter, & Piacitelli, 2015, p. 87). Findings regarding reflection include that the implementation was reported at varying degrees of success. The varied reactions of preparedness or under-preparedness was dependent on the category of your involvement with the program. Students generally found that they were prepared to reflect and participated actively in reflection. A student commented:

> "I learned how to evaluate my service and be less introspective and more of how they see my service. I wasn't the one to decide if I was helping or hurting that wasn't my choice. A specific example was our leader would always ask us, at the end of the day it's not wrong to ask if your work added value. As opposed to doing something that just took more time to teach than it would to add value. So I kind of learned to not be the person that's deciding if I'm doing a good job."

In contrast, staff and community partner's responses provided themes of under-preparedness for students to participate in reflection activities while on the trip. One community partner commented, "Whenever we tried to do full-group discussions it was very, very quiet, and hard to get them to talk. During downtime they would be fine talking and then reflection time they would be very quiet." This misaligned response likely lends to the students' self-perception of how they reflected both personally and in small group conversations, rather than as the prescribed activity, which may support the less positive responses of the staff or community partners who were expecting the entire group to participate at one time.

4.1.6 Reorientation

Reorientation refers to the connections of students post-trip to the program. This can include content specific experiences that relate to their Alternative Break trip / partner, the ability to connect locally with like-minded organizations, and organized continued action. While the PittServes program was focused on the pre-trip program, this final best practice was found to not be present as part of the program planning or implementation. Findings in the interviews support the need for reorientation activities as staff members provided specific feedback regarding continued connection. A staff member spoke of the opportunity for reorientation, "So I think that a loop we were missing in 2018 was definitely what momentum can we continue with this trip? We had an amazing time, learned about yourself, served with others. How can we continue this? There is a loophole in terms of next steps and having to bring it all together." An additional staff member inquired about what happened after the trip as well, by asking if anything beyond a debrief had occurred, and if that was part of my study.

This finding continued as one community partner also noted the desire for continued connections, primarily from the local trip offerings. "I would like to see ongoing service. Outside of that week, those organizations [where students served] have sessions each Saturday. I would have liked to see more communication between students individually signing up for that outside of Pitt's organizing the groups to go see where their work went well." This finding indicates that there was not inclusion of this best practice in the planning of PittServes' Alternative Break program and that there is awareness and interest in it for the future.

4.2 Inquiry Question 2

Which experiences within the Alternative Break pre-trip curriculum do students, staff, and community partners define as most supportive of student learning? Which are perceived as less supportive of student learning?

The four components of the pre-service curriculum that were examined most closely through the interviews and document review were the training and activities focused on power and privilege, team building, Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), and reflection. Analysis of the coded qualitative data revealed evidence that the curriculum supported student growth in three of the four target areas (power and privilege, team-building and ABCD), but to varying degrees of success, as stated in the analysis. The aspects of the curriculum, which are considered inadequate and have an opportunity for development, were those designed to prepare students to engage in effective reflection and to be prepared for their specific trip locations.

The sources of information which provided evidence of adequate or inadequate impact varied by the topic. For example, students consistently self-identified that their highest levels of learning were related to understanding their privilege and the power systems in place when serving in a community. One student remarked, "We learned about the diversity that was going to be within our communities. I thought it was cool because we did it with Ecuador and the people staying in Pittsburgh and various locations. It applied to everywhere we went. So we could still do it as a whole group. I appreciated the diversity within the community. I think that was helpful." When asked about the impact of team-building activities, over half of the students said they did not remember them. When asked directly, one student noted "I don't remember which specific team building activities we did but I remember laughing a lot with my group," indicating that the language use may have been the concern, not the implementation of the activity. As such, during

94

the student interviews, all students shared examples of team-building activities when asked to identify their favorite part of the pre-service experience, and team-building was highlighted as an important component to continue during the Start-Stop-Continue exercise. Despite testing protocol, there was not concern with the use of language coming in to the interviews. As this example illustrates, relying on student feedback alone would mask the effectiveness of many program activities. This section contains details of the findings related to each core program element separately so that these nuances can be explained. Taking these differences into consideration during future evaluations may strengthen program staff's ability to evaluate program impact.

4.2.1 Power & Privilege

Power and privilege training is focused on students being able to understand the structures of power within community and recognize where they personally held privilege to ensure their service would be done ethically and responsibly. This area showed strong elements of success with students citing personal learning and development; and community partners not expressing concern over the behavior of students. The pre-service curriculum content and the reflection activities which focused on power and privilege was the clearest takeaway for the students. When asked to reflect on (a) what they learned, and (b) which trainings they drew upon while on Alternative Break, privilege and bias was the most common response each time. About half of the students gave specific examples. One student shared, "I learned a lot about [the community location] itself when we had the breakout sessions, which was nice. I especially learned about the stereotypes we all had going in. We talked about what first came to mind and then we actually did a little research on it."

Another student added, "I'd say there were a few activities that facilitated discussions – one was where we had post-its, the activity where we had different identities and we put post-its on various identities based on the privilege of that identity. I remember that activity as one that really triggered a lot of discussion as I was walking around the room and seeing some of the other things that people were putting up on the wall." The activity mentioned is named 'Privilege Gallery', and was used to assist students in exploring their own privilege and then identify ways in which they will be addressing systems of privilege within their service. A staff member commented that an experience with a student around their frustration with learning history in the community that they did not feel aligned with their own beliefs. The staff member said that it "reminded me of our privilege gallery and what we look like when we have privilege and the power we exude in those spaces. We had a really great conversation with that student." These examples were consistent, as the Privilege Gallery was the most commonly mentioned training within the student interviews. Students comments included, "I think it was a shift in perspective when I learned stuff that I didn't realize I do as an American… I come from a different background so I didn't think I had too much American privilege but I was very wrong about that."

Another student noted about their power and privilege training, "I think it was super helpful to do before we went down there. If we hadn't done it we would have confronted it down there – or alternatively not at all, which would not have been good. It would have taken away from the trip. So I think it was super helpful before we went." A third noted,

> "That session is, well… I would say it is kind of hard for me. Because I had never
> thought about privileges before. Like what I have. Especially when I saw the poster about
> education. That one is kind of privilege for me. I've never thought of that before. I can
> actually some memories with my relatives. They talk to me like "oh you are well educated

96

and you are above us" like that. But I don't feel that. That poster helped me with those thoughts. And umm.. well it was hard to especially write down your own privileges. Especially if you are not thinking from others perspective. But when you do, you realize that you do have the privilege."

The finding of student personal development coincides well with a lack of a finding with community partners and staff, which supports that positive preparation did occur in this area. Staff members and community partners did not express concerns regarding student behavior in relation to privilege. This concern, from the literature, is often what is at the forefront of discussions of voluntourism or the negative impacts of Alternative Break groups.

4.2.2 Team-Building

Team building refers to activities and events implemented to assist in facilitating relationships between the students to prepare them to serve together while in the community of focus. The elements of team building seem to have been successfully implemented, as students frequently noted their enjoyment with the activities. Additional findings of success are from the lack of concern with community partners and no mention of inter-group issues when asked about working with the group. When asked directly about team-building activities, most students were not able to recall that part of the pre-service program. However, when students were asked what part of the pre-service training they would call their favorite, they unanimously named a variety of team-building activities that supported bonding with their peers that they would be serving with. While all nine students referenced "friend dates," team activities, serving together during MLK Day of Service, or other items that were team-building focused, that same sentiment did not translate when asked what the students learned, or what the most useful part of their training was.

This disconnect is an important finding since a change in the phrasing of the question resulted in significantly different responses.

Students identified team-building activities as a valued part of the experience, but the vast majority of students reported that other areas of the pre-service training were more useful and provided more learning. This finding is consistent with what would be expected given the program's logic model. While the team-building activities are intended to support student growth and learning, their primary purpose is to build stronger relationships within the team and help students feel more prepared to travel with a group of students they may not have known prior to this experience. Some of the student quotes about specific team-building activities are shared below. These quotes highlight the ways in which these aspects of the program met their intended purpose for many of the participants.

Friend dates were an opportunity for students to meet one-on-one to get to know other students on their same trip. It was suggested that they take the opportunity to dine together at the dining hall on campus, take a walk, or get coffee. Students were encouraged to do as many as possible, yet asked specifically to hold at least two individual sessions to help build relationships with people they are not currently friends with. A student responded, "I'd say the most useful thing was being around people that I would be serving with and getting to know them. There were informal dinner dates that we planned to get to know each other in addition to the formal training." Another noted "I think [the friend dates] were important to understand who you are working with. It makes it easier to open up in one on one settings."

Another student's connection to their peers was a theme of the interview that continued about their ability to connect with others throughout the Alternative Break program. This international student was asked what was most helpful in the trainings, and responded that

participating in a team-building training titled *I Am Poems* was most helpful. They commented:

"I am intimidated about writing things about myself. I have never done anything [like that] before. I am awkward at English. I am fearful of writing something that doesn't make sense and people might laugh at me. But it turned out fine. I read the notes other people gave me and it was amazing!"

When then asked about their favorite part of the trainings, the student provided this response:

"I'd say you have all the fantastic ideas which actually work out for all of us…. I was thinking [the training was] going to be boring and several weeks are going to be terrible. After the very first one I was like, oh this is more than I expected, and it's good. I kind of expected it to happen the following weeks. It gave me, kind of a social life that I had never had before. It's helping me to know more about other people and think more positively."

This connection to other students can greatly influence the preparation of students for their time in community, as they likely will have the ability to work more closely with one another in the service setting and hold one another more accountable during service and reflection. Staff members noted the importance of team, speaking mostly about the implementation while on-site in their communities for the week. One staff member commented, "Seeing those smaller groups but also a larger team culture and then seeing it grow over the course of the week... I think there was a different starting point than I had seen before and then it kind of continued to grow from there." That staff member had facilitated similar trips in the past, and noted that this experience was different, as the team was more cohesive going into the week of service than in years past. Another staff member noted that cliques did not form within their group, as they had expected they

would. They commented, "I think part of that was [during] pre-trip sessions, [student leaders] had done some forced friend dates where they had broken the group up into the weirdest, disparate parts that they could do, and make people go on hikes, and do this, and do that! So while you were forming some friends, friend relationships in the group, you were often getting split up with people that you hadn't had an experience of working with or hanging out with."

4.2.3 Asset Based Community Development

Asset Based Community Development is a framework of focusing on the assets of a community or experience, rather than a deficit-based approach. This framework was introduced to students through training and reinforced through activities and discussions. The finding related to ABCD is that the title of this training may have skewed the student's responses when asked about their reflection on the ABCD or 'focusing on the assets' training. Very few students were able to provide a response when asked directly about the training by name. Through additional probing questions, half of the students were able to remember the concepts and provide examples of their implementation of the ideas discussed. Others were able to recall the training, but were not able to share how they implemented the concepts during service. Some responses included, "I don't recall that" and "I remember pieces of that session but I don't remember enough to be able to speak on my reactions." With one student's positive response providing,

"Yeah, I definitely remember [ABCD]. Because I was like oh man, everyone here is so much smarter than me. I think we all went in and were really intimidated. We talked about that when we were [on our trip]. I especially remember that because that was one of those things I kind of talked about where I wasn't sure about all the issues with going to somewhere to volunteer. And just taking pictures and leaving everything pretty much unchanged. That to me was really like

100

trying to figure out how to put this into words… that gave me an idea of why we were going over there I think more than anything else, like that solidified it. I knew I wanted to go obviously before we started the pre-training, but that was what made me set on going and made me realize that this is a good thing we're going to do."

Additional student responses regarding ABCD include reflection on their experiences, "When we'd go into some of the neighborhoods it was easy to fall prey to 'this is what I see in front of me and this is a community that lacks resources' I had to retrain myself I feel like this is what they do have, and this is what we're serving them for." The same student continued, "so I think ABCD training was really helpful especially for us serving that population. I don't know if other people in my group utilized it. I think I spoke to one person about it when we were working side by side that day."

ABCD was an effort to also have students reexamine their privilege in another context. One student noted, "It was helpful for me just to pull comprehensively look at a community and what assets they do have, rather than just seeing a different population than what I grew up in. Just like they don't have something – looking at the positives, rather than what they don't have."

When considering what the training included, students had to think beyond the title of the training to reflect on their experience. One student thought aloud, "So I think you showed the [PittServes] logo yeah, well that one really gave me vague impressions. I understand what this is training about, but I don't remember the details. I think I have to think more, challenge my stereotypes about communities. It has become part of me. It's not like I can recall details about the session." Thus, while they did not clearly recall the full training – they recalled parts, and noted that the concept became 'part of them'. The student reinforced the idea that this changed their mindset and the way they look at the world.

With this, responses from community members skewed toward a lack of attention to the concept in general. A community partner noted that they were not sure and upon further prompting that students were encouraged to focus on the positive aspects of the community, rather than what media may present the partner responded,

> "Oh yeah, I definitely think they came in with that kind of attitude, especially – or that kind of thinking. I think we were kind of intentional, maybe without even knowing what that meant. We tried to bring in positive influences and people who are doing amazing work in the community. They recognized a lot of times their preconceived notions of the community vs. what they were learning or vs. what they had heard about and how it actually was in the community. I really appreciated that. So I would say that yes, they gained from that."

Several community partners not providing a response in a positive or negative fashion also may indicate that the language of "focusing on the assets" or "asset based community development" is something that is not common consideration or that nothing stood out as incredibly positive that was noteworthy or incredibly negative that would damage the student's or the university's reputation as a result.

4.2.4 Reflection

Reflection is the act of personal or group debriefing of the activities or service that took place, to identify meaning, successes, and opportunities for improvement. While most students remembered reflection and were able to provide examples of how that training was implemented and used during their time serving, they did not identify reflection as an important part of their learning. This finding is that the reflection preparation did not meet its intended impact for

102

students to understand the importance of quality reflection. A student responded to being asked about reflection with, "I was excited to reflect about it, because being open minded to the fact that maybe there is stuff that you do that you don't know about or things you take for granted was part of my personal reflection." However, this same student when asked about their personal learning, did not note a relationship to reflection.

Feedback from trip leaders and community partners indicated that the reflection sessions during the trip were of varying quality, and that students were often quiet and not prepared to engage in group reflection. Community partner comments included, "During reflections they tended to get very quiet. When we had them partner up for things they would speak to each other 1:1, but whenever we tried to do full-group discussions it was very, very quiet. And hard to get them to talk. During downtime they would be fine talking and then reflection time they would be very quiet."

That partner was not alone in their observations, as another noted "I think it was funny, because a lot of them would be very inquisitive during the day and then we would come to our prepared reflections …It might have been our fault too that the reflections weren't interesting enough so a lot of times it was us trying to prompt them to say something and so throughout the week it was probably 4-5 people who would ever talk during the reflections maybe through the reflections and if they had to."

At the same time, there were specific examples from both students and a trip leader which demonstrated how rich discussion did occur in which students critically examined some of the concepts they had learned about within the context of their experiences in the community.

A staff member shared the following:

"I think that we had about 50% of our group who was comfortable leading reflection. We talked about that before going. We talked about the types of reflection questions that we might utilize and how reflections should be organized. I think once we got there we ended up shifting around a lot of what we were doing for reflection. Just based on people's comfort level and what they wanted to talk about. We had a standard list of reflection questions, so if nobody volunteered to do a reflection that night, I would choose one that I thought was most appropriate to the day. Again sometimes we would do pair and shares. We'd have them go off to separate places in the house and talk to each other and then come back and share. Sometimes we'd do things popcorn style – we would just go around the room and everyone would offer something – an observation or feeling from the day. We did a lot of writing in the journals and asking people if they wanted to share out what they had written. I would say by the third or fourth day we were there, everyone felt comfortable sharing."

Additionally, a community partner provided this positive response when prompted to give their impressions of the group's ability to participate in reflection:

"All of our reflections were tailored to the activities we were doing. When we cooked the meal for [community partner] which is an anti-poverty program, and the reflection was tailored to anti-poverty efforts in [community] we tried to keep the reflections relevant to what they were working on. They responded accordingly with thoughtful responses about the value of ongoing service vs. one time service. And the impact that service can have. I observed it to be reaching them."

These sentiments were found throughout staff and community partners, as it was often noted that one or two students would be active in the discussion and others remained very quiet or silent, bringing to question the preparedness for all students to reflect on their service.

Overall, the reflection component of the pre-service curriculum does not seem to have had its intended impact of ensuring that students were able to reflect in group and individual settings. While students were able to note ways they reflected, the staff and community partners noted consistent themes of groups being quiet during planned reflections.

4.2.5 Trip-Specific Information

Trip-specific information refers to the planning and preparation of students for the content area they are going to serve with (homelessness, environmental, etc.) and the information that will prepare students for the logistics of travel and service. Students displayed a clear desire for more trip-specific information leading up to the Alternative Break experience. Students most often noted 'trip-specific information' as the most useful part of their training, as they found the content relevant and important to their Alternative Break experience. Yet, they still wanted more – trip-specific items were identified when students were asked what was missing from training. One student shared "[I would add] more local information. When we went to [community] and one of our team member got his phone stolen. .. When we went there…I'm thinking, it's just another place like America. We were just not prepared for that." Similarly, another student responded with "thinking about how people of different backgrounds and diversity are mentally affected by the places they go. I think there's a mental pull between… this is safe, [but] this is also very strange."

Four additional students' comments spanned very trip-specific content, which draws attention to the need for increased capacity to align the physical, mental, and skill-specific demands of each community partner or community to better prepare the students with the most practical elements of the trip needs. Students directly highlighted the desire for additional content to be added to their pre-trip trainings. "The pre-departure meetings were very helpful and relevant to most of the trips, but they could have been more specifically tailored to each trip. Our trip, in particular, was not always super relevant to the topics." Another student, when asked what was missing, responded, "Maybe more emphasis on the places. [Community] is different from the US." Continuing to highlight the importance of trip-specific content, another student noted, "I think it's hard to plan ahead with some of those [what would have prepared them better] – because you don't know what they need that day." Continuing about project specific needs, the student noted preparation that was community partner specific, and continued, "It would have been nice to have some real [language] classes."

Another student added reference to the community service conducted prior to departure for the Alternative Break trip, "I would increase the time we served together. I don't know what training we would receive. There was a lot of hiking and walking – but I don't know how we train that [said laughing]."

This desire from students was affirmed by community partners. Each community partner reported that students were underprepared for site-specific tasks, knowledge, or physical demands of the service work. One exception to this pattern was the knowledge-base students had leading into the May Alternative Break trip. The community partner provided PittServes staff with pre-reading which addressed issues specific to their community and their service projects, so students were more prepared to engage in thoughtful discussion with community stakeholders during their

experience. A staff member noted the pre-reading provided by their community partner was roughly 180 pages in length and it was reviewed and discussed by the whole group. That staff member commented in their interview, "And I think that they really heeded that and they asked hard questions – when we went to visit [organization], they asked him questions about energy production in the country and aluminum smelters, and you know, and he said several times during that 'gosh, you guys actually did some stuff before you came'."

4.3 Inquiry Question 3

How do students indicate how they incorporate their learning into their Alternative Break service trip?

The findings for inquiry question three include positive attributes to how students incorporated their preparation into both their Alternative Break trip and their service following that experience. Students were asked questions regarding how they implemented the concepts, or saw their peers implement the concepts during their Alternative Break trip in order to best understand how students translated their pre-service trainings into learning and practical application during their trip. The ability to articulate learning and implementation from the student's perspective was confirmed in many cases by the staff and community partners. However, in some cases, findings do exist that noted more preparation is needed for this positive implementation to occur, such as with reflection facilitation.

From analysis, I found that students did feel prepared from the training they had participated in. The following student's quote regarding the implementation of training while serving illustrate examples of the core training concepts in action: "Coming into the situation with

basic knowledge of our partners allowed us to deepen our connections with each other along with keep one another safe. We had a number of students who had physical and mental limitations. Having the trust and knowledge amongst each other allowed for us to remain safe and within reasonable boundaries."

Another student shared their reflection of, "I applied this concept during my time at Alternative Break by critical thinking and questioning via community-based activities, presentations, and working with folks from the area." Also focused on training, another student commented, "[ABCD] was a great first meeting because it opened my mind more to looking for strengths of the community which is so easily stigmatized for being rural or poor… the community that we saw… was warm and welcoming, which was awesome."

When asked about their interpretation of the power and privilege activities and reflections, students shared that they found it to be important for their learning experience. One student noted, "It was important to acknowledge our individual privileges beforehand, so we could look at situations objectively and help in an equalizing manner, rather than brining an unfair presence of power that is demeaning and not helpful." An additional student commented, "Power and privilege were very important themes throughout the week, especially as Pitt students going in to an impoverished area that may not feel like Pitt has always been a good neighbor. It was important to always be checking our privilege and power, but also think about how our power as Pitt students could possibly be used to bring the [community] to the table." These concepts connected in with assets and the intersectionality of recognition of privilege, power, and assets. A student shared, "I applied these concepts when interacting with the [community partners] and volunteers. I kept the ideas in my mind, and identified some of the assets. One of the speakers even mentioned some of the negative aspects, like the issue of food deserts." The students' ability to connect their training

to their experiences can illustrate that the students both understood the intent of the trainings and were able to implement these concepts while serving.

A concrete finding of implementation of students' own privilege is consistent and affirms positive responses from students regarding their learning and incorporation. This successful implementation proves that the training was successful in this way. Themes of culture were present when students were discussing their service week experience. "It was a really broad learning experience about the culture. That's what I got most. Learning about the culture, talking to the tour guide about the culture." Another student described the experience of speaking to an individual who had gone to high school in the area they were serving in. "She was telling us more about the community and stuff. Certain biases that I had were that people were [a certain way]. It was like 'oh yea, this is actually comforting in a sense'." This comment again illustrates students connecting to the theme of their privilege and of bias or stereotypes that may have been held coming into the week of service. Student interviewee number four provided this commentary:

"I definitely remember there were many times in [community] when we were reflecting during the day as a group. Where various people brought up things we learned during the pre-trip training. Some of the people brought up privileges and what we noticed during the day's work. Or bringing up things they noticed about the community and trying to expand on some of those things that we might have reflected on before the trip, were often brought up in nightly group reflection. After serving, often that's where I saw people applying the pre-trip training. They were wrapping around our experiences and reflecting on that as a group."

Students also displayed stronger understanding of the focusing on the assets trainings, with examples during their Alternative Break experiences. This theme relates to a better understanding of their role in the community, the fact that all communities served also have assets, and that tourism and volunteering should be reflected on to avoid 'voluntourism' natured activities. "Actually sitting and talking to all the people [in that community] and listening to the people about how much crap they have to go through but how much work and love they have for their community, and all the stuff they've done. It has a bad reputation that it doesn't deserve." When asked about any ah-ha moments on the trip, a student responded, "definitely the voluntourism thing we talked about because when I see people posting pictures on Facebook from mission trips…When they have pictures with random children. I always thought there was something off about that, but now I finally have the ah-ha moment of 'ok – cool – this is why I feel a bit weird about it." This approach to more ethical service directly addresses the problem of practice that unprepared students may cause harm to communities. These examples of learning support a better, mutually beneficial relationship with organizations and themes of deeper thought process of students prior to engaging in community service activities that are not aligned with community partners.

This content also was explored by how students continue to implement their learning into community service beyond their week-long Alternative Break experience. Student interviews included questions about longer term learning and incorporation of learning into service. Findings within this area range, as three of the nine students reported that they have not participated in community service activities since their Alternative Break 2018 trip. Additionally, two students reported having done minimal / one time service events. This group of students provide the finding that future participation in community service is not a given for students who are self-selecting in

110

to this program. The final four student participants responded that they do serve regularly in some capacity. To explore the impact of the training, students were asked the question of, "How do you currently, or will you in the future, approach service differently since participating in Alternative Break?" Thus, all students who were interviewed were able to respond to the question, even if they have not recently participated in service. The findings in this area skew toward two themes:

1. focusing on impact of the service activity, and

2. identifying a strong community connection prior to service activity.

The two overwhelming responses from students, "focus on impact" and "identify community connection," tie to the problem of practice that students are under-prepared to serve in communities they do not typically call home during the Alternative Break experiences. The idea that it is most important to have an approach that correlates to a positive impact on the community while also ensuring that there is an existing community connection aligns to the best practice of building a program / project with the community, rather than entering a community with a forced idea of what service should be accomplished. These findings provide a framework for the enhancement of the Alternative Break pre-training program that PittServes incorporates to address the desire to best prepare students for their experience in a new community.

4.4 Summary of Findings

These findings provide a framework for the enhancement of the Alternative Break pre-training program that PittServes incorporates to address the desire to best prepare students for their experience in a new community. The primary findings related to the best practices of the report include:

Strengths:

- Diversity and social justice training had a positive impact on students.

- Adequate focus on drug and alcohol free experiences was achieved.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- Educational training related to issue / content specific areas is desired.

- Orientation to the organizations and communities of focus received mixed response and is an opportunity for improvement.

- Skills based training is desired by participants and partners.

- Reorientation is desired by all populations.

Chapter V consists of further detail and recommendations regarding next steps for implementation of a program that aligns to best practices, focuses on student learning, and can connect to continued engagement in Pittsburgh and beyond for the participants.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The program evaluation of the training program that was implemented as part of the 2018 Alternative Break programs in the Office of PittServes has been conducted to understand if the program worked to address the problem that students are unprepared to serve in these environments. The results of the document review and interviews provide varying degrees of success by which the program met the best practices criteria and prepared students for their experiences serving during their Alternative Break experience. The three research questions provide guidance for understand how the program has been successful and what areas of growth and improvement exist, per the responses of community partners, staff members, and students. The inquiry questions include:

- How does the PittServes curriculum and accepted best practices align with recommendations from the field, for Alternative Break programs?

- Which experiences within the Alternative Break pre-trip curriculum do students, staff and community partners define as most supportive of student learning? Which are perceived as less supportive?

- How do students indicate how they incorporate their learning into their Alternative Break service trip?

5.2 Recommendations for Programming

From the findings of the student and staff interviews, the reoccurring themes of what was successfully implemented and what could be more useful will be an opportunity for the staff to implement recommendations for the program to enhance the effectiveness of the training. Recommendations are being offered to enhance the existing training components, to maintain successful elements, and to implement new and different opportunities to align with what students, staff, and community partners noted as potential opportunities for more useful training.

5.2.1 Connection to Best Practices

Research question one addressed the connection to best practices regarding Alternative Break training and implementation. It is recommended that for future programs, the full list of best practices be used in creating the curriculum to enhance the successful elements of the program and to strengthen the areas that were not aligned with the best practices of the research.

It is recommended that staff continue to focus on the implementation of power and privilege and the core themes of asset based community development, while also continuing to include a focus on team-building activities throughout the weeks leading up to the Alternative Break program. These successful elements provide good quality experiences for students and communities as well as shared learning and should be maintained.

The privilege gallery training and inclusion of power and privilege as a core concept throughout the program should be maintained in the training program. With consistent remarks of student learning, and a lack of negative staff and partner feedback, the training addressed social

justice and diversity, a key best practice within Alternative Breaks. Students noted their connection to one another and the self-reflection that this training offered.

Consistent feedback emerged regarding the need for enhanced trip-specific information and training to occur in the post-trip written evaluations and the qualitative interviews. Student suggestions included content such as language training for international Alternative Breaks, pre-trip tours of local neighborhoods in Pittsburgh, and intentional sessions into the focal issue of the trip for the national opportunities (homelessness, sustainability, ecological trail building). It is recommended that the coordinating staff and the staff trip leader collaborate to identify opportunities for the teams to serve together. The best practices of education, orientation, and training are all crucial components to successful Alternative Break programs. Each of these incorporate learning about the specific areas, organizations, and skills required to have a successful Alternative Break experience and will be discussed in relation to inquiry question two.

5.2.2 Increasing Learning Outcomes

Inquiry question two focused on the areas of learning within the program. Orientation provides the connection to the organization(s) with which students are serving and connecting students to their mission and vision, which is a key learning component for all student participants. It is recommended that PittServes identify a pathway to increase the capacity of the program, in order to create more tailored orientation materials and trainings to best connect students to the issue-specific content, the mission of the organization(s) being served, and the history and present day make-up of the community of focus. The findings related to orientation showed that students did not feel they obtained this learning by participating in the pre-training and community partners have a desire for this to be increased to better prepare students to serve in their communities and

with their specific projects. This also allows for an increased connection for longer term understanding of the underlying issues, identifies opportunities for continued connection, and identification of larger systemic issues. This will directly address the feedback of students regarding a lack of understanding of the area or the organizations they were serving in during their breaks.

Training supports student skill building to effectively prepare for the tasks that will be taking place in the community. With student and staff feedback regarding students being under-prepared for the actual service tasks, physical activity requirements, and language barriers provide ample opportunity for trip-specific learning and activity to better prepare the students for their service. Regarding the educational best practice, there is also an opportunity to enhance the issue-based education to directly enhance the students' understanding of the main focal issues of their trip. One student noted in their interview that "knowing more about the issues we are tackling and the community we were going into would have been …more beneficial beforehand." This same concept was provided by several staff members, including one who noted that it appeared to her that the students had never been exposed to some of the specific issues and people facing those issues. Additionally, three of the six staff members noted that there was confusion of students around the landscape of rural, suburban, and urban homelessness, which was expressed by the questions that were being asked of with the community partner and of the staff members.

A training program for staff should be implemented prior to the pre-training curriculum for students, given the mixed feedback of staff. As the staff members' experience with similar programs did not provide a relationship to feeling more prepared or their perceptions of students, levels of preparedness, it may benefit the program as a whole to provide a training track for staff leaders to focus on the training themes, understand logistics, and communicate their areas of

116

confidence. It is also suggested that staff are provided a pre-assessment to understand what levels of preparation they currently possess and areas where they do not feel confident in their current training. Staff members varied by department and levels of experience with community service programs. Thus, all participants regardless of their current employment or past leadership experiences are required to take part in the training program. One staff member did note a desire for participation in the curriculum topics, prior to participating in the trainings alongside the students. A limitation of the staff feedback is the amount of time from when they agreed to serve as staff leaders to when they provided feedback for this study. It appears that staff were unable to separate their feelings of preparation leaving for the trip, from what circumstances occurred while with the group. Thus, very specific recommendations for trip or student-specific preparation were provided from trip leaders and not generalizable for the entire group.

5.2.3 Incorporation of Concepts to Future Service

Inquiry question three guided the inquiry regarding how students were able to incorporate their experiences from training into their Alternative Break service. An additional component of best practices of Alternative Break is reorientation. It was not found through this program evaluation that there was evidence of reorientation programming with any of the student participants. Of the nine students interviewed, less than half (4 students) responded with evidence that they regularly participate in community service activities. Staff members also noted the lack of reorientation activities in their interviews, including one staff member inquiring if there was anything program-related that occurred following spring break. Another staff member shared, "I think that a loop we were missing in 2018 was definitely what momentum can we continue with this trip? We had an amazing time, learned about yourself, served with others… how can we

continue this? There is a hole in terms of next steps and bringing it all together." This recommendation encourages that the reorientation should build on the topics that the students focused on during their service to help apply understanding of systems and what their individual roles should be on a local / global level, while a student at the University of Pittsburgh and beyond.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Evaluation

For PittServes to enhance their understanding of program effectiveness, it is recommended that staff leaders be asked to complete a pre-assessment, to provide an understanding of their training needs and compare to their responses following their participation in the pre-service curriculum and after their service experience with students. The pre-assessment should include the following questions:

- What level of comfort do you feel with the following:
    - Facilitating group dialogue
    - Managing student crises / concerns
    - Ambiguity / flexibility in navigating schedules and projects
    - Managing relationships between community partners, student leaders, and student participants
- What experience do you have with the content area of focus (trip specific, pending the offering of the trips)?
- Students will be trained on Asset Based Community Development, effective team-building, power & privilege, and reflection. What concepts would you like additional training or refresher content on prior to the trainings?

With this information, a tailored approach to ensuring that the staff leader feels adequately prepared to participate in the entire process can impact the views of the staff, and thus support the reinforcement of the pre-service curriculum with the students prior to and during their service experience.

In addition to the pre-assessment, it is recommended that staff should also participate in a post-service reflection session for the coordinators and PittServes staff to best understand their experience and best track opportunities for improvement within the training of students, the community partner selection and communication, and the opportunities for future program growth. This data collection could be a survey, interview, or focus group format, to best gather the staff data. It is critical that the staff leaders share their impressions of the experiences with community partners, to assist the PittServes staff in making decisions regarding future partnership with the specific trip location. As Sumka (2015) suggested,

> Site leaders can build on the opportunities for participants to learn from community members and each other. They can involve community members in reflection sessions, meet with them in panel discussions, or foster informal conversation during service projects, all while creating space for participants to share their own experiences with one another and community members. (p. 100)

To continue to build on the program and the understanding of the effectiveness of the pre-trip curriculum, this study displayed that the timely communication with community partners is a necessity. Given the lack of response of the individuals and the response that too much time had passed to decipher the Pitt students from the other groups their organization interacts with, it is strongly recommended that PittServes plans to request immediate formal feedback from

community partners to determine the levels of preparation the students came to their organization with.

In addition to the timing of the community partner feedback, it is also recommended that students are evaluated to some degree with their incoming understanding of core concepts and the feedback or evaluation session of the pre-program occurs directly prior to their departure, as it did in 2018. This provided the opportunity for students to separate their impressions of the pre-curriculum with their experience when serving during Alternative Break. To enhance the ability to understand long-term impacts, it is recommended that students are surveyed again, after time has passed from their return and reorientation into the Pittsburgh community, but not so long as to potentially overlap with the following year's program timeline. The number of students eligible to give feedback in January and February of 2019 was limited by the number of students who responded as willing to participate, but were actively participating in the 2019 program trainings. Students should be provided some opportunity to provide feedback about how their preparation impacted their experience, possibly in October or November, as to not coincide with the coming year's program. This calendar provides eight months from spring break and six months from May break to allow for understanding of retention of knowledge and how students put their learning into practice.

5.4 Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

The assessment highlighted the foundations of a strong program which puts into practice many of the best practices which are outlined in the literature. At the same time, opportunities for continuous improvement emerged and they are listed below.

Programming:

- Continue Power & Privilege and Asset Based Community Development trainings

- Enhance trip-specific training content

- Implement community service projects pre-departure (related to trip theme)

- Increase staffing capacity

- Provide tailored orientation materials for each group

- Conduct thorough staff training

5.4.1 Demonstration of Practice

The demonstration of practice for this program evaluation of the PittServes pre-curriculum for the Alternative Break program will include a presentation of findings via an executive summary document to the Office of PittServes and the Vice-Provost and Dean of Students. This is intended to provide support and guidance, with thorough information regarding the successful components of training and areas of where students and staff reported high levels of demonstrated preparedness. Additionally, the executive summary consists of the key points of this study, including where students did not display high levels of preparedness and thus, there is opportunity for enhanced training and support for both students and staff members. This document provides key action steps for students, staff, and community partners to be prepared for the future Alternative Break programs.

5.5 Closing

This qualitative study of the 2018 Alternative Break pre-curriculum has provided examples of successful implementation and recommendations for future program and research enhancements. The program was successful in providing a platform for students to better understand their privilege and assets of the communities they were traveling to for their alternative break experience. While the students most highly provided commentary on the value of the team and social aspects, there were also comments providing evidence that all nine students considered their privilege and the privilege of their group when entering the community, which is a positive step in addressing the problem that students unpreparedness may cause damage to the community of focus and the university itself. Themes also made it evident that the pre-curriculum has much needed areas of improvement to match the best practices stated for effective Alternative Break programs. As stated, the education and training that are conducted are both desired by the students and evidence of best practice to strengthen the PittServes pre-curriculum and better prepare students for their service experience. It is important to note that increased communication with community partners and content experts requires the time and resources to enhance this programming. Proper staffing and student leadership models to support the program can offer a more quality and unique experience to each group of students, and thus more actively prepare students for the mission, location, and populations they will be serving with.

Appendix A Student Interview Email Request

Email invitation and follow up (if lacking adequate participation):

Dear (insert name):

My name is Misti McKeehen, and as part of my doctoral program at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education, I am conducting a program evaluation of the Alternative Break program, operated through the Office of PittServes. This is a voluntary research study that I would like to invite you to participate in, based on your participation in Alternative Break programming in 2018.

The research study includes 1:1 interviews with student participants that will take place the weekend of February 23 – 25, 2019 at the University of Pittsburgh. Interviews will be 30 – 45 minutes and will be recorded with your permission. To confirm your willingness to participate in this study, please click here to schedule a time, no later than Monday, February 18. There is no compensation for the study and no requirement to participate. All data collected will be evaluated and will be confidential to the study. The research will be compiled for the program evaluation dissertation and will be provided to the staff of PittServes to inform future planning for Alternative Break programming.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at misti@pitt.edu or 724.840.3242.

Thank you for your time and consideration of participating,
Misti McKeehen
Doctoral Candidate, 2019, School of Education
Former Director of the Office of PittServes

Dear (insert name):

As a follow up to my (date) email. I would like to invite you to participate in the program evaluation I am conducting as part of my doctoral research. This will be an evaluation of the Alternative Break program, operated through the Office of PittServes. This is a voluntary research study that I would like to invite you to participate in, based on your participation in Alternative Break programming in 2018.

The study includes 1:1 interviews with student participants that will take place in January 2019 at the University of Pittsburgh. Interviews will be 30 – 45 minutes and will be recorded with your permission. To confirm your willingness to participate in this study, please respond via email no later than (date). There is no compensation for the study and no requirement to participate. All data collected will be evaluated and will be confidential to the study. The research will be compiled for the program evaluation dissertation and will be provided to the staff of PittServes to inform future planning for Alternative Break programming.

Would you be willing to schedule an interview regarding your experiences on (date)? If so, please click here to confirm your availability and schedule a time.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at misti@pitt.edu or 724.840.3242.

Thank you for your time and consideration of participating,
Misti McKeehen
Doctoral Candidate, 2019, School of Education
Former Director of the Office of PittServes

Appendix B Student Protocol

Thank you for your time and participation in this study of the PittServes Alternative Break program. This research is to be conducted regarding the 2018 Spring Break (March 3 – 10, 2018), or 2018 May Break (May 13 – 23, 2018). You have been invited as one of 20 eligible students who participated in the program within this time frame. As a reminder, I am no longer employed with the University of Pittsburgh and the Office of PittServes, thus your responses today have no bearing on your current or future partnership with the office. Your responses will be compiled with the responses of others and no personally identifiable information will be shared.

No risks are anticipated with your participation. Measures are being taken to ensure that no breach of confidentially is experienced, as your answers will be coded separately from where the data and transcripts are being stored.

If at any time during this interview you wish to stop or withdraw from participating, please interject and we can conclude. Your information will not be used, as your notes and your information will be deleted. If you wish to withdraw following this interview, please contact me via phone at 724.840.3242 or misti@pitt.edu to confirm your withdrawal.

In the process of my program evaluation of the Alternative Break program that I was involved with during my time at the University of Pittsburgh, I am looking for honest and open feedback from students who engaged with Pitt students during this program.

Student Interview Protocol

1. What would you say you learned from participating in the pre-trip trainings that occurred in the weeks / months leading up to your trip to [location]?

2. What did you find most useful in preparing to for your Alternative [spring or May] break trip? (Open-ended)

   [*follow up questions are likely to include clarifying questions regarding the preparation activities*]

3. What was your favorite part of the pre-trip trainings / meetings?

4. What would you add to make the pre-trip sessions more useful?

5. The training themes that were included in the 2018 pre-trip curriculum were focusing on assets, team building, power & privilege, and reflection. I'd like to hear your reactions and thoughts on those sessions.

   [Follow up – which impacted your experience? Which could have been enhanced to be more impactful? Ask for content on each area.]

6. Was there any experience with the pre-training that provided you with an ah-ha moment?

7. Was there anything missing from the training that would have better prepared you for your service experience in [community]?

Thank you. Now I'd like to talk about your broader experience related to community service.

8. Since your participation in the program, have you been involved in community service? Follow up: In those experiences, are there ways you think you have approached community service differently because of your experience with Alt Break? (Open-ended)

9. Finally, is there anything else you would like to add about your experience with the PittServes Alt Break program?

Closing:

If you would like to be informed of the final research, please email me at misti@pitt.edu to be notified at the end of the research. Your participation in the programming and interview will support a stronger understanding of what strengths and opportunities for improvement exist within the Alternative Break Programs.

Dear (insert name):

My name is Misti McKeehen, and as part of my doctoral program at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education, I am conducting a program evaluation of the Alternative Break program, operated through the Office of PittServes. While I previously was on staff within the University of Pittsburgh, I have moved to a new university and thus your responses will not impact any current or future participation with the Office of PittServes and the University of Pittsburgh.

As a representative of (community partner), I would like to ask for your participation in my research - a program evaluation of the University's Alternative Break programming that you interacted with in 2018, through the Office of PittServes. During (spring / May) break, your organization hosted a cohort of students within the (CITY) community.

To participate in this evaluation, I am asking for individuals who had direct contact with the students to participate in a phone or video-chat interview. The one-on-one interview will be an opportunity for me to learn about the successful elements and the opportunity to improve the Alternative Break program. This is a voluntary opportunity and there is no compensation being offered for participating in the program evaluation. You are not required to participate. All data collected will be evaluated and will be confidential to the evaluation. The research will be compiled for the program evaluation dissertation and will be provided to the University of Pittsburgh in a

final report to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the program. If you would be willing to participate, please click here to schedule a time that best fits your schedule.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at misti@pitt.edu or 724.840.3242.

Thank you for your time and consideration of participating,

Misti McKeehen

Doctoral Candidate, 2019, School of Education

Former Director of the Office of PittServes

Appendix D Community Partner Protocol

Thank you for your time and participation in this study of the PittServes Alternative Break program. This research is to be conducted regarding the 2018 Spring Break (March 3 – 10, 2018), or 2018 May Break (May 13 – 23, 2018). You have been invited as one of the seven eligible service sites within this time frame. As a reminder, I am no longer employed with the University of Pittsburgh and the Office of PittServes, thus your responses today have no bearing on your current or future partnership with the office. Your responses will be compiled with the responses of others and no personally identifiable information will be shared.

No risks are anticipated with your participation. Measures are being taken to ensure that no breach of confidentially is experienced, as your answers will be coded separately from where the data and transcripts are being stored.

If at any time during this interview you wish to stop or withdraw from participating, please interject and we can conclude. Your information will not be used, as your notes and your information will be deleted. If you wish to withdraw following this interview, please contact me via phone at 724.840.3242 or misti@pitt.edu to confirm your withdrawal.

So to start, can you tell me how you were involved with the Pitt students in the [trip name] Alternative Break experience?

- Ask clarifying questions about their role with the partner organization and how they interacted.

If not already addressed:

- How much time did you spend with the group during the week?

- What parts of the day were you with the group (consider meals, service, reflection, downtime, community tours, etc.)?

The students participated in pre-trip training sessions to help prepare them to participate. Are there ways you found the students to be well prepared for your experience?

What ways did you find them to be underprepared or areas that you would hope that Pitt could better prepare the students in the future?

How would you describe the team work and leadership of the group?

Were there ways in which the students displayed knowledge of your community?

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience working with the Pitt students in 2018?

Thank you for your time. I will be using the data collected to compile a report of common themes regarding student preparation for participation in Alternative Break programs for the University of Pittsburgh. Your feedback will be combined with others and compared with student responses. Again, your remarks are anonymous and do not impact your current or future relationship with the University of Pittsburgh and the Office of PittServes.

Appendix E Staff Email Request

Dear (insert name):

My name is Misti McKeehen, and as part of my doctoral program at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education, I am conducting a program evaluation of the Alternative Break program, operated through the Office of PittServes. As you are aware, I have left the University of Pittsburgh's Office of PittServes, thus this research will not impact any of your current or future participation with the Office and its programming.

As you led a group of students to (COMMUNITY) in 2018, I am interested in gaining your feedback regarding the preparation of students for their Alternative Break experience. To participate in this evaluation, I am asking for eligible staff members to participate in a phone or video-chat interview. The one-on-one interview will be an opportunity for me to learn about the successful elements and the opportunity to improve the Alternative Break program.

This is a voluntary opportunity and there is no compensation being offered for participating in the program evaluation. You are not required to participate. All data collected will be evaluated and will be confidential to the evaluation. The research will be compiled for the program evaluation dissertation and will be provided to the University of Pittsburgh in a final report to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the program. If you would be willing to participate, please click here to schedule a time that best fits your schedule.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at misti@pitt.edu or 724.840.3242.

Thank you for your time and consideration of participating,

Misti McKeehen

Doctoral Candidate, 2019, School of Education

Former Director of the Office of PittServes

Appendix F Staff Protocol

Thank you for your time and participation in this study of the PittServes Alternative Break program. This research is to be conducted regarding the 2018 Spring Break (March 3 – 10, 2018), or 2018 May Break (May 13 – 23, 2018). You have been invited as one of the seven eligible staff leaders within this time frame. As a reminder, I am no longer employed with the University of Pittsburgh and the Office of PittServes, thus your responses today have no bearing on your current or future partnership with the office. Your responses will be compiled with the responses of others and no personally identifiable information will be shared.

No risks are anticipated with your participation. Measures are being taken to ensure that no breach of confidentially is experienced, as your answers will be coded separately from where the data and transcripts are being stored.

If at any time during this interview you wish to stop or withdraw from participating, please interject and we can conclude. Your information will not be used, as your notes and your information will be deleted. If you wish to withdraw following this interview, please contact me via phone at 724.840.3242 or misti@pitt.edu to confirm your withdrawal.

In the process of my program evaluation of the Alternative Break program that I was involved with during my time at the University of Pittsburgh, I am looking for honest and open feedback from staff members who engaged with Pitt students during this program.

1. How were you involved in the program in 2018?

   Follow up questions include:

- Can you describe your role more thoroughly?

- How much interaction did you have with the community partners and students?

- Have you worked with similar programs the past (at Pitt or elsewhere?)

2. A major focus of my study is to learn more about how prepared the students were to participate in their Alternative Break program. How would you describe the level of preparedness of students [on this trip]?

3. Which of the pre-trip trainings were you involved in / do you remember?

4. Given what you know about the pre-trip curriculum, what skills, tools, or other preparation items did you see the students display during their Alternative Break service trip?

5. How prepared did you personally feel before the trip?

   Clarify their preparedness, personal readiness / training needed.

   Ask probing questions about the following:

   -Managing logistics of the experience throughout the week

   -Navigating the relationship with the community partner

   -Facilitating student reflection

   -Promoting student leadership

   - Coaching students through challenging situations

6. Now, thinking about the students – where would you say they were prepared well and where did you see evidence of under-preparedness?

Ask probing questions if necessary about the following:

-Students were knowledgeable about the community they were coming to serve when they arrived.

-Students were aware of the assets of the community. How so?

-Students were aware of challenges the community faced. How so?

-Students displayed an understanding of the privilege structures of the community or the privilege they brought to the community. How so?

-Students were thoughtful during reflection activities.

-Students had elements of successful team culture. How so?

7. What would you say were the greatest opportunities for improvement for the Pitt students you served with?

8. Do you have any additional feedback regarding the student participation or the coordination of Alternative Break with the Office of PittServes?

Thank you for your time and participation with the University of Pittsburgh's Alternative Break program. This information will remain confidential and will be used expressly for the dissertation work of Misti McKeehen, who serves as the principal investigator of this study. If you have any questions, please contact misti@pitt.edu.

Appendix G Student Participation Agreement

All participants must be 18 years of age before March 1, 2018.

Participant Contract 2018

I, _____ wish to participate in the

(print name clearly)

Alternative   Break   Program   at   the   University   of   Pittsburgh
_____ service site during

(Write Service Site Location)

Spring Break 2018. I understand that my participation in the Alternative Break program

includes pre-training and service, and the week consists of community service, daily reflection,

team building, and opportunities to experience local culture and sightseeing as appropriate. I

understand that Alternative Break is an ALCOHOL AND DRUG FREE experience and that some

trips may limit or restrict tobacco use.

I understand Alternative Break is a weeklong service project that allows me to work with

community members on issues that concern our society. I understand that I must pay for my

Alternative Break Trip. The cost of the trip will cover my expenses for transportation, housing and program sponsored meals needs during my Alternative Spring Break program.   I understand that I am required to bring additional funds to cover non-sponsored meals and other optional activities.

I acknowledge that there are no health related reasons or other problems that preclude or restrict my participation in the Alternative Break program and affirm that to the best of my knowledge I am physically able to participate in the Alternative Break program I selected. I acknowledge that the University has recommended that I consult with, and have a physical examination conducted by a physician and a current tetanus shot before I participate in Alternative Break program.

The University may, but is not obligated to, take any actions it considers to be warranted under the circumstances regarding my health and safety. I agree to pay all related expenses and release the University from any liability for any such actions.

I have or will secure health insurance to provide adequate coverage for any injuries or illnesses that I may sustain while participating in the Alternative Break program. By my signature on this contract, I certify that I have confirmed that my health care coverage will adequately cover me, and hereby release the University, its trustees, employees, and agents from any responsibilities, liability, or expenses for my injuries or illness (including death) occurring during and/or arising from participating in the Alternative Break program.

I understand and recognize that there exists the possibility and risk of bodily injury to me or damage to my property while participating in the Alternative Break program. Since this is a

voluntary program, I hereby release the University of Pittsburgh, its staff, trustees, officers, employees and agents from any liability or claim of liability arising from my participation in the program and traveling to and from the program site.   I understand that this contract means that I am giving up, among other things, rights to sue the University for injuries, damages or losses I may incur. I also understand that this participant contract binds my heirs, executor, administrators and assigns, as well as myself.

I agree to comply with all applicable laws, University of Pittsburgh rules, standards and instructions for student behavior found within the Student Code of Conduct and policies found within the Alternative Break Participant Manual. I also agree to comply with the rules, standards and instructions of the host organization for the program.

I understand the there is a NO TOLERANCE POLICY for the use and/or possession of alcohol or illegal or irresponsible drug use by anyone, regardless of legal age, **for the duration of the Alternative Break program, which begins when I depart from the University of Pittsburgh campus and ends when I return to the campus and will result in immediate dismissal from the program.** Staff and Team Leaders will abide by this policy, oversee the compliance by student participants, and strictly enforce sanctions under the direction of the Office of PittServes and the University Judicial Board.

I understand that physical or sexual assault or harassment, the possession or distribution of illegal drugs, the possession of explosives or weapons will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

I agree that the University has the right to enforce the standards and conduct described above, in its sole judgment, and that it will impose sanctions, which may include payment for all property damages, reimbursement of the Office of PittServes and Student Government Board contributions towards the student's participation in the program, suspension of participation in the project and including expulsion from the Program, for violating these standards and for any behavior detrimental to or incompatible with the interests of the University, the Program or other participants. I recognize that due to the circumstances of the Program, procedures for notice, hearing and appeal applicable to student disciplinary proceedings at the University do not apply. If I am expelled from the Alternative Break Program, I consent to being sent home at my own expense with no refunds of fees.

I understand that the University is not responsible for providing any assistance under any circumstances for legal problems encountered while on the trip.

I grant permission for the Alternative Break Program and the University of Pittsburgh to use my name, photos or videos of me or my likeness; and/or any other identifying information about me or accounts of my work and experience as a participant in the Alternative Break Program at the University of Pittsburgh.

I understand that I must turn all required forms in on time, complete all surveys and evaluation forms, attend all mandatory meetings, team meetings and Alternative Break training sessions.

I understand and agree to the Alternative Break NON-REFUNDABLE PAYMENT POLICY. All fees must be paid in full before attending the trip.

I agree that, should any provision or aspect of this participant contract be found to be unenforceable, all remaining provisions of this participant contract will remain in full force and effect.

I represent that my agreement to the provisions herein is wholly voluntary, that I have carefully read the participant contract, and I further understand that, prior to the signing of this participant contract, I have the right to consult with the advisor, counselor, or attorney of my choice.

This participant contract represents my complete understanding with the University concerning its responsibility and liability for my participation in the Alternative Break program. It supersedes any previous or contemporaneous understanding and cannot be changed or amended in any way except in writing.

By my signature I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age before March 1, 2018 and I have read, understand and agree to the policies of the University of Pittsburgh Alternative Break Participant Contract.

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   Date

Printed Name: Student ID #:

Preferred T-Shirt Size: Adult Small   Adult Medium   Adult Large   Adult X-large   Adult XX Large

Medical Health Conditions Disclosure:

Appendix H Student Interview Chart

Questions	Summary of Analysis	Illustrative quotes
What would you say you learned from participating in the pre-trip trainings?	• The majority of students noted that awareness of privilege and bias was at the forefront of their learning. This was noted by specific mention of the power & privilege training activities, the readings students did, and the conversation / reflection of each group regarding their space within the communities of focus.	• "I especially learned about the stereotypes we all had going in. we talked about what first came to mind and then we actually did a little research on it. Talked about what the different disparities were." • "I'd say one thing that I remember learning is trying to identify where we were coming from, being university students being from University of Pittsburgh. Think about and understand where we would fit into the community we were going to." • "A lot of what I learned was centered on when you are going to a new country to do service, a lot of what they said they see is the white privilege / white savior complex."

	• While less commonly noted, the understanding of voluntourism and awareness of team building was evident in student response. • Additionally there was also mention of location-specific information (dealing directly with the communities of focus).	• "We did some debriefing at a pre-training sessions – talking about the identities and privileges we were bringing identities and privileges coming into the space." • "We learned about the diversity that was going to be within our communities." • "I learned a bit more about the history itself – was trained on voluntourism. How we had to be aware of our privilege going into a different community and trying to be aware of… disconnect that there might be there"
Thinking about the trainings, what did you find to be most useful in preparing for the Alt Break trip?	• Student responses included themes of trip-specific information, team building, and reflection. Each student response was coded as one of these three themes, with a higher portion of the students noting that the trip-specific	• "I'd say the most useful thing was being around people that I would be serving with and getting to know them." • "I learned how to evaluate my service and be less introspective and more of how they see my service. I wasn't the one to decide if I was helping or hurting that wasn't my choice." • "I would say actually the kind of ice breaking activities really helped a lot. I'm an introvert. And after that I am just more open now. I

	information (such as travel suggestions, language, etc.) was the most useful in preparing them for their service experience.	would like to share with others. It was enjoyable to read from others, what they thought. It was so fun. I really enjoyed it." • [When we] "spoke to someone who had been on the trip before and learning about their experience and some tips to make us more comfortable." • "I oddly found it most useful to get to know everyone." • "I also thought that meeting with the group we were going to be with was extremely helpful so we could build connections ahead of time."
What was your favorite part of the Alterative Break pre-trip training?	• All students responded to this question with notes of team building activities and the relationship building that came from them. While it may not have been the most beneficial in terms of learning, the student satisfaction levels are noted.	• "I think just getting to meet everybody. The people on our trip and on the other trips." • "Meetings that I got to meet the students I was going to be working with who are all coming from different majors backgrounds, places where we live, and different perspectives it was great getting to know them ahead of time. Learning how they think. Making those strong connections."

	• While not asked this question specifically, community partners and staff noted that the teams worked well together. This positive connection to team-based work supports ongoing positive relationships with the community agencies and does not cause concern for unnecessary student discord while in the community.	• "MLK Day of Service, it was the first experience together – even though it was here and not at all what we did there. It was fun to be serving together like beforehand." • "Definitely the friend dates." • "The [I Am] poem. That one was, I never thought about it before. I am intimidated about writing things about myself. I have never done anything before. I am awkward at English. I am fearful of writing something that doesn't make sense and people might laugh at me. But it turned out fine. I read the notes other people gave me and it was amazing!"
What are your reflections on the Asset Based Community Development	• Student responses displayed a lack of memory for this specific training. When prompted, the majority either did not recall the training or remembered very little. Only a minority of students were	• "I remember pieces of that session but I don't remember enough to be able to speak on my reactions." • "I can't quite remember it, to be honest." • "I don't remember." • "I understand what this is training about, but I don't remember the details. I think I have to think more, challenge my stereotypes about

146

Training?	able to remember and provide	communities. **It has become part of me.** It's not like I can recall
(student)	examples of how they understood	details about the session."
	or implemented these concepts into	• "It was like you know this community is bad or good, which is
	their service.	obviously black and white. When we went out and looked, that's
	• Some students were able to discuss	what stuck with me. When I still go today, when Im' going through
	how they implemented ABCD	communities today, I can see about transit. I can see how far away
	during service, rather than	schools are and how developed homes are, and extensive homes are.
	recalling the specific training.	Because we were able to go to communities and look at."
What are your reflections on the Power & Privilege Training? (*student*)	• Nearly all students were able to provide reflections and a connection to this training. Some noting it was impactful in their personal development as well as their preparation for the trip.	• "I thought it was helpful to go around the room and have the giant papers we wrote on. Because you had to come in with some ideas and reactions to the poster – or you might have none. And when we went back around the room you could see what others added that you didn't think of. That was really effective. That was a good way to meet people too. I really appreciated that."

	• More than half of the students also provided examples and context to their response.	• "I think it was good to see everybody's different take on it. You may find yourself in a bubble and you don't hear these other opinions very often. It's nice to feel like community – and grow outside of your little bubble." • "I think that was a very intense training. Something that you don't necessarily think about every day but I think it was super helpful to do before we went [on the trip]. If we hadn't done it we would have confronted it down there – or alternatively not at all, which would not have been good. It would have taken away from the trip. So I think it was super helpful before we went." • "I really enjoyed that activity and really enjoyed hearing from other people in terms of what they were thinking. It really opened my mind up to think about the way that other people might from their perspective. And it got me to ask some people I didn't know well, more questions of other people I didn't know as well. I enjoyed that – I think it was very thoughtful of you."

| And, tell me about your thoughts and reactions to the reflections we included? (*student*) | • The majority of students were able to recall reflection activities and note ways in which they participated in reflection.

 • Throughout the interview, reflection was revisited by all students, noting in some form ways that they participated in personal or group reflection activities before or during their service.

 • While not noted as a key learning by students in the initial question, the reflection proves to be a consistent positive correlated activity for students. | • "So, a lot of the individual reflection was your own note taking. [A] bigger part of group reflection was understanding the group dynamic because it was a diverse group. It was being observant about how the group acts and how people go towards each other. I thought it was really good because we didn't have the group mentality even if we disagreed on things it was like we were not fighting but like we were able to talk it through and understand and not everything is as black and white as we initially thought."

 • "I remember a reflection activity form one of the group reflection activities. Pretty much we were reflecting on the information we had to collect. I remember the reflections being very meaningful in the sense that they kind of relate to the power and privilege activity – I got to hear other people's reflection on the things we were all getting into."

 • "Looking into and thinking about aspects of the community that we are serving in like, hearing how they – what they heard about the |

		community. And comparing that to mine. Building my knowledge and perspectives of where we were going. The group reflections helped to expand my insight on the activity that we were doing." • "I liked doing it as a group. Especially within the trip that we were going on. Sitting down and doing those – I liked those better than the individual reflections, because I feel like you get more out of it by listening to other people and discussing your own experience." • "So those were probably honestly the most helpful. I mean the activities wouldn't have been super helpful if we hadn't all explained what it meant to us in some ways. But those were nice because you got to hear everyone else's thoughts about what was happening. If we had just done the activities and left I don't know if it would have had the same impact."

What are your reflections on the team building we did pre-trip? (*student*)	• As noted from the "favorite part of training" question, all students responded positively and with examples of team building. When asked directly about trainings that included team building elements, less than half of the students were able to name them specifically, some noting that they "did not remember". • This contrasting response illustrates that when the specific language is assigned to activities, students may have focused more on the themes and learning rather than the titles of the sessions.	• "To be honest, I don't remember that one either." • "I don't remember that." • "That one time we kind of it might have been the first time we met as a group. We kind of went through where did you grow up and what kind of… Teach your partner something and they had to teach it back to you. Yeah, I think that was an interesting – to get a perspective on how people's backgrounds and hobbies and things they are interested in doing and their teaching methods." • "I don't remember which specific team building activities we did but I remember laughing a lot with my group – I think there were some that we did just as our group, which were super fun because we got to do it with [staff]. It fostered us as group."

151

What would you add to make the trainings more useful? (student)	• The majority of students noted that more trip-specific information and activity would be most useful. Less common, but still important include student's desires for more direct service as a group prior to departure and physical activities to increase their ability to participate in more physically strenuous direct service activities.	• "I would add a lot more trip specific training. I know a lot of the pre-trip training was pretty broad so it could cover informing everyone form all the different trips. I wish we did learn more about our trip specifically. And more things that would help us on our specific trip." • "One thing I am remember was during the trip last year I didn't have as much knowledge about the homeless population in [community]. And then we ended up learning a ton of that when we got there. It would have been nice going into the trip and doing training on homelessness would have been good to do before leaving." • "Yeah, definitely – for example local information." • "Umm I feel like it would be hard to do, but if it was more trip specific– I think it was a consensus that we didn't know what we were going to be doing when we got to [the community]. We didn't know what to expect, what to bring. If we would have known – ok [our community partner] or who we were partnering with, we could have looked it up and talked about their mission. Even getting on the

152

		bus, we still didn't know necessarily who we were going to be working with. I feel like it could have been more meaningful – maybe we would have been more excited by knowing more ahead of time."
		• "I would increase the time we serve together, and there was a lot of hiking and walking – but I don't know how we train that [laughter]."
		• "Knowing more about the issues we are tackling and the community we were going into would have been a lot more beneficial beforehand."
How have you (or will you plan to) integrate(d) what you learned to approach community service activities differently, since	• It is important to note that not all students have participated in community service since their experience in 2018. • The majority of students responded to this question noting that they do (or will) focus on the impact of their service more thoughtfully.	• "I think one big thing that I've been able to take away from doing service through AB is pretty much trying to understand my impact in serving. I know a big thing we learned about before [another AB trip] 2 years ago, was about voluntourism and understanding how different types of service can actually be detrimental to the community. I've been asking myself how am I helping this community or how am I hurting this community. Trying to maximize the chance that I will actually be helping rather than hurting. That is something I really

your participation in Alternative Breaks and the training program? (student)	• Nearly as many students (the majority) also noted that they focus on deeper connections to the community or agency they are serving with than they had one so previously. • Less common, but important to note, some students mentioned that they intentionally focus on the assets, critique their partner's plan for service, and acknowledge when their own white savior complex (or that of others) is present.	learned through AB. That is something that came up in a lot of the trips I went on. Trying to not just to go into the community to be a hero for the day. But trying to actually make an impact. Get down to their needs instead of just pushing what I think they should be doing. Or what I believe their needs are. That mindset I have definitely got from doing the service with AB." • "I think I took little things a lot less seriously. So I didn't just brush off things because I wasn't getting on a plane and going to a country. I think I found a lot more value in helping in little ways because that's what I did [on Alternative Break]." • "In the future I will evaluate if it is a necessary need. I would really like to do something that is helpful instead of making myself feel good." • "I try to be more conscious of the communities that I'm going into and thinking about the impact my work has. More thinking instead of

154

		going in and saying yeah you have to help paint this – or do this – thinking about impact I'm making." • "It gets me thinking more about how useful it is to have people to donate their time and effort. I think before I might have thought of it as "it's nice to do, but it's not really necessary part of a community" but I think it is essential to community engagement and I think it really helps out in thinking about the opportunities that are ongoing in a community."

Appendix I Staff Interview Chart

Staff members are employees of the University of Pittsburgh who served as trip leaders during the Alternative Break service experiences.

Questions	Summary of Analysis	Illustrative quotes
In what ways did you see students well prepared during their service trip?	• The majority of staff noted that students were well prepared for positive interactions with the community, this varied in their direct responses, in some cases noting specific areas related to the community history or surroundings. • Additional staff comments that were less frequent included preparation and	• "I felt that students were, more prepared than I thought they would be. Meaning the training sessions- we had about 10 training sessions prior departing – where we covered topics about community, voice, power and privilege, and we basically, I saw that the students did collectively use some of those experiences to draw upon. They focused a lot on the do's and the don'ts. Probably more so the don'ts, honestly. I saw that on the trip when it came to taking pictures of various

	flexibility in regards to the service they would be preforming, and the management of their expectations.	landmarks, individuals, and asking permission to make sure folks were represented correctly. So those are little elements and examples of where I saw the training coming into the trip." • "I think that they were prepared in certain ways for sure. Very prepared. We made a concerted effort to communicate that being uncomfortable was part of the experience." • "I would say they were fairly prepared. I think they were prepared in the sense that they reflected on what service was to them that this wasn't just a social or recreational trip. Which I think gave them pretty good insight beforehand. They also did some research about the actual [community] and the community and the historical perspective."

157

		• "I think I would describe the level of preparedness probably at varying points. Some students on a spectrum, were very prepared. As far as like, the complex conversations we were having about impact. A lot of them came with their own passions." • "So I think that in terms of being prepared for the actual work that we did, students had a pretty good idea of what to expect when we got there." • "I think we did a very good job at preparing them for the service component and for asking good questions around the history and the culture of the country."
Given what you know about the pre-trip curriculum, what skills, tools, or other	• The most common response from staff was the focusing on the assets that students displayed while in community. Staff frequently	• Referencing the privilege discussions, one staff member noted, "[The students communicated] "we have so much privilege, we have to be careful not to use it" or do like you know this and it became, it in some ways

| preparation items did you see the students display during their Alternative Break service trip? | mentioned student's asset based approach or direct connection to the Asset Based Community Development training.

• Less prominent, but still important is the recognition of power and privilege and their own connection to the community of focus. | was self-sacrificing. The student was very much concerned about that and I think relying on the training and the things we talked about, just to be so careful and aware of your surroundings, being responsible. Not being your typical touristy American person was super hyper aware for this student."

• "I think the biggest one is the concept of an asset based mindset and asset based approach. Because a lot of times in our debrief and facilitation at the end of the evening."

• "I saw them display some insight on what is service, what does service mean to them. The group that I interacted with were pretty open to discuss their history with service, how service was a role in their life. Umm, so I think a lot of them had reflected on that piece even before starting the alt break trip." |

		• "So I think, also it was ABCD of course… that was the first training which I would say is a skill I saw the students display throughout the course of the trip. We had great conversations facilitated by student leaders with our community partners. About what opportunities it had and opportunities where we could come and fill in." • "ABCD, was something that they utilized. We went to [the city] for one day. So they actually spent some time walking around and trying to identify assets. So that part was actually incredibly helpful. Everywhere we went, I had students say 'I'm trying to look at this with that glass half full mentality – and not, wow, this is kind of gross'."

| How prepared did you feel to lead the trip? | • While themes emerged around logistics, emergency response, training, and facilitation, the staff members had very different viewpoints on each.

• Equal number of staff members mentioned feeling prepared for the logistics of the trip as the number who mentioned feeling underprepared.

• Several staff members mentioned facilitating student conversations and supporting students in emergency situations. There was no consensus on the preparedness for these, as half that mentioned each of these topics felt prepared and half felt unprepared. | • "Not at all. I felt not at all prepared. The amount of what I did not know logistically about how to do this trip was startling."

• "In terms of the background information for leading the service trip, I felt very prepared."

• "I felt confident handling questions or emergencies that popped up on the trail. I felt confident stepping in and facilitating conversations with students."

• "I think in terms of all of the aspects of being a trip advisor, so like, in terms of Emergency response protocol, the kind of follow up that happens when something expected – a student is triggered unexpected. The emotional response that can come from the experiences we were having. I think I was more so prepared for that." |

161

		• "I felt pretty prepared, we had a schedule ahead of time. I kind of knew at least generally where we would be each day even if the timing shifted a little bit. [Although], I think I would have liked to participate in more of their pre-group meetings."
		• "For me I was prepared knowing that larger picture. I did feel a little unprepared in moments when it came to individual students. So for students that (and I got to know them a bit more during the trip) but students that had health issues and they would write somethings on their forms – and I was like how do I deal with this? What would happen if something happens with persons mental health anxiety, depression, what would I do?"

| I want you to think about how well they were prepared or areas where you saw levels of under preparedness, and we'll start with the idea around students were knowledgeable about the community they were coming to, to serve, when they actually arrived. | • The most common theme from this question was in regards to the general information about the community. Staff members shared examples of history, socioeconomic knowledge, and content specific to pre-readings or information that had been discussed. While nearly all mentioned these themes, it was split between feeling that the students were prepared or underprepared with information.

 • Cultural understanding was only mentioned once by staff members. | • "In the cultural context. I think that the students were not as prepared to think about they still had some kind of stereotypical like ideas or ideologies of what the [community's] culture is. So for instance, I don't think they were very prepared to think more deeply about the social structures in [the community]."

 • "This pretty high. They were relatively prepared. In our pre training we did get into the nitty gritty of [the location], the capital city, we even talked about with the general service group about [community], which is where they were serving."

 • "I think that they were prepared in the sense that they knew general information about the socioeconomic status of the [community]. But they were underprepared for the deep history and the positive aspects." |

163

		• "I think in terms of under preparedness. I think that this comes with not knowing the actual specific areas I think that just kind of like some of the fundamental questions that were asked."
		• "The under preparedness was interacting with the community members."
		• "Where they were really well prepared was in terms of the type of service we were doing and the [location] itself, like what we were experiencing."
How did you see students prepared or under prepared as it relates to ABCD?	• When directly asked this question, the majority of staff members noted that it was a basic level or underprepared level. • No staff members responded to this question with additional examples.	• "I don't think they were prepared for that. Again, it's kind of like if they didn't think we were engaging with it." • "When you had led the training and we talked generally then into specific trip groups. And talked about the communities specifically that we would be serving in. I remember going through this exercise with the cohort

	• The staff member who previously provided strong examples of display of ABCD was not asked the question again.	and we googled things like the population, employment rate. So we did get into the nitty gritty and I think it showed when we got there." • "I don't think I recall times where I did see it."
How did you see students prepared or under prepared as it relates to their understanding of power structures and privilege?	• While there was not consistent themes related to this question, staff were able to share specific stories related to power and privilege. Multiple staff members shared examples of a time when one or more students displayed under-preparedness, and then continued to note how the other students within the group were able to address this in conversation. • Staff shared examples ranging from underprepared to well prepared and	• "I think something that was less obvious was the structures of power and privilege dynamics [at the service site]. The volunteers and community partners we worked with, there was less of an obvious power dynamic and more of a sense of people coming from a place an equal place and working together." • "Yes - I think they reflected on that a good amount. That became more evident through the week. A lot of students were happy to talk about 'This is my hometown – this is how I was brought up – this is the privilege I've experienced in my life' so I think they had a pretty good sense of what privilege they were

	one staff noting that it was not relevant to their location.	bringing to the experience. Umm – and then they recognized it was looking different based on the community partners they were working with." • Additional comments are not being shared as they include identifying information or longer, more personal stories that can be generalized for themes but do not offer the opportunity for direct quotes.
How did you see students prepared or under prepared in regards to their reflection?	• Themes related to reflection show a low to medium level of success for student's involvement with reflection while on their Alternative Break trip. • Staff were able to provide some examples, but frequently gave qualifiers regarding the students not knowing one another, being shy, or being tired.	• "I think that we had about 50% of our group who was comfortable leading reflection. We talked about that before going. We talked about the types of reflection questions that we might utilize and how reflections should be organized. I think once we got there we ended up shifting around a lot of what we were doing for reflection. Just based on people's comfort level and what they wanted to talk about."

		• "I think they were thoughtful -- depending on the day, and how tired they were. That was another thing that helped us to know to pepper it throughout the day. At the end of the day they were tired and ready to wrap up and to home." • "I would say after each day they came back prepared with things they were thinking about while they were there or things that popped up in their mind. Some had individual conversations – such and such and I were talking about this.. but we also wanted to bring this to the group. I think in terms of – in terms of the impact that they were having in addition to the impact that the organization was necessarily having. I remember that being one of the focal points of the conversation. Of us coming in for one day, and then what impact, how does

167

		that carry on and how does that play a role into the larger picture."
		• "Especially the first couple of night's students were less willing to participate. That had to do with them getting to know each other. That doesn't reflect on their knowledge and their prep going into the trip."
How did you see students prepared or under prepared as it relates to working as a team? Did you see elements of team culture?	• The responses to this question were equally split between themes of the group being unprepared upon arrival and the group being well prepared. • Half of staff noted that the group worked well together, citing ways that the group connected or overcame obstacles.	• "I think they were under prepared before and then they got super into it when they were there." • "I think we came together really well as a team." • "It was pretty easy for them to stay as one cohesive group. There were some kind of off-shoots within there naturally. But I think they blended well together, people played to their strengths. So the natural leaders helped lead the group. Overall there was not any conflict to my knowledge between group members."

	• Half of staff noted that the group was not familiar with one another or was very quiet.	• "I did. That was actually cool to see. [The [previous] trip I had advised…I didn't necessarily see that." • "So I think that the first couple of days were a challenge in terms of building team culture. We had a lot of students who either only did one or didn't do any friend dates. They hadn't had the opportunity to bond with other members of the team. The first two days as leaders, we spent a long time getting a sense of who in the group were going to be the more talkative group members."
What would you say were the greatest opportunities for improvement for the Pitt students you served with in 2018?	• Themes did not emerge from this question, as staff provided a variety of suggestions for improvement to the program. • The variety of responses tended to be trip-specific and related to individual	• Suggestions included: o Reorientation programming o Additional group team building o Cultural competency o Student engagement / participation o Time management

students or an experience that occurred while on the trip.	o Community partner connections o Sharing of documents (binder) o Trip-specific content o Increased pre-trip community service

Appendix J Community Partner Interview Chart

Community partners are employees or trained volunteers of the host organization during the Alternative Break service experiences. These individuals were screened to ensure they interacted with the students during their service experiences.

Questions	Summary of Analysis	Illustrative quotes
In what ways did you see students well prepared during their service trip?	• Community partners shared common themes of students being eager and ready to serve, with the majority of respondents noting that students were well prepared in those ways. • Similarly, several community partners continued by noting that they were also open-minded.	• "I don't think that anything we asked them to do required any specific expertise. So it's not as if they came in with any kind of any kind of huge advantage over someone who wouldn't be prepared. But they did seem prepared to ask good questions about what it is that we do. And they were also prepared to do whatever it was that we needed done. They were eager and willing to do it."

• Additional themes that were the minority, but are relevant to best practices include knowledge of community and the ability to ask good questions. • One outlier noted that students were not prepared at all for their service week.	• "No – no most of the students that come for the ASB are not fully prepared. Because what we do is full on manual labor. So nobody is actually prepared for doing that unless you've been doing that." • "They seemed to have background in what we were talking about, not a ton but eager to continue to learn." • "I think that they were really ready to come in with an open mind and with some critical thinking skills. I also think they came in prepared to do a lot of community service which was really great as well." • "More so than others, maybe just like umm – their ideas of how the political environment is different here." • "They were a pretty open minded group that was willing to serve. I think the students who self-select into the program that are kind of predisposed to it already. I remember them being very eager and cooperative group."

Was there anything that stuck out to you that you would say based on your interaction, that Pitt has an opportunity to do better in preparing the students to serve?	• The majority of respondents were not able to provide any specific ways in which they would like Pitt to better prepare students. • A small minority of the participants gave examples, including reflection preparation and providing more information on service requirements.	• "Not really – they all seemed very ready to jump in." • "Maybe them coming prepared to talk more during reflections. Sometimes students were really shy and that's ok too but just being ready to participate fully." • "I don't know. [long pause] umm – yeah – I'm trying to think… umm. I don't know how to answer that." • "They just don't seem to – they do not seem to show up knowing what they are about to be doing."
How would you describe the team work and	• All community partners provided positive responses, citing examples and ways in which they were pleased with the group dynamics.	• "I believe they were prepared to do work and work together. I thought everyone worked really well together."

leadership of the group?		• "I think what is standing out is the team work. I think that overall the group worked really well together. And when even a task was introduced, they were really just – they went right for it." • "I would say that there was a couple of older students who definitely showed some leadership skills which was very admirable and very helpful to us just in order to keep the day going." • "Pittsburgh is always fantastic they always work together very well. There is usually there is no arguing or anything within the group. Everybody seems to get along well and yeah, they are one of our best schools."
How did you see students prepared or under prepared as it relates to	• There were no majority themes in this area, with community partners providing positive remarks when they answered.	• "I think some of them expressed the idea of some of that privilege, but others of them did not bring it up at all. I think it just wasn't addressed • "Ummm – oh gosh – off the top of my head. Not really immediately. They were very respectful toward everyone we

their understanding of power structures and privilege?	• Several community partners requested clarity on the concept and were not able to provide reflection on the topic. • Of all participants, no one presented any negative relationship or signs of unpreparedness of the students.	worked with and really, I think they really gained a lot from what [community members] had to say." • "I don't think they crossed any boundaries. I think they were respectful and humble."
How did you see students prepared or under prepared in regards to their reflection?	• This data is reduced, as two individuals did not participate in reflection with the group. • Those who did participate in reflection, nearly all noted that students were much more reflective during informal discussions than during formal reflection activities.	• "During reflections they tended to get very quiet. When we had them partner up for things they would speak to each other 1:1, but whenever we tried to do full-group discussions it was very, very quiet." • "I think it was funny, because a lot of them would be very inquisitive during the day and then we would come to our prepared reflections and this honestly might have been our fault too – maybe. It might have been our fault too that the reflections weren't interesting enough so a lot of times it was us trying to prompt them to say something and so throughout the week it was

	• The majority noted levels of under preparedness, but were not negative about the experience. • One individual was positive and noted that the group was active during discussions.	probably 4-5 people who would ever talk during the reflections maybe through the reflections and if they had to. Honestly that was just shyness and maybe it was the end of the day and maybe they were tired." • "I don't measure participation just in terms of how much you talk. I measure participation in how you are actively listening, are you following along, Are you following along with the reading and prompts and does it look like you are thinking about it."
Did you see evidence of students focusing on the assets of the community or	• Nearly all community partners responded that they did not see evidence of this. However, no one noted that there was a concern with students focusing on challenges. • Of the majority that responded that they did not see evidence, one person did ask	• "I don't think so. I think that – I mean, I think here were a few vague comments about [the community]. Nothing showing a solid foundation but also nothing showing that they hadn't been exposed to anything. So not really." • "Within the community?? Hmm – [pause] – you know I honestly I really didn't hear any discussion of that."

| using an ABCD lens? | for clarity of the term. Upon clarification, positive remarks were provided regarding the student preparation.

• There was a minority that noted that students had a positive attitude and were appreciative of the community. | • "They recognized a lot of times their preconceived notions of the community vs. what they were learning or Vs what they had heard about and how it actually was in the community. I really appreciated that. so I would say that yes, they gained from that."

• "Just with some of the conversations I heard – they would get into conversations and I was impressed that that was going on with some of them. I think that shows a lot of preparedness. When people are… able to like a code switch. You are just looking to tell them about something and all of a sudden you are chatting about some sort of issue. I think if you were – if they were unprepared they wouldn't have been able to do that."

• "They seemed pretty open minded and sponges to absorb the information more so than, commenting on it. More so than… they did have positive reactions to everything they were told. It didn't seem like they were bringing in any negative prejudice in ahead of time." |

177

| What do you hope Pitt would do to help students be prepared for another Alternative Break service experience? | • Consistently community partners began by responding with comments that they were unsure. While there were no significant themes that were reported by the majority of partners several comments related to best practices.

• Some community partners noted specific community or service activities (education and training).

• An additional community partner noted the desire for ongoing engagement (reorientation).

• Two community partners noted an interest in being involved in the training to give trip-specific information. | • "It's a tricky question because some of the prep I'd want them to have would be best given by [organization] and not by Pitt. Merely because I don't know of anybody at Pitt who has the kind of knowledge about the neighborhood that we have. So I would just want there to be some orientation built into such a program."

• "One important part about their sessions would have been for us have known what their sessions were about when planning their schedule, we did some learnings of our own. I think things like gentrification would have been a great thing to cover and even just really what it means to do service. And what it looks like and the different forms that it can take on. And even more of the history of [the community] would have also been interesting. We covered most of that, but it took away from time we would have been doing service, had we not been covering that." |

		• "Learning more about specifics about each community. I think that would be really important just so that students come in with some ideas."
		• "I don't know – I think that's the whole point of coming on the tour is to learn about it and to be fully immersed. I don't know if it's possible to prepare someone for that kind of stuff. You might learn about it, but until you see it's a lot different and you are going to think about it differently after seeing it."
		• "Hiking. I would say hiking to prepare."
		• "This is outside of your study and probably outside of your control. I would like to see ongoing service. Outside of that week those organizations where they were [serving] has sessions one Saturday every month – I would have liked to see more communication between students individually signing up for that outside of Pitt or Pitt organizing groups to go to see where their work went well. And continue to build relationships."

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181

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