A Case Study on Alternative Spring Break: Supporting Black Women at an HBCU

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A CASE STUDY ON ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK: SUPPORTING BLACK WOMEN AT AN HBCU

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The College of Human Sciences and Education

by

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To my mother and brother, I could not have done this without you two.
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Abstract

Alternative Spring Break (ASB) is a college-based travel program in which students spend their traditional spring break vacation traveling to a new domestic or international city to complete a service-learning project such as community restoration in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. As a result of participating in Alternative Spring Break, students gain invaluable experiences and transferable skills that can be applied to their academic and career goals. In this dissertation, the specific transferable skill explored is emotional intelligence.

The purpose of this dissertation is to illuminate the lived experiences of Black women who have participated in a college-based travel program and how their participation fosters the development of emotional intelligence. This study focuses on Black women because there is minimal research available to support this particular student population with intentional strategies regarding their academic and social integration. Interviews with Black women enrolled at Howard University (HU), a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) who participated in a Spring 2019 ASB trip serve as the primary source of data for this study. And the HU ASB program was selected because of its 25-year history and robust site selection.

The researcher implemented an instrumental case study design, focusing on the relationship between Black women and their lived experiences during an Alternative Spring Break trip and how these students developed emotional intelligence. Illustrative quotes from participants will highlight the relevance of the data collected and the impact ASB has on Black women. Additionally, implications for higher education practice, policy and research are presented.
Chapter One: Introduction

Just to travel is rather boring, but to travel with a purpose is educational and exciting.

– Sargent Shriver, American Diplomat

(Clarke, 2018, p. 88)

Introduction

Alternative Spring Break (ASB) is an opportunity where college students use a designated vacation time during the academic school year to engage in a community service project, typically traveling to a different domestic or international destination to serve a community in need. As these programs increase beyond Spring Break and include other designated vacations they are often referred to as alternative break programs, “which are short-term service-learning trips, immerse students in direct service and education, resulting in the creation of active citizens who think and act critically around the root causes of social issues” (Piacitelli et al., 2013, p. 87). The research presented in this dissertation focuses primarily on the Alternative Spring Break program at Howard University. Howard University’s Alternative Spring Break (HU ASB) program was intentionally selected because of the program’s longevity and robust list of service sites. The researcher examined how college-based travel programs like Alternative Spring Break foster non-cognitive skills like emotional intelligence in African American women.

Alternative Spring Break offers an opportunity for students to participate in high-impact practices through service-learning projects that provide an outlet for students to travel to new cities, states, or countries for one week to serve a community in need. The publication of George Kuh’s (2008) High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter, influenced the way student affairs professionals approach student
engagement, retention and overall college success causing many campuses to redesign the student experience completely (Finley et al., 2013). According to Finley et al. (2013) Kuh’s book prompted more research and assessment focused on how high-impact practices influenced student success and achievement. High-Impact Practices (HIPs) are programs offered on college campuses across the nation specifically designed to increase student retention and engagement. Some examples of high-impact practices with opportunities to travel include, but are not limited to, the following: study abroad, mission trips hosted by student organizations or academic departments, internships, conferences, research opportunities, and alternative spring break. These programs are considered high-impact practices because when used intentionally they may increase student success through engaged learning (Finley et al., 2013). The reason Alternative Spring Break is recognized as a high-impact practice, is because it requires students to participate in a service-learning project in which students complete a community service project and participate in reflection activities.

**Service-Learning: A High Impact Practice**

“Service-learning,” a term created in 1967 by Robert Sigmon and William Ramsey (Anderson et al., 2016, p. 34 ), is described as an opportunity for faculty to teach and students to learn from the integration of classroom curriculum and organized service projects typically involving experiences inside and outside of the classroom (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hatcher et al., 2004; Hurd, 2008). Faculty intentionally align “the course content by meeting a need of the community through student practice” (Campus Compact, 2000, p.15).

Based on Kuh’s research, community service-based programming has rapidly grown as a trend in higher education (Hoey & Feld-Gore, 2014). This programming provides experiential learning for students thus enhancing their cognitive, civic, and emotional development which
meets several institutional missions to engage their local communities (Hoey & Feld-Gore, 2014). For example, the last sentence of Howard University’s mission statement is “with an abiding interest in both domestic and international affairs, the University is committed to continuing to produce leaders for America and the global community” (Howard, 2019b, para. 1).

Service-learning allows students an opportunity to ‘learn by doing’ in which faculty members are provided a context to develop student tests, apply discipline-based theories, concepts, practica, observations and pedagogies. Subsequently providing students with ample opportunities to develop non-cognitive skills like communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, and performance techniques (Hurd, 2008; Steiner & Sands, 2000). It is critically important for both faculty and students to be actively engaged in the planning process and implementation of the service project, this will increase the likelihood of achieving the following service-learning goals: enhanced academic learning, community development and engagement, and increased student personal and civic development. Also, make special note that these elements are engrained in the service-learning experience in addition students must participate in reflection activities to truly create a learning experience (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hatcher et al., 2004; Hurd, 2008).

Several intentional efforts have been implemented to determine the impact of service-learning on student learning, growth and development beyond previous assessments that only focused on participation frequency, including the book The Measure of Service Learning (2004) and national projects such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ (AAC&U) large-scale Bringing Theory to Practice project (Hoey & Feld-Gore, 2014). The Education Commission of the States provides short-term and long-term outcomes of high-quality service-learning. The short-term outcomes are “strengthens academic engagement, increases school
attendance, connects students to their communities, and reduces risky behaviors” (Ryan, 2012, p. 4). The long-term outcomes are “civic engagement, career preparedness, healthy school climate, and public engagement in education” (Ryan, 2012, p. 4).

Joe Bandy, the Assistant Director for the Center for Teaching at Vanderbilt University suggests several types of student benefits including learning outcomes, personal outcomes, social outcomes, career development opportunities, and improved student relationships with the university (Bandy, 2019). These learning outcomes include students gaining the ability to apply what they have learned and demonstrate problem analysis and solving, critical thinking and understanding ambiguity (Bandy, 2019). Personal outcomes include a sense of personal efficacy, personal identity, and interpersonal skills like leadership and communication development (Bandy, 2019). Social outcomes include an increased inter-cultural understanding and social responsibility (Bandy, 2019). The career development benefits include networking with professionals and community partners for future internship or career opportunities and transferable skills that can be used in their career (Bandy, 2019). And lastly, students are more likely to have a greater relationship with their university through service-learning through stronger student-faculty relationships, satisfaction rates and persistence to graduation (Bandy, 2019).

The Oldest Alternative Spring Break Program and Break Away

The overview of student benefits of ASB participation from Vanderbilt University is highlighted because Vanderbilt University’s Alternative Spring Break program is recognized as the oldest ASB program and one of the largest student-run travel programs in the country. The first alternative spring break trip happened in 1987 when students met a professor’s challenge to organize a week of service as opposed to a traditional spring break vacation (Vanderbilt
The Vanderbilt program has grown to host 42 sites, in which 3 are international and was recognized by Break Away as the 2016 National Program of the Year (Vanderbilt University, 2016). The mission of the organization is “to promote critical thinking, social action and continued community involvement by combining education, reflection and direct service on the local, regional, national and international levels” (Vanderbilt University, 2016, para. 3).

Michael Magevney and Laura Mann started Break Away in 1991 once they graduated from Vanderbilt University, because of their involvement with ASB during their undergraduate career. Break Away is now the nation’s leading alternative break organization, recently celebrating its 25th year in 2016. With humble beginnings at Vanderbilt University, the program ran as an alternative break resource center for 10 years. And in 2000, Break Away was relocated to the Center for Civic Education and Service at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida, and was incorporated as a 501(c)3 organization. Later, in 2007, Break Away relocated its headquarters to Atlanta, Georgia.

Piacitelli et al. (2013) explain that Break Away established the “Eight Components of a Quality Alternative Break” which are defined as the following; “education, orientation, training, strong direct service, reflection, reorientation, social justice and diversity, and being drug- and alcohol-free” (p. 90). The Break Away network has expanded to include a membership of 200 colleges and universities and 700 community partners (Break Away, 2019). Break Away offers two types of memberships to colleges and universities that provide the necessary tools to start a successful ASB program. Students at the chapter schools are then able to participate in ASB through a university hosted ASB program.
While Break Away is the nation’s leading alternative break organization it is not the determining authority on implementing Alternative Spring Break at institutions across the United States. Additionally, their membership does not include any Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Which raises a point of concern that there is not a uniformed effort to intentionally engage students at HBCUs. Therefore, the Alternative Spring Break program highlighted in this study is at Howard University (HU), a HBCU in Washington, D.C. founded in 1867. Of the open and accredited 101 HBCUs, only 20 offer any type of service-learning courses, mission trips, or alternative spring breaks to their students (Appendix H). Therefore, the selection of the HU ASB program was intentional because it is the oldest, most consistent, and most robust program across all HBCUs.

**History of HBCUs and the Mission of Howard University**

In 1991, the U.S. Department of Education published an overview of “Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Higher Education Desegregation” (U.S. Department of Education, 2020a). This article explains that prior to the Civil War African Americans did not have any formal system to receive an education due to segregation and discrimination but institutions for colored youth carried that charge, providing elementary and secondary education (U.S. Department of Education, 2020a). After the Civil War ended, the 1890 Morrill Act supported the higher education of Black students, and states were required to offer a land-grant institution for Black students if there was already a land-grant institution restricted to White students only. Eventually 16 Black institutions were granted the land-grant college designation (U.S. Department of Education, 2020a).

Additional legislation was passed to further the education of Black students, including Plessy vs Ferguson in 1896, Brown vs Board of Education in 1954, and the Civil Rights Act of
1964 (U.S. Department of Education, 2020a). Which influence the expansion from 16 designated Black land-grant institutions grew into 107 HBCUs across the southern, eastern, midwestern and northern regions of the United States. And according to the most recent data available from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), there are 101 recognized and or accredited Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Of the 101 recognized and accredited HBCUs across the nation, Howard University is the only one referred to as ‘the Mecca’ because it is revered as one of the most prestigious institutions of higher learning in the world, not to mention the most prestigious HBCU (Cottum, 2015; Hoskins, 2017; Ladipo, 2019). Howard University has “awarded more than 100,000 degrees in the arts, sciences and humanities. Howard ranks among the top producers of the nation’s Black professionals in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering, nursing, architecture, religion, law, music, social work and education” (Howard University, 2019d, para. 1). The university mission is aligned with the mission of many HBCUs which is to “provide an educational experience of exceptional quality at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels to students of high academic standing and potential, with emphasis on educational opportunities for Black students” (Howard University, 2019b, para. 1). And to hire “faculty who are, through their teaching, research and service, committed to the development of distinguished, historically aware, and compassionate graduates” which is in sync with the implementation of high impact practices (Howard University, 2019b, para. 1). And Howard seeks to encourage the “discovery of solutions to human problems in the United States and throughout the world” which is aligned with the concept of service-learning. Lastly, the university motto is “Veritas et Utilitas,
Truth and Service” which is engrained into the campus culture and carried out through the Alternative Spring Break program (Howard University, 2019c, para. 4).

HBCUs have always had a service orientation and several have served as the background to social justice issues like the Civil Rights Movement. That movement would not have been successful without the involvement of several HBCU students including “Medgar Evers (Alcorn State), Rosa Parks (Alabama State), Stokely Carmichael (Howard University), and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Morehouse College)” (HBCU Lifestyle, 2020, para. 2). And the universities themselves were used as meeting spaces and demonstrations. These included boycotts and marches led by Fisk University students to end segregation in Nashville, voter registration drives and Freedom Rides at Shaw University, and students from Tougaloo College asked White entertainers not to perform at segregated venues (HBCU Lifestyle, 2020, para. 3). And students at Howard University organized the first “sit-ins” at cafeterias when they were refused service because of their race. Howard University students have continued to engage in the needs of the community through programs like Alternative Spring Break.

**Alternative Spring Break at Howard University**

The Howard University Alternative Spring Break (HUASB) program was created in 1994, making it the first and oldest program on record hosted by a HBCU. HU ASB is under the direction of Dr. Bernard L. Richardson, the Dean of the Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel. This is important because most HBCUs were founded with the support of the Black Church or missionary groups which meant that some campus leadership and faculty members were ministers. The first trips under his leadership began as missionary trips. The program has remained under the Chapel and his leadership, every year since its inception.
In 2006 the program expanded out of Washington, D.C. and added New Orleans, Louisiana because students wanted to physically respond to the devastating aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In 2009 the program grew to include multiple sites including Washington, District of Columbia, New Orleans, Louisiana, Chicago, Illinois, and Detroit, Michigan. By 2011, the program had reached international status, as students again wanted to respond to the aftermath of another natural disaster, this time it was the earthquake in Haiti. And by 2017 the program continued to experience expansion, as it reached 13 sites domestically and internationally.

The program celebrated its 25-year anniversary in 2019 and according to the 2019 promotional flyer, the program has accomplished 100,000 hours of service, with 800 engaged students across 100 community partnerships. At the conclusion of the Spring 2019 semester the program successfully visited a record breaking 21 sites with over 1000 student participants. In addition, the program was recognized by “President Barack Obama’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll with distinction, which is the highest federal award an institution can receive for service-learning and civic engagement” on October 22, 2014, (Howard University, 2019f, para. 4).

The program has the following mission and vision:

HUASB Mission Statement

Howard University Alternative Spring Break is a unique service learning experience that enables HU students to connect with targeted communities domestically and internationally in activism while combatting prevalent social issues, exploring the ethical and spiritual dimensions of leadership, and challenging their unique gifts and talents through the Howard University motto, truth and service (2017 HUASB Program Overview, 2017, p. 117)
HUASB Vision Statement

Howard University Alternative Spring Break aims to expose students to concepts of social justice, urban education, and community development; to cultivate ethically responsible, socially aware leaders; to integrate vocational discernment and interfaith spiritual exploration into the developmental process; and to improve communities through direct outreach and long term impact (2017 HUASB Program Overview, 2017, p. 117)

Program Overview

At present the HUASB program is still housed under the Office of the Dean of Chapel; however, students physically meet in Carnegie Hall as the chapel undergoes renovations. With the support of the Office of the President, HU ASB is recognized as a university-wide initiative and learning lab, that is completely student operated. The program is introduced to students during their Freshman Orientation experience, and the program encourages students to participate at least once during their time at Howard.

The program is organized similarly to a student organization but on a much larger scale, comprised of a steering committee, including 50 students that range from directors to social media managers to site coordinators. The program offers over 20 sites domestically and internationally with 1-2 site coordinators and 2-4 team leaders per site. The top three leadership positions are Executive Student Director, Director of Operations, and Director of Internal and External Relations. The rest of the positions are filled after student applications are reviewed and interviews are conducted. The rest of these positions include various roles within the following teams: public relations, media, fundraising, events, executive support, and database and operations. Site Coordinators and Team Leaders work together to find housing, meals, and sites to volunteer at over a nine-month period. They depend on previous relationships built with churches, service organizations, and schools to create their ASB week. This also includes creating social and cultural activities to participate in.
**ASB Week Experience**

A typical HU ASB experience is seven days long, with two days primarily dedicated to traveling to the destination via university van or charter bus. Keep in mind that international destinations might extend to 9 days to accommodate flights and changes in time zones. The student leaders develop a master itinerary based on the city they are visiting. And a typical week for the students might include the following schedule (varies by city and number of work sites):

- **Day 1:** Students sign waivers, travel to destination, welcome dinner, leadership meeting
- **Day 2:** Breakfast, site one, lunch break, site two, dinner break, reflections
- **Day 3:** Breakfast, site one, lunch break, site two, dinner break, visit site three, reflections
- **Day 4:** Breakfast, site one, lunch break, college panel, dinner break, reflections
- **Day 5:** Breakfast, site one, lunch break, site two, dinner break, visit site three, reflections
- **Day 6:** Breakfast, cultural activity, lunch break, social activity, dinner break, reflections
- **Day 7:** Breakfast, pack up and clean up, travel back to campus

**Statement of Research Problem**

“Black women currently earn about two thirds of all African-American bachelor's degree awards, 70 percent of all master's degrees, and more than 60 percent of all doctorates” (Slater, 2020, para. 1). Black women enroll in college at higher rates and complete degrees in higher numbers, yet research related to their experiences, persistence to graduation and or non-cognitive skill development is either limited or non-existent. Few empirical studies address the issue of non-cognitive variables or factors that impact student success for Black students, mostly focusing on Black men (Gray & Swinton, 2017; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015; Hyatt, 2003; Lanham et al., 2011; Nasim et al., 2005; Powell 1981; Shorette & Pamlter, 2015; Williams et al., 2018; Zell, 2011), and even fewer studies exist for Black women through this lens. Additionally,
there is a lack of research available on Black students’ experiences with Alternative Spring Break (Destine & Katz-Fishman, 2018), specifically Black female students.

Further, after reviewing each of the 101 HBCUs recognized by the National Center for Educational Statistics, the researcher only found 20 schools with any type of alternative spring break or service trips listed on the institution’s website. Details of this research and its results are organized into a HBCU Alternative Spring Break Benchmark report (Appendix H). As a result of this research it is evident that HBCUs are lacking in providing this opportunity for its students, in which there are proven academic, personal, and professional benefits to service-learning opportunities.

**Purpose of Study**

This study explored how Alternative Spring Break, a college-based travel program, fosters the development of emotional intelligence for students, specifically Black women enrolled at a HBCU. To achieve that, this research illuminates the lived experiences of Black women that participated in Alternative Spring Break during the Spring 2019 semester. And for this study, ‘African American’ and ‘Black’ are used interchangeably “to refer to individuals whose ancestral origins lie in groups of African descent including African Americans, Africans, Haitians, West Indians, Black Caribbeans, etc.” (Strayhorn, 2015, pp. 45-46).

The purpose of this research is to highlight these students’ lived experiences and explain how their participation leads to developing emotional intelligence and academic and social integration because of their participation in Alternative Spring Break. The Alternative Spring Break program at Howard University is a week-long service trip, in which students organize one or more service projects at a site away from their institution (i.e., local, national, or international), and it usually involves social and cultural activities in the city they are visiting.
ASB participants are also required to participate in reflection assignments to reflect on what they have learned about themselves, the community they are serving and the service initiative they focus on during their service-learning trip. Students selected for this research should be able to describe their ability to develop emotional intelligence because of participating in the Alternative Spring Break program at Howard University. The development of emotional intelligence is the crux of this research study, introducing a new way to study the benefits of participating in an Alternative Spring Break service trip.

**Emotional Intelligence in this Study**

Sedlacek and Brooks (1976) determined that non-cognitive skills serve as additional factors impacting minority student academic success. Initially, there were seven non-cognitive dimensions that Tracey and Sedlacek (1984a) determined, “positive self-concept, realistic self-appraisal, understanding of and ability to deal with racism, preference for long-range goals over short-term or immediate needs, availability of a strong support person, successful leadership experience, and demonstrated community service” (p. 6). Sedlacek and Brooks (1976) first hypothesized these seven non-cognitive predictors for minority student college success and have been tested using the Non-Cognitive Questionnaire (NCQ) to assess Black student achievement and persistence (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1984b). Nasim et al. (2005) refer to these seven psychosocial factors as the traditional non-cognitive aspects that contribute to a student's ability to demonstrate achievement-related beliefs and adjustment to a new social context, college for example (Nasim et al., 2005). Later Tracey and Sedlacek determined an eighth dimension; academic familiarity, (Tracey and Sedlacek, 1986).

Parks et al. (2019) state that “emotional intelligence generally describes the non-cognitive skills that effectively manage the feelings and behaviors that serve personal and professional
relationships” (p. 1486). Therefore, the research presented in this case study will focus on emotional intelligence (EQ-i) as another type of non-cognitive skill that students develop during their undergraduate careers. Based on the Tracey and Sedlacek’s (1984a) foundational framework, this research will continue their efforts to understand how developing emotional intelligence impacts student development and academic and social integration for Black women specifically enrolled at a HBCU. Higher education administration and employers agree that these skills are sought after in graduates as they complete their degrees and enter the workforce. And according to Law et al. (2004) additional research finds that emotional intelligence is a critical aspect related to job performance and life satisfaction.

Students that participate in high impact practices like service-learning based programs will share illustrative quotes about their ability to demonstrate an understanding of self, others and the community which aligns with the four emotional intelligence dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Therefore, by using an instrumental case study design (Stake, 1995, p. 64), the intent for this research is to understand the relationship between Black women and their participation in Alternative Spring Break and how they develop emotional intelligence as a result of their participation. Again, Alternative Spring Break is an opportunity for students to participate in a college-based travel program, a high-impact practice, that relies heavily on service-learning, social justice education and experiential learning to engage students. And Kuh (2008) found that high impact practices will particularly engage students in underserved populations like the Black women in this study.

**Research Questions**

This case study explored three research questions relevant to the experiences of Black women at Howard University who completed an Alternative Spring Break trip:
1. What are the lived experiences of Black women that participated in Alternative Spring Break?

2. How did their involvement with Alternative Spring Break develop the four dimensions of emotional intelligence?

3. How did participation in Alternative Spring Break impact their ability to experience academic and social integration?

**Significance of Study**

This research is significant because it focuses on Black women and their lived experiences. The researcher sought to focus on a very specific student population that participated in a college-based travel program, providing insight into how Black women describe their ability to integrate into college both academically and socially. It is hoped that this study will ultimately contribute to the existent body of research on Black, female undergraduate students specifically their ability to develop emotional intelligence. Additionally, the institution highlighted in this research is the only HBCU with an organized alternative spring break program that has 25 years of uninterrupted service trips including several domestic and international service sites.

The data presented at the conclusion of this study may be used in consideration of organizational practice, as higher education faculty and student affairs professionals engage with Black women during their undergraduate experiences. The data collected from these students’ experiences with ASB can be extrapolated within broader contexts of higher education practice and policy for supporting Black women as they matriculate through their undergraduate experience, including retention, persistence, and completion rates. Zamani (2003) states that “the missions, characteristics, and climates of postsecondary institutions require attention with regard
to their capacity to foster postsecondary educational attainment for African American women” (p.10). Therefore, this research is significant in the larger body of literature because there is a need for more institutions of higher education to offer programming targeted toward Black female students, as they are outnumbering their male counterparts 2:1 (Slater, 2020), and historically excel academically consequently there are less resources designated specifically for their benefit. While these students are resilient, they still need intentional and target programming to help them complete their academic programs and transition into their careers.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined based on the information provided for this study:

- **Alternative (Spring) Break Program.** A college-based travel program in which “students travel locally, nationally, and internationally to conduct direct service while focusing on targeted social justice issues” (Piacitelli et al., 2013, p. 88). Programming for Alternative Spring Break happens during the traditionally scheduled spring break vacation, but the popularity of these programs has grown into service trips that happen during national holidays and winter breaks, therefore colleges are using an umbrella term alternative breaks as of late.

- **Academic and Social Integration (Tinto’s Theory on Student Retention).**

  Academic: “A measure of the general expansion of the individual’s intellectual breadth and scope, of the person’s ability to think systematically and critically, and of his stimulation in his academic coursework” (Tinto & Cullen, 1973, p. 56). A construct related to how well a student feels that he or she fits into the academic life of an institution (Brown, 2002).
Social: “The development (through peer associations, campus events activities, faculty/staff contact, student organizations, etc.) of sufficient congruency with some part of the social system of the college” (Tinto & Cullen, 1973, p. 60). “A match between the individual student and the social system” (Ting, 2008, p. 6).

- **Black/African.** People who are native to Africa, descendants of natives of Africa, or individuals who trace their ancestry to indigenous inhabitants of Africa (Merriam-Webster, 2020)

- **Black/African American.** The term African American is used to describe Americans that have partial or total ancestry rooted in Africa (Rastogi et al., 2011). They are also referred to as Black American or Afro American or Black (West, 1984). The term African American, is the acceptable term to refer to descendants of former African slaves in America (Locke & Bailey, 2013; Martin & Fabes, 2008)

- **Black/Afro-Latina.** “Black is the racial group, while the pan ethnic identification of ‘Latino’ refers to language, culture, and nation of origin. To be a Black Spanish speaker in the Americas means to feel, taste, hear, see, etc. the West African heritage at all times in our phenotype, in our music, in our dance, in our rhythms, in our food, in our language/daily lexicon, etc…Sometimes this means living life on the hyphen, to borrow from Professor Juan Flores, neither being perceived as ‘Black enough’ nor ‘Latino enough’…but we’re Afrodescendientes and proud” - L. Tamar Minter (Moreno, 2015).

- **Community Service.** Community service is work done by a person or group of people that benefits others. It is often done near the area where you live, so your own community reaps the benefits of your work. You do not get paid to perform community service,
though sometimes food and small gifts, like a t-shirt, are given to volunteers (Sarikas, 2018).

- **Emotional Intelligence.** Emotional Intelligence includes the ability to engage in sophisticated information processing about one’s own and others’ emotions and the ability to use this information as a guide to think and behavior. That is, individuals high in emotional intelligence pay attention to, use, understand, and manage emotions, and these skills serve adaptive functions that potentially benefit themselves and others (Mayer et al., 2008).

- **Historically Black College and University (HBCU).** The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, defines an HBCU as: “...any historically Black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education] to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation” (U.S. Department of Education, 2020b, para. 1).

- **Howard University (Howard or HU).** Howard University is a private institution that was founded in 1867 as a historically Black college in the heart of the District of Columbia (US News, 2020).

- **Non-Cognitive Skills.** Tracey and Sedlacek (1984b) offer eight psychosocial variables which are proven to reliably predict academic success for African-American students; the eight variables are self-concept, realistic self-appraisal, support of academic plans, the ability to understand and deal with racism, setting long-range goals, academic familiarity
and interest, ability to establish community ties, and successful leadership experience (Nasim et al., 2005).

- **Service-Learning.** “A teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (Ryan, 2012, p.3).
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Introduction

The following literature review focuses on Alternative Spring Break and understanding the effectiveness of service-learning experiences as well as non-cognitive skills and how emotional intelligence is developed among college students. Ivory (1997) stated that alternative breaks gave students an opportunity to immerse themselves in a new cultural setting in which they are exposed to real social, economic, and environmental issues. Beatty et al. (2016) stated that research on credit-bearing service-learning opportunities validated students’ ability to link theory to practice and achieve enhanced academic outcomes in addition to personal outcomes like self-confidence and a commitment to service. And according to Parker et al. (2005) students with a significantly higher emotional intelligence performed better academically.

There are clear benefits outlined for ASB, but the effort to increase their implementation at HBCUs is minimal therefore little empirical studies are available on ASB at these campuses. Based on the research I conducted, reviewing each of the open and accredited HBCUs websites I created a benchmark report, see Appendix H. The following HBCUs have a record of ASB on their website including a webpage, flyer, or student posted media, etc.:

- Albany State University
- Bowie State University
- Florida Memorial University
- Hampton University
- Harris-Stowe State University
- Howard University
- Huston-Tillotson University
- Jackson State University
- Mississippi Valley State University
- Morehouse College
- Morehouse School of Medicine
- North Carolina A & T State University
- North Carolina Central University
- Savannah State University
- Spelman College
- University of Maryland- Eastern Shore
- University of the District of Columbia
- University of the Virgin Islands
- University of the Virgin Islands - St. Thomas Campus
- University of the Virgin Islands - A. A. Sheen Campus
- Virginia State University
Based on the content available on their websites, few have had a consistent program history, most do not have an office or department that is responsible for the program, and the leadership over the program is also inconsistent. I found that these HBCUs may have ASB under the study abroad office or various student organizations and none of them are tied to Break Away. So, it is safe to assume that the effort to increase the implementation of the program is inconsistent across HBCUs nationwide.

While there are several research studies and articles that focus on service-learning and civic engagement, there is a significant gap in the literature that focuses on Alternative Spring Break programs as well as any ASB programs hosted by HBCUs. I found one article for alternative spring break at an HBCU but it focuses on the project and not the students, I located another article framed as a case study for alternative spring break, and I could not find articles available on non-cognitive skill development (i.e., emotional intelligence) through alternative spring break. It was also just as challenging to find articles specifically exploring how Black students or Black female students develop emotional intelligence. Therefore, this case study will add to the literature on Black women in higher education, specifically those enrolled in undergraduate programs that participate in college-based travel programs like Alternative Spring Break at an HBCU.

**Engaged Learning through Alternative Spring Break**

Alternative Spring Break (ASB) is a high-impact practice and a form of experiential learning, which is becoming increasingly popular at 4-year colleges and universities (Eyler, 2009; Warren, 2012). The popularity and implementation of these opportunities is a call to action for institutions of higher education to provide an educational experience that offers additional skills for its graduates (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2002; DiConti, 2004;
Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities, 2012). The following section discusses the articles with research studies contributing to the research about ASB and how universities are incorporating service-learning pedagogy.

**Service Learning**

According to Eyler (2009), experiential learning programs connect academic content with intentional volunteer experiences, reinforce classroom learning, and advance the students’ ability to think critically. Moreover, universities are integrating opportunities to bridge the gap between academic learning and community engagement, as they strive to create globally and socially responsible graduates (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Bringle et al., 2011; Chambers, 2009; Jones & Abes, 2004; McCarthy & Tucker, 2002; Ramaley, 2014). Calvert (2012) states that service-learning “is introduced as the optimal teaching methodology for creating cross-functional capability for business students” (p. 61). And Penn and Tanner (2009) offer the acronym “EAR” to better understand the service-learning pedagogy, the “E” stands for education, “A” for action and “R” for reflection (p. 279).

Gasman et al. (2015) found that while there is a breadth of articles on civic engagement and its resurgence on historically White campuses, there is a lack of depth and scope of articles available about the consistent civic engagement at HBCUs. This research proved that the faculty, staff and students at HBCUs have served a significant role in their local communities through health, literacy, voter engagement, education and a space for public gatherings but their involvement lacks the same exposure as their White counterparts (Gasman et al., 2015). Therefore Blankson et al. (2015) sought to understand the relationship between service-learning and civic attitudes among students at minority serving institutions, specifically HBCUs. By implementing a quasi-experimental research design, they examined the role of service-learning
on six aspects of civic attitudes and skills: (a) civic action (b) interpersonal and problem solving skills (c) political awareness (d) leadership skills (e) social justice attitudes and (f) diversity attitudes (Blankson et al., 2015). Blankson et al. (2015) stated that of the students currently enrolled in a service-learning course, there were noticeable effects for civic action, political awareness, interpersonal skills, and social justice. And Smith et al. (2017) provide insight into the service-learning that takes place at Morgan State University. Like many HBCUs “Morgan State University (MSU) seeks to prepare its graduates with the commitment and capacity to address social, political, and economic disparities that impact residents of urban communities” (Smith et al., 2017, p. 441).

**Alternative Spring Break.**

Alternative Spring Break is grounded in Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory, distinguishing itself from cognitive learning theories and behavioral learning theories, experiential learning theory emphasizes the role experience has in learning, and is used as a framework for experiential activities that focus on both action and reflection (Beatty et al., 2016). Based upon this newfound theory, Ivory (1997) declared that there was a need to contribute to the research on Alternative Spring Breaks, therefore he conducted a study examining student experiences with re-entry crisis. Re-entry crisis is often experienced by students who participate in study abroad and it means that they encounter “social and psychological difficulties while attempting to readjust to campus life” (Ivory, 1997, p. 104). The five most prevalent re-entry and adjustment issues experienced by the students in this study were: 1) Readjustment to Physical and Educational Environments 2) Academic Dysfunction and Uncertainty 3) Relationships: Barriers to Communication and Understanding 4) Distance and Isolation in Relationships and 5) Self-assessment of Experience and Reactions of Others (Ivory,
Ivory details each of these in detail but the narratives provided by the students spoke to the powerful impact ASB can have but also the social, academic, and psychological challenges students might face as a result of their participation (Ivory, 1997). Thus, student participation in ASB provides a unique experience in which students grow individually but that growth might feel like a personal crisis when re-entering their campus environment.

Similarly, by implementing a case study design, Rhoads and Neururer (1998) examined how participating in community service through ASB influenced students’ sense of self, others, and the larger community beyond their college campus. Rhoads and Neururer (1998) found that community service projects organized in a week-long immersion format offers more developmental opportunities for college students leading to a greater understanding of themselves and their values, commitment to the community and accepting their own social responsibilities to serve these communities. This study was unable to answer whether week-long community service projects have any long-term outcomes or implications (Rhoads & Neurerer, 1998).

Niehaus and Rivera (2015) used data from the National Survey of Alternative Breaks (NSAB), which included students representing 281 alternative spring break programs. The results of this study reported 62.5% of the students said that their experience influenced their understanding of people from different racial groups and 34% reported the experience having a significant impact on their own racial identity development, therefore, ASB contributes to the racial understanding of White students and Students of Color (Niehaus & Rivera, 2015). Based on the students’ involvement, they achieved the following benefits: personal efficacy and desire to participate in community service, empowered to do service and participate in social change prior to graduation, engagement in their local communities and a connection to peers at
neighboring community colleges (Bohon, 2007). Mann and DeAngelo (2016) performed a qualitative study on the potentiality of transformational learning taking place during a week-long event. Students expressed various motivations to participate including not having anything else planned, a more costly trip was out of range, they were called to do this work by their religious commitments and some just wanted to do something good for others. Further, the results of this study found that students changed in three ways; “perception of self, change in perception of others, and change in perception of social issues” (p. 420). In addition to that, students were more culturally aware and better understood their own privilege. And Beatty et al. (2016) performed a “quasi-experimental study of a short-term cocurricular alternative break program, designed to consider the impact of the program on students’ personal development” (p. 95). By implementing this quantitative design, including a control group and surveying students three times during their ASB trip, they were able to “identify specific personal development outcomes for participants versus nonparticipants” and understand any future long-term effects of ASB participation (p. 95). The results of their study found the following relationship between ASB participation and psychosocial development among students: a positive attitude toward community service, higher rate of personal growth through community service engagement, students had a higher desire to help and increase sense of personal competence, ASB participants showed more positive beliefs and values about service than non-ASB participants, ASB participants rank a service-oriented career higher than non-ASB participants and after engaging with the community ASB participants had a better understanding of the social issues impacting the community (Beatty et al., 2016).

We are introduced to the terms volunteer tourism and voluntourism through Brumbaugh’s (2010) quantitative study on how Volunteer Orientation and Diversity Seeking
impact students’ perceptions and attitudes about participating in Alternative Spring Break instead of a traditional spring break vacation. Brumbaugh (2010) stated that “this research is the first to explore how individuals’ predisposition toward volunteering and tendency to seek diversity influence their attitudes toward the voluntourism opportunities,” as more students want to physically respond to natural disasters (p. 484). The results showed that “those high in these traits are more interested in vacations that satisfy their values associated with self-esteem, accomplishment, and learning about other cultures than people low in these traits; are more likely to find vacations that satisfy these values to be fun; and have more favorable attitudes toward such vacations than others low in these traits” (Brumbaugh, 2010, p. 485). This explains why the 2010 earthquake in Haiti sparked the interest of college students, at several universities across the nation, to respond with hands on disaster relief during their Spring Break vacations. As a result of this influx in international travel among college students, “a small group of alternative breaks professionals from five U.S. universities came together with Break Away to form the Haiti Compact (Piacitelli et al., 2013, p. 87). Piacitelli et al. (2013) shared the best practices developed to ensure students did no harm while completing service abroad and still learned while engaging with the community they were there to serve. Using a case study approach this group decided to start the first exploratory trip in June 2010 and then commit at least four more ASBs to visiting Haiti. The compact model included the following elements: a compelling and timely call to action, core leadership, a bonding experience, ongoing commitment and goal development, and a leadership transition plan. One of the most useful parts of this article is the “Rubric for Assessing International Community Partnership Development Break Away: The Alternative Break Connection/The Haiti Compact June 2010” that provided a detailed look at how to assess the needs of the international site (Piacitelli et al., 2013, pp. 101-
Lastly, the best practices that emerged as result of creating the Haiti Compact are as follows: (1) creating an international host site rubric, (2) creating work plans in partnership with host organizations, and (3) developing a compact with several universities for collaboration and resource sharing.

Reardon (2005) did a program review of the Cornell Urban Scholars Program (CUSP) that he co-directed since its inception in 2001. The purpose of the ASB program was to engage Ivy League students in public service with hands on experience with community building and social change. Of student participants in this program, 30% entered positions within nonprofit organizations when they graduated and 20% entered graduate programs related to preparing for a career in public service. Another program assessment was completed by Hoey and Feld-Gore (2014) for the Service Opportunities for Students (SOS) program at Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) which included ASB. Using a case study design with a triangulated multimethod approach, this program assessment illuminates the students’ retrospective evaluations of the ASB program to answer the following questions: “(a) How well is the program working? (b) Is the program serving those it intends to serve? (c) Are students acquiring knowledge, skills, and abilities that are relevant to their coursework, majors, and intended professional careers?” (Hoey & Feld-Gore, 2014, p. 79).

From the advisor perspective Carrie DuPre and Connie North both described their experiences with alternative break trips and what they perceived as themes and learning opportunities for their students. DuPre (2010) served as the advisor at Clemson University and in the 2019 Spring semester she traveled with 18 students on an alternative spring break trip to Nashville, Tennessee, and in the Fall 2019 semester she traveled with 15 students on an alternative fall break trip to Columbia, South Carolina. Based on these trips she found the
following themes, consistent with her students: they valued the relationships with their peers, appreciated the connection with the people they served during their trip and the students were able to exhibit leadership skills. Additionally, she offers some ways to incorporate the students experience once they re-enter the college campus community; students can give presentations, encourage faculty to incorporate service-learning into their syllabi and outlined course expectations, and allow students to do research on relevant social issues. North (2010) states that she traveled with 19 students to El Paso, Texas to study U.S./Mexico border issues in the city with the lowest per capita income in the United States. North feels that this ASB experienced pushed her as a “a university-based educator, to contemplate how I structure learning spaces and enter into dialogues on social issues” (North, 2010, p. 161). Based on the conversations between students and the locals, students were challenged in their thinking and how they respond to comments around religion and homophobia. Additionally, the students visited a border patrol museum that focused on recognizing the work of keeping terrorists out and a local organization focused on emancipation through social and educational programming. And after these visits the students performed a theater of oppression, through this activity North challenged her students to change from their socially constructed views of social issues to those that are institutionalized in the United States. Overall students were able to reflect on their own migration stories and apply them to the concepts they learned about through service like “marginalization, assimilation pressures, and economic struggles” which lead to complex discussions about border issues, (North, 2010, p. 166).

Lastly, Destine and Katz-Fishman (2018) outlined their service project that focuses on the implementation of a political education modules through ASB at a local HBCU seven months after the death of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. They used ASB to visit local high schools
and a juvenile detention center to educate the youth about the current racial and political issues, specifically the rate that police are killing African Americans. At the end of the week, the youth performed skits and engaged in discussion that indicated their level of understanding institutional racism and creating solutions that might be implemented in their communities.

**Developing Emotional Intelligence in College Students**

Calvert (2012) stated that there are clear connections between the concept of service-learning and the learning blocks of Emotional Intelligence (i.e., reality, reflection, and reciprocity). This is critical to understand as the next section reviews literature on non-cognitive skills and emotional intelligence for college students. The concept here is that emotional intelligence is a specific skill set that students might develop during their undergraduate programs and it might impact their ability to integrate academically and socially.

**Non-Cognitive Skills**

Extensive research has focused on traditional measures of cognitive ability like standardized testing like the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) or American College Test (ACT) as an indicator of academic achievement for college students however the results are inadequate for African American students (Fleming, 2002; Fleming & Garcia, 1998; Houston, 1983; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Stack & Porter, 1980). Therefore, new research has been developed that examines non-traditional measures including non-cognitive factors specific to achievement-related beliefs, knowledge of and adjustment to a new social context, and variables related to campus climate (D’Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Perry, 1981; Sellers et al., 1998). Sedlacek and Brooks (1986) hypothesized seven psychosocial variables that adequately demonstrated how African Americans integrated into college both academically and socially. By developing an empirical model that reinforced the seven psychosocial variables to convey African American
college students’ academic achievement and success this list was later enhanced to eight non-cognitive predictors (psychosocial variables) of Black student success (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1984b). The eight non-cognitive predictors are academic positive self-concept, realistic self-appraisal, support of academic plans, the ability to understand and deal with racism, setting long-range goals, academic familiarity and interest, ability to establish community ties, and successful leadership experience success (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1984b).

The following researchers (Astin, 1982, 1993; Cokley, 2003; Hrabowski et al., 1998; Jones 2001; Lang, 1988; Moore, 2001; Nettles, 1998; Rice & Alford, 1989; Rowser 1997; Swail et al. 2003, Tracey & Sedlacek, 1985) collectively determined that non-cognitive variables are predictive of success for African American students at Predominantly White Institutions. In fact, Moore (2001) states “success in college has less to do with aptitude in cognitive measures…than non-cognitive measures such as self-efficacy, motivation, commitment, and persistence” (p. 77). However, these studies fail to detail the experiences of Black students by gender and achievement patterns (Harper & Davis, 2006).

Gilbert et al. (2006) conducted a study that also used students enrolled in psychology courses, however this study used Black students enrolled at a HBCU. This study was influenced by a previous study using cluster analysis by Neville and Lilly, seeking to understand the relationship between racial identity and psychological symptoms for this student population. Beyond collecting basic demographic information, the researchers implemented two additional measures; the RAIS-B (“a 50-item measure that assesses four racial identity statuses: Conformity, Dissonance, Immersion/Emersion, and Internalization”) and the Brief Symptom Inventory (“one of the best brief self-report measures of overall psychological symptomatology”), (p. 114). The study did yield results different than that of the study from
Neville and Lilly, (2000) which used a sample population from two PWIs, that results in five types of racial identities. This study gathered four racial identify profile clusters that showed high levels of internalization and low levels of conformity, which means Black students experienced less psychological issues attending a HBCU and being with peers and faculty members that look like them (Neville & Lilly, 2000). It is important to understand this dynamic because previous research states that Black students experience emotional difficulties at PWIs as minority students experiencing racism, discrimination, prejudice, or exclusion.

**Emotional Intelligence**

At a mid-sized private university in Taiwan, Kao (2009) performed a study to understand burnout in college student volunteers. Kao (2009) used the Maslach Burnout Inventory to measure burnout and Wong and Law's EI Scale to measure Emotional Intelligence. And based on student responses, emotional intelligence was found to moderate the relationship between subjective workload and burnout and developing emotional intelligence among college students volunteer can effectively reduce burnout.

Shouse and Nilsson (2011) researched the impact of one aspect of emotional intelligence, emotional awareness, and how various levels of emotional awareness can impact the relationship between self-silencing and intuitive eating among college women. The population used for this study included 140 women, 50 or 36% of which identified as Black. This study found that students with a higher sense of emotional awareness are less likely to engage in behaviors like self-silencing or disordered eating. Therefore, “intuitive eating is maximized when a woman has high levels of emotional awareness and low levels of self-silencing” (Shouse & Nilsson, 2011, p. 455).
By developing a practice-to-research article, Dixon et al. (2018) described how a university implemented the Social Change Model (SCM) into an undergraduate student leadership program. The Social Change Model is one framework used by universities to create socially responsible leaders. At the institution presented in this article, the President Leadership Fellows program is grounded in this model and is an extension of the president’s commitment to leadership development. In year 1 students completed an Emotional Intelligence assessment to understand their current leadership skills and personal values as well as how they respond to different situations.

As evidence supporting the positive relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and academic performance continues to increase Zhoc et al. (2018) found that emotion is the foundation of learning and that it serves an important role in a students’ learning processes especially self-directed learning. It is equally important to understand the emotion can motivate a student to learn and hinder their ability to learn effectively. And understanding the emotional intelligence is how a person manages their emotions hence how a student’s aptitude to do that well can impact their learning and ultimately their academic performance. Therefore, these researchers studied the role of emotional intelligence on self-directed learning, “and how both EI and self-directed learning contribute to key learning outcomes in higher education, including both the academic (GPA) and generic learning outcomes (social, cognitive and self-growth outcomes), as well as students’ satisfaction with the university experience” (Zhoc et al., 2018, p. 989).

The study presented by Zhoc et al. (2018) provides necessary empirical evidence supporting the value of emotional intelligence in fostering student success. A prospective longitudinal research design used a paper survey followed by an online survey at the end of the
first year with 560 undergraduates responding (213 male and 346 females) from a university in Hong Kong (p. 990). The Emotional Intelligence Scale was used to assess six dimensions of EI, and the study found that emotional regulation of self, appraisal of emotions in the self and emotional regulations of others significantly influence the ability to manage self-directed learning (Zhoc et al., 2018).

Parks et al. (2019) address several components of this literature review including self-reported emotional intelligence and service-learning, with students enrolled at a HBCU designated medical school. Parks et al. (2019) state that HBCUs are uniquely positioned to answer questions related to emotional intelligence because the missions of these institutions have always been civic minded, echoing Gasman et al. (2015) same sentiments. For this study, the Meharry Medical College HBCU Wellness Project was used because it is a service-learning based training program that trains Tennessee HBCU undergraduates in addressing health disparities through community-based interventions (Parks et al., 2019). As a form of program and curriculum evaluation an emotional intelligence survey is administered to assess student’s ability to enhance their skills through service-learning training (Parks et al., 2019). Students are also asked to write a 500-word reflection essay which is a key aspect of service-learning, but it is not included in this study. The data was collected from 31/33 program trainees that completed the pre and post surveys, in which 77% of participants were female and 87% identified as African American and 42% participated in another formal training process (Parks et al., 2019, p. 1489).

In conclusion, the Parks et al. (2019) findings showed that students did have a significant difference between their pre and post training measures. Students that were pursuing STEM majors expressed more EI-self-confidence and students that identified as African American had a
higher rate of EI-motivation (Parks et al., 2019). The research done with this cohort may be applied to the utility of implementing service-learning components into the curriculum for HBCUs and HBCU Medical Schools and move away from the traditional passive-learning and lecture-intensive formats (Parks et al., 2019). After completing the service-learning based training, the students self-reported emotional intelligence competencies changed significantly, which is important to recognize since service-learning is reported to enhance civic responsibility, personal growth and competence, racial awareness, and peer empathy especially within the HBCU ethos (Parks et al., 2019).

The Lived Experiences of Black Women in College

Harper et al. (2004) stated that previous researchers found Black “female students’ educational and career goals were substantially lower than those of male students” and Black women “received noticeably less support and attention from faculty than their male classmates” (p. 273). Previous research compared the experiences of Black students’ experiences at HBCUs and PWIs, but few studies focus on the ability for HBCUs to effectively serve Black students. Which means that there have not been enough empirical studies published that address the student engagement and outcomes at HBCUs and how Black students engage in “educationally purposeful activities” (Harper et al., 2004, p. 271).

It is critical to understand the lived experiences of Black women, maintain membership in two marginalized groups within postsecondary education (Moses, 1989) that are often rendered invisible on college campuses (Zamani, 2003). “Although gender is salient in shaping identity and defining various facets of women’s educational experiences, race also has an influence that often differentiates experiences and opportunities” (Zamani, 2003, p. 7). Historically Black women were excluded from higher education, but HBCUs provided a new opportunity for them
to receive an education in addition to combat their experiences in America’s racist, sexist and patriarchal society to “use their place along the margins of society as a basis for their transformative learning” (Johnson-Bailey, 2006, p. 4).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study includes emotional intelligence theory and academic and social integration theory. These two theories work together to seek a new understanding of the lived experiences of Black women through their participation in Alternative Spring Break. While studies have incorporated these theories individually, the pairing of the two is a unique approach. As previously stated, research question two focuses on developing emotional intelligence and research question three focuses on the students’ experience with academic and social integration.

Emotional Intelligence Theory

The first theory guiding this dissertation is Daniel Goleman’s groundbreaking work on Emotional Intelligence which includes four dimensions and eighteen competencies (Table 2.1). The term “emotional intelligence” was coined, by psychologists John Mayer and Peter Salovey but the recognition grew because of Goleman’s book with the same name in 1995 (Institute for Health and Human Potential, 2019, para. 1). Emotional Intelligence is defined as the ability to “recognize, understand and manage our own emotions and recognize, understand and influence the emotions of others” (The Institute for Health and Human Potential, 2019, para. 2). The Institute for Health and Human Potential (2019) explains that a person would need to manage their emotional intelligence in the following situations “(a) giving and receiving feedback (b) meeting tight deadlines (c) dealing with challenging relationships (d) not having enough resources (f) dealing with change (e) and dealing with setbacks and failure” (para. 3). Daniel
Goleman (2015) lists the information in the following table to break down the four dimensions of Emotional Intelligence and the specific competencies one would exhibit if their EQ-i is high.

Table 2.1 Emotional Intelligence Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional Intelligence Dimensions and Competencies</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Awareness</strong></td>
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<td>Emotional Awareness</td>
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<td>Transparency</td>
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<td>Accurate Self-Assessment</td>
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**Academic and Social Integration Theory**

Alternative Spring Break is a tangible way Student Affairs professionals can apply Tinto’s (1993) theory of academic and social integration to practice (Figure 2.1). Therefore, to understand the importance of academic and social integration, one must start with Tinto’s foundational theory of college student persistence because it describes student persistence as a longitudinal process impacted by their interactions with formal and informal aspects of the college environment, (Evans et al, 2010). Although Tinto’s theory focuses primarily on student retention, it also describes a student's ability to transition into college and succeed in this new academic environment (Tinto, 1975, 1993, 2007). A student needs to be academically and socially integrated into the campus culture to feel connected to the institution and committed to graduating (Tinto, 2007). According to Tinto (1975, 1998), students need to persist and complete
their degree (academic integration), and they also need to engage in the campus culture, inside and outside of the classroom (social integration).

The process of academic and social ‘integration’ explains how students adjust to the demands of college life inside and outside of the classroom. Social integration is understood as the rate at which students can have successful student-to-student interactions and student-faculty interactions (Braxton et al., 2004; Kuh, et al., 2006). Academic integration is understood as the students’ abilities to successfully perform academically based on institutional standards. Faculty and staff should seek to foster a positive academic and social integration into the college environment so that their students feel connected to the institution and remain committed to their academic and career goals. Tinto’s theory assumes that college students will display more resilience and persistence to degree completion because of successfully integrating academically and socially (Bean, 1983).

Figure 2. 1 A Conceptual Schema for Academic and Social Integration, (Tinto, 1993)
By examining the ASB program at Howard University, that has been consistently providing Black students an opportunity to engage in underserved communities through education, mentorship, and crisis relief this case study explored the relationship between Alternative Spring Break experiences and developing Emotional Intelligence for Black women. As research shows participation in service-learning opportunities and high-impact practices like HU ASB, students will experience different levels of academic and social integration. While Black women outnumber their male counterparts 2:1 (Slater, 2020), however the literature lacks studies that highlight their experiences and their ability to integrate into the college ethos academically and socially.

Based on this conceptual framework, incorporating the theory of emotional intelligence and the theory of academic and social integration, this study intentionally provides Black women an opportunity to unpack their experiences and how they develop various non-cognitive skills like emotional intelligence and leadership. The conceptual framework developed for this study guided the development of the data collection and analysis processes.

**Chapter Summary**

Clark et al. (2003) stated that if a student can successfully complete a service-learning opportunity during their time as an undergraduate student, they are more likely to exhibit the following concepts of emotional intelligence: self-management, self-awareness, social awareness and relationship management. And while Destine and Katz-Fishman (2018) used the ASB at an HBCU to engage youth and Calvert (2012) found that service-learning can develop emotional intelligence in students, none of these studies focus on the actual ASB program and how it develops emotional intelligence for Black women. The articles presented in this literature do not
offer enough data specific to Black women, and many of these articles were quantitative, lacking direct quotes to illuminate the voices and experiences of Black women. Therefore, based on the literature reviewed, there is a significant gap that validates the need for additional research. This case study seeks to contribute to the literature by filling a noticeable void between a HBCU hosted ASB program, emotional intelligence development and Black female students’ experiences participating in a college-based travel program with a service-learning component.
Chapter Three: Research Methods

Introduction

Prior to 2000, little research focused on African American men and their psychosocial and personal experiences in college (Harper, 2004). Institutions have developed a higher sensitivity to the needs of Black men but lack the same sensitivity for Black women, which “created a discouraging and disengaging experience” over time (Harper et al., 2004, p. 273). Additionally, researchers have demonstrated that there is a critical need for even more attention to be paid to the student experience at HBCUs in order to help African American students maximize their ability to increase student retention and persistence (Gasman et al., 2010; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006; Lundy-Wagner & Gasman, 2011; Palmer et al., 2014) but “researchers have not thoroughly investigated gender differences in student engagement and satisfaction at HBCUs since the Fleming and Allen studies in the 1980s” (Harper et al., 2004, p. 274). Therefore, more researchers have brought specific attention to the impact of non-cognitive factors in promoting retention, persistence, and academic success of African American students. However, there is limited research on how Alternative Spring Break fosters emotional intelligence development, especially for this specific subgroup of students, African American women.

Therefore, this study illuminated the lived experiences of Black women, enrolled in undergraduate programs at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU), that self-elected to participate in Alternative Spring Break, a college-based travel program with a service-learning component. And this chapter includes a description of the study’s research design, research setting, participant sampling procedures, methods of analysis and limitations. The final section of this of this chapter summarizes each step of the research procedures used in this study.
Research Design

For this dissertation I relied on an instrumental case study design, focusing on the relationship between Black women and their lived experiences during an Alternative Spring Break trip and how these students developed non-cognitive skills (i.e., emotional intelligence) through their participation. This is a qualitative study, primarily focusing on action research based in narrative inquiry. A qualitative research design was developed for this study because qualitative research seeks to understand “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” within a social or cultural context, (Merriam, 2009, p. 5).

The researcher used an epistemological approach grounded in social constructivism, because interaction in learning is a necessary and fundamental process for acquiring knowledge and developing cognitive and physical skills (Barker, 1990). Woo and Reeves (2007) used Vygotsky and several other researchers’ work on constructivism to determine that social constructivism is a way to conduct subjective research based on studying and combining the experiences of others as it relates to a social society. Altogether, this guided the decision to choose a case study design to focus on a specific student population and their experiences with a specific college-based travel program.

Case Study

A single case study design was the research methodology selected for this study. The single case study design was appropriate because this design offers “strong internal validity for assessing causal relationships between interventions and outcomes” (Lobo et al., 2017, p. 187). According to Yin (1981) a researcher uses a case study when “an empirical inquiry must examine a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context” (p. 98). For this study, I hosted
one-on-one interviews to understand the lived experiences of Black women that participated in Alternative Spring Break during the Spring 2019 semester at Howard University. This single case study is bounded by time (Spring 2019), institution (Howard University), and program (Alternative Spring Break). This was intentionally bounded by these factors because Baxter and Jack (2008) explain that a researcher must decide on the type of case study to perform and define the case or unit of analysis and it must be bound to a time or event. It is important to recognize the distinctiveness of the case study design, because it gives “great prominence to what is and what is not "the case" - the boundaries are kept in focus” (Stake, 1978, p. 7).

**Research Setting**

The setting for this case study is Howard University (HU), founded in 1867. It is a private and federally funded Historically Black College and University (HBCU) which promotes the education and social mobility of Black students. This institution’s main campus is in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, and sits on 256 acres of land. The university has four health science units including Pharmacy, Dentistry, Nursing, and a College of Medicine. In addition to that, the West campus houses the Law School and School of Divinity. The university also owns a hospital that is within walking distance to the main campus, the HU Hospital is the only teaching hospital located on the campus of a HBCU (Howard Forward, 2018).

The total student enrollment is 9,139 and these students have more than 130 areas to select a major from within the university’s 13 schools and colleges; “Arts & Sciences, Business, Communications, Dentistry, Divinity, Education, Engineering, Architecture & Computer Sciences, Graduate School, Law, Medicine, Nursing & Allied Health Sciences, Pharmacy and Social Work” (Howard University, 2019c). Howard University is recognized as a R2 Doctoral University and offers Undergraduate, Master’s, Doctoral, and Professional Joint-Degree
programs (Howard Forward, 2018). In addition to that the university has 19 Division I sport teams and participates in both the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) and National Collegiate Athletic Conference (NCAA), (Howard University, 2019e).

Howard University is the only HBCU that offers a robust Alternative Spring Break (ASB) program; I have detailed this in the HBCU Alternative Spring Break Benchmark report (Appendix H). I did some preliminary research and after reviewing the websites of the 101 recognized and accredited HBCUs across the nation, I found that only 20 of these institutions have alternative spring break, service-learning or service trips mentioned anywhere on the website.

The HU ASB program runs annually, in which students forfeit a traditional Spring Break vacation to complete community service projects. HU ASB is a fully funded program, alleviating students of any expense including travel expenses, lodging, meals, and entertainment. In 2019 the HU ASB program sent students from undergraduate and graduate programs to 21 sites, of which 5 were international. Most of the sites have been visited by Howard students for several years, but additional sites are added when donors direct the funds toward a specific initiative or city, or when there is a need to respond to a natural disaster. Students participate in service projects that may include community restoration, disaster relief, mentoring and feeding the homeless. Additionally, the program celebrated 25 years of uninterrupted service, it has seen steady expansion throughout the years, and has accumulated over 800 participants, 100 community partnerships and 100,000 hours of service (Figure 3.1). This program continues to operate each year because the students hold several leadership positions, manage the marketing and recruitment, plan each service trip from inception to completion, lead their peers in service and fundraise to make sure the program is a success.
Howard University Alternative Spring Break is a unique service learning experience that exposes students to concepts of social justice, interfaith exploration, and ethical leadership development.

HISTORY

1994 PROGRAM INCEPTED
HUASB expands to New Orleans, LA to provide crisis relief service efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

2006 HURRICANE KATRINA
HUASB progresses from a singular site service-learning program to multiple sites in Chicago, DC, and Detroit

2011 HUASB GOES INTERNATIONAL
HUASB travels to Haiti in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake

2015 FLINT WATER CRISIS
HUASB works with sites in Flint, MI to provide crisis relief following the water crisis

2017 GROUNDBREAKING EXPANSION
HUASB develops domestic and international programs serving three new sites: Dallas, TX; Lambert, NE; and Ghana

2018 HURRICANE RELIEF
HUASB utilizes domestic and international programs to provide crisis relief in the aftermath of Hurricanes Harvey & Irma

2019 HUASB CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

A GLANCE AT #HUASB19

800+ PARTICIPANTS
100+ COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
10+ HU ALUMNI CHAPTERS

100,000+
EXPECTED HOURS OF SERVICE
ASB 2019

2019 SITES
Albany, GA | Baltimore, MD | Birmingham, AL | Camden, NJ | Chicago, IL |
Flint/Detroit, MI | Ghana | Haiti | Memphis, TN | New Orleans, LA | Puerto Rico |
St. Thomas, USVI | Washington, DC

STAY CONNECTED!

Figure 3.1 HU ASB 2019 Promotional Flyer
Participants

I pre-determined what type of individual(s) would have the most knowledge or expertise about a specific phenomenon, (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). Because I wanted to understand the lived experiences of Black women that participated in a college-based travel program and how their participation fosters non-cognitive skill development (i.e., emotional intelligence), I hosted one-on-one in-depth interviews to gather thick-rich data. Therefore, participants for this study had to meet the following criteria, which was pre-determined as follows: a) identify as a Black woman which includes Black/African American or Black/Afro-Latina, etc. b) complete the entire service trip during the Spring 2019 Alternative Spring Break program, and c) must be currently enrolled in an undergraduate program at Howard University. This type of sampling is also known as purposeful and criterion based. In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is used as a technique to identify and select cases that would provide thick-rich data (Patton, 2002).

In addition, the participants needed to be mentally and physically available and willing to participate with the ability to and interest in an open and in-depth conversation about their experiences in the Alternative Spring Break program.

The recruitment efforts including reaching out to program’s professional and student staff via phone call and email. Although that was unsuccessful, I was determined to use HUASB as my research site. So, I physically visited the campus to recruit participants, and I was able to meet the 2019-2020 Executive Student Director and she agreed to coordinate participant recruitment on my behalf. As a result of this recruitment process, thirteen students volunteered to participate, and the 2019-2020 Student Executive Director provided me with their contact information. The sample consisted of ten students that met the criteria, two were male and one was a woman that did not identify as Black/African American. Of the ten Black women that
agreed to participate in this study, one essentially forfeited her opportunity to participate due to a lack of communication. Therefore, the surveys and interviews were conducted with nine Black women that participated in the Spring 2019 HU ASB program. Within the sample, students ranged from Sophomore to Senior, experience with ASB varied, as did their majors and minors. Each student receives financial aid, including scholarships, grants, and loans. One student self-reported that she was at Howard because she received a full ride scholarship which covered her tuition and expenses. During the 2019 HU ASB program six participants served as Site Coordinators and three participants served as Team Leaders. Lastly, I was initially informed of 13 service sites for the 2019 program, and sought after one participant from each site, especially hoping to gather students that had gone abroad. However, the students that completed interviews only covered eight of the sites, two of which, were not listed on the promotional flyer (Figure 3.1). Detailed information about the participants is provided in Table 4.1.

**Human Participants Ethical Precaution**

Based on the ethical guidelines set by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Louisiana State University (LSU), I took several measures to protect the participants. At the start of the pre-interview survey, students were provided with an electronic consent form (Appendix A) and could not move forward without clicking ‘Yes’. Prior to the start of the Zoom (virtual) interview, I asked for permission to record. I also explained the purpose of this study and how their recorded interviews would be used in my research. I also expressed clearly, how their survey responses, audio recordings, and transcripts would be kept confidential and anonymous, hence why they provided their own pseudonyms. Only the outgoing Associate Dean elected to use his real name throughout his interview, but I did offer selecting a pseudonym as an option. I also recompleted an IRB modification to receive approval to complete his interview, once I realized it
was necessary. Lastly, I encouraged all participants to be honest and as in-depth as possible because the more information they provided the more informed my research would be.

**Data Collection**

I chose the Spring 2019 cohort because the trip was quickly approaching, and I wanted to have students complete a pre-trip survey. This pre-trip survey, was based on the NCQ-R, which includes “two nominal items relating to educational, expectations, 18 Likert-type items relating to expectations about college and self-assessment, and three open-ended questions relating to present goals, past accomplishments and offices held/groups belonged to” (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1982, p. 7). The purpose of a pre-trip survey was to gather data related to the student’s non-cognitive skill set prior to their service-trip experience. So, in March 2019 I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Louisiana State University (LSU), to conduct surveys and interviews with Black women enrolled at Howard University (Appendix A). However, this part of data collection had to be removed as students were not successfully recruited until seven months post-trip.

Although the strategy implemented for this case study was complex, the plans for this study changed drastically. I developed an online scheduling option and asked students to use Zoom to participate in the interviews virtually. Next, the pre and post trip surveys were removed, but a pre-interview survey was created to collect simple demographic information instead. Students were asked to submit this information at least 24 hours before their scheduled interview. At the conclusion of the interviews, students were asked to submit any reflective journal entries via email. At the conclusion of the student interviewing process, I submitted an IRB modification to include inviting the outgoing program director to participate in an interview as well and he was able to provide the stored data on the program, in addition to answering
emerging questions from the student interviews, which is another form of triangulating the data. Lastly, I asked the students to complete a post-interview survey (Appendix E), this was used to answer additional questions that were not properly clarified during the interview. Participant responses improved the accuracy of their demographic information and allowed lengthy written responses to questions regarding their experience.

Prior to beginning the interviews, participants submitted a pre-interview survey (Appendix B) that included the LSU IRB consent form, basic demographic questions, and definitions of different non-cognitive skills. The demographic survey allowed the researcher to collect information such as age, class standing, 2019 HU ASB Site, race and gender, and financial aid status. Each student was also asked to provide a pseudonym to protect their identity throughout the process. In the interview, students provided information about their hometowns, majors, and minors and how long they had been with the HU ASB program.

This case study consisted of the researcher designing a one-on-one interview with a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix C) with open-ended questions. I chose interviews for this study because interviews serve as one of the primary forms of data collection in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014; Yin 2014). During the interviews, each student was asked to reflect on their service trip experience, identity development and non-cognitive skill development. All interviews were hosted virtually via Zoom, a video teleconferencing platform that students were able to download to their cellular phones and use an app. Since I was unable to host in-person interviews, I determined Zoom was the best audio recording tool to use because it provided a detailed transcript of each interview. With permission, each interview was audio recorded for these transcription purposes. I conducted one-on-one, in-depth interviews, ranging from 30-85 minutes, however most were 60 minutes. After the initial interviews were collected and
reviewed, the students were asked to complete a follow up survey this can be seen in Appendix E. The purpose of these additional questions was to gather very specific answers around identity development, experience and emotional intelligence previously omitted from the virtual interviews as well as clean up discrepancies with the demographic questions. These responses were harder to gather because each of these students were preparing for their 2020 ASB trips, but thankfully every student submitted a completed follow-up survey. These data collection methods provided nine Black women an opportunity to articulate and elaborate on their experiences and provide anecdotal data in which the researcher would be able to collect thick-rich data.

**Data Analysis**

Stake (1995) stated that researchers use a case study design to understand the complexity of a single case and because it is of special interest to the researcher. Qualitative case studies use the following research methods naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, or biographic (Stake, 1995). This is an instrumental case study because I am using several students to understand the effects of college-based travel programs on non-cognitive skill development. Creswell and PlanoClark (2007) suggested that researchers should be cognizant of their use of description and analysis in qualitative case studies. He suggested splitting the content into three equal parts (1) description of setting and events (2) the themes and (3) interpretation, lessons learned and reporting. Yin (2003) posed several ways to address case study analysis, single case narrative, multiple case, and cross-case analysis, even a chronological approach might even be use or cases bound by time. However, Yin (2017) also offered an “unsequenced” structure that will most likely be used for this case, because the events, processes and activities may not all be presented in the order they occurred (p. 231).
The primary purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of Black women that participated in an Alternative Spring Break program and how the program fosters non-cognitive skill development. I implemented a holistic approach to understand each student and achieved that through the data collection methods including a demographic survey, in-depth interviews, reflective journals, an interview with the outgoing Associate Dean, and stored program data which were all used to fully assess the students’ experience.

Based on the data collection methods, the first step includes reviewing the basic demographic information provided in the pre-interview survey. This allowed me to gauge student personal background and their familiarity with the non-cognitive skills assessed in this study. The second step included scheduling and completing the interviews. Once each interview was complete, a transcript was provided to me via Zoom. I spent several hours listening to interview playbacks to properly edit the transcripts to match exactly what each participant said, verbatim. Once these transcripts were edited, each student received a copy and approved them, mainly for the use of quotes in the data presentation of this study. Allowing the participants to verify the transcripts is referred to as member checking. I used this technique to ensure trustworthiness and credibility, because it is a “way of finding out whether the data analysis is congruent with the participants’ experiences” (Curtin & Fossey, 2007, p. 92). After that, I was able to organize the participant demographic information (Table 4.1) and student profiles.

The next part of the analysis process included cleaning up the interview transcripts, allowing the students to review the content and coding the data. The interview transcripts were printed, and I read through each transcript to organize and reflect on the data. Based on the content provided in the transcripts from the interviews, I independently coded the data with open and axial coding techniques (Cooper, 2009). I specifically used an open-coding approach to
highlight content while looking for units of meaning and emerging themes or patterns throughout the responses. The first set of codes were pre-determined before collecting the data, which is referred to as “a priori” coding (Montgomery & Crittenden, 1977, p. 235), based on the four dimensions of emotional intelligence. The second set of themes were based on specific non-cognitive skills (cultural humility, problem solving, and fiscal responsibility) outlined in the interview questions. And the third set of themes (leadership development, event planning, friendship, and enriched undergraduate experiences) emerged from the data, which is referred to as “a posteriori” (Montgomery & Crittenden, 1977, p. 235), which developed consistency across interviews and student experiences. As described by Miyake (1986) I was able to sort the coded data by participants, large themes, and subthemes in an iterative process of understanding. Once data sorting was complete the researcher used thematic analysis to identify the following emerging themes: (a) Black women develop all four dimensions of emotional intelligence through Alternative Spring Break participation including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management (b) Black women develop leadership skills and other transferable non-cognitive skills through Alternative Spring Break, and (c) Alternative Spring Break provides an intentional opportunity for Black women to experience academic and social integration. These themes and subsequent subthemes are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

According to Patton (2002) the qualitative researcher must “decide what things go together to form a pattern, what constitutes a theme, what to name it, and what meanings to extract from case studies” (p. 277). Therefore, I used basic text and content analysis methods (Patton, 2002) to analyze the data collected from student interviews, the HU ASB website, documents provided by the outgoing Associate Dean, and student reflective journal entries.
Subsequently, each of these data points were synthesized to create the student profiles, programmatic features, program overview and highlight the students’ lived experiences. Lastly, but most importantly, quotes from the interviews were used to demonstrate emotional intelligence, non-cognitive skill development and components of academic and social integration development as they align with the themes found during the analysis and illuminate the personal experiences of each student.

**Researcher Positionality**

Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007) explains that is critical for a researcher to reveal their own personal beliefs, assumptions, and experiences prior to conducting research to clarify the researcher’s biases. Additionally, researchers should engage in a ‘methodological reflexivity’ to exercise our ability to be honest about our role and relationship with the research context, participants, and data as well as the results we report (Corlett & Mavin, 2017). As a result, I will present my own bias, relationship to the research topic and participants, and my experience with the process from data collection and analysis to data presentation and reporting. The following discussion will delineate my personal experience and connection to non-cognitive skill development for Black women through college-based travel programs.

I identify as a Black female, first-generation college student who is passionate about travel and encouraging underrepresented students to increase their opportunities to travel both domestically and internationally. Although I received several scholarships before and during my undergraduate experience, I also received financial assistance through Pell Grants, federal loans, and federal work study to afford my education. And regardless of funds, I still participated in Alternative Spring Break, Study Abroad, and through several student organizations I traveled across the state of Florida for meetings, presentations, events, and conferences. After that, I
pursued two graduate programs and completed two master’s degrees at the same time and managed to travel across the nation and around the world with limited funds. I actively sought out travel opportunities because I believe they foster non-cognitive skill development. Personally, I learned how to budget and be fiscally responsible, communicate and organize travel plans for small and large groups, secure housing, meals and venues, learned the language of the locals, participated in cultural activities, and developed better time and stress management skills.

Prompted by my peers’ constant inquiries about how I could afford to travel so regularly, I published a non-academic book focused on educating students and equipping them with strategies to travel domestically and internationally on a budget during their academic careers. I wrote and self-published this book in the first year of my doctoral program. Since then, I have also presented on the book’s themes at two conferences with student and advisor audiences.

I have worked in higher education since my junior year, as a paraprofessional and I received the ‘student affairs tap’ at the conclusion of my senior year. My professional career started in student activities and I have bounced between student affairs and academic affairs for the past ten years. In addition to my professional responsibilities, I have participated in several committees, advised student organizations, and served as a teaching assistant in leadership development classes. My focus has always been students of color, women, and first-generation students. Lastly, I have served as mentors for several students over the years in official and unofficial capacities, which has been my greatest achievement.

Prior to starting my doctoral program, I worked at a HBCU for one year as a Residence Life Coordinator, our staff was small and I responsible for a desk assistant staff of 20 and a resident assistant staff of 20, in addition to 5 residential halls. I worked closely every day with impressionable Black students and my experience with them is immeasurable. I learned in that
one year that HBCUs need more resources inside and outside of classroom, and I hope to spend a long career in higher education serving these institutions and their student populations.

I am aware of my positionality and accept that the findings may not support my personal stance, but I believe Black women need intentional support from faculty, staff and administration that is designed to increase the trajectory of their academic and professional careers. Especially holistic opportunities like Alternative Spring Break that will promote non-cognitive skill development in higher education settings. I seek to understand if there is a direct correlation with college-based travel programs and their ability to foster non-cognitive skill development, for example, emotional intelligence and student’s ability to exercise educational resilience, persistence, and degree completion.

Credibility and Dependability

In order to achieve a study that is deemed credible and dependable, the researcher aimed to satisfy the required components of trustworthiness; this can be achieved through establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability, (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014, p. 5745). The researcher achieved this through the following techniques: prolonged and persistent engagement with the cases (students), member checking, triangulation, peer debriefing, thick description, audit trails and raw data and a reflective journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

And the researcher established integrity by ensuring trustworthiness in the data collected, this includes using consistent data collection methods, developing relevant codes and themes, as well as providing accurate accounts of the research and recognizing the researcher’s positionality (O’Leary, 2012). For the purposes of this paper the researcher will rely on stating their own positionality (described earlier in this chapter), member checking, and triangulation.
Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore how Alternative Spring Break (ASB), a college-based travel program with a service-learning component, fosters the development of non-cognitive skills like emotional intelligence for students, specifically Black women at an HBCU. The data were collected from demographic surveys, individual one-on-one interviews that covered the trip experience and emotional intelligence development, an interview with the outgoing program director, Howard University (HU) ASB stored data, and student reflective journal entries. This study was guided by the following three questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of Black women that participate in Alternative Spring Break?
2. How does their involvement with Alternative Spring Break develop the four dimensions of emotional intelligence?
3. How does participation in Alternative Spring Break impact their ability to experience academic and social integration?

At the conclusion of data collection, I successfully conducted in-depth interviews with nine students that identified as Black women currently enrolled at Howard University in an undergraduate program and participated in a Spring 2019 ASB service trip. The following table (Table 4.1) is a comprehensive participant demographic profile and it includes basic information about each student collected through the survey and interview process. Additionally, a brief description of each student is provided to offer more background about who they are and what their academic and career goals are. In addition, please find a HU ASB overview and the findings from data collection.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Hometown</th>
<th>Class Standing</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>First Gen</th>
<th>Financial Aid Status</th>
<th>HU ASB 2019 Site</th>
<th>First ASB</th>
<th>Leadership Role</th>
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<td>Angela</td>
<td>Black/Bi-Racial (Caucasian)</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Baltimore, MD</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Texas</td>
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<td>Biology</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Need &amp; Merit-based</td>
<td>Lumberton, NC</td>
<td>No</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Janel</td>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>Criminology</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Need &amp; Merit-based</td>
<td>Camden, NJ/Philly, PA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Site Coordinator</td>
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<td>Jasmine</td>
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<td>Junior</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Merit-based (scholarships)</td>
<td>New Orleans, LA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Site Coordinator &amp; Director of Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jay</td>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Need &amp; Merit-based</td>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Site Coordinator</td>
</tr>
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<td>Joann</td>
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<td>California</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
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<td>Flint/Detroit, MI</td>
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</table>
Participant Profiles

The participants in this study shared the following information about themselves. Each student discussed where they are from and their future academic and career goals. In addition to that, the outgoing Associate Dean, elaborated on his personal experience as a Howard student, university roles and longstanding experience with HU ASB.

Angela

Angela is a Sophomore with a Biology major and Political Science and Chemistry double minor. While serving as a Freshman Intern for HU ASB, she was promoted to a Site Coordinator. She served as the Site Coordinator for Baltimore, Maryland and the service initiative focused on youth empowerment. In addition to that she will be the Site Coordinator for St. Louis, Missouri for Spring 2020. She has plans to go to medical school to become an OBGYN, and she is going to be a certified Doula. She is also interested in traveling around the world to host pop-up medical clinics to serve low-income communities.

Fortune

Fortune is a Senior with a Biology major and Chemistry minor. She was the Lumberton, North Carolina Site Coordinator, another site added for students on the waitlist. She is a 5th year pre-med student and has a long history with ASB; during her freshman year she was assigned to the Washington, D.C. site, during her sophomore year she was a Team Leader for Lumberton, North Carolina, during her junior year she was the Site Coordinator for Port Author, Texas which had 100 participants, and for Spring 2020 she will be the Site Coordinator for Ghana.

Glen Vinson Jr.

Vinson opted out of using a pseudonym for this interview, which was offered to him as a form of privacy and anonymity. However, he worked with HU ASB for several years, increasing
the program sites, reach and student involvement. His decision to opt out of a pseudonym in this study reflects a desire to be recognized as an individual and share his story (Wiles et al., 2008) as well as the story of a program he holds near and dear to his heart. He was at Howard University for 20 years, beginning with his undergraduate experience as a student athlete, playing football and majoring in Psychology, he graduated in 2002. Later, Vinson worked his way up from the Graduate Assistant for the Office of the Dean of Chapel to Program Coordinator to Director of Service-learning to eventually serving as the Associate Dean for Religious and Civic Engagement, subsequently working with HU ASB from 2005-2019. While he did not participate in ASB during his undergraduate experience, he did inform me that he attended various trips over the years as a full time professional. Additionally, he began teaching AFRO 127 - Alternative Spring Break (3 credits) in 2013, it is a service-learning course for student leaders within the ASB program.

**Janel**

Janel is a Junior with a Criminology major and Community Development minor; she is interested in juvenile law and restorative justice. She served as the Site Coordinator for a dual site, Camden, New Jersey and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania because the sites were only 30 miles apart. These sites were combined because they are recognized within the Top 5 Murder Capitals. As a result, the dual site initiative was combatting gun violence and youth empowerment. She is interested in pursuing a PhD and wants to spend her career focusing on juvenile delinquency, and juvenile justice legislation and policy.

**Jasmine**

Jasmine is a Junior with a Political Science major and a Legal Communications minor. She served as the Site Coordinator for New Orleans, Louisiana in addition to serving as the
Director of External and Internal Communication. The New Orleans site initiative was combatting the school to prison pipeline through youth empowerment. Her first ASB trip was to St. Thomas, an international site, and she served as a freshman intern for the program. For the Spring 2020 trips, she serves as the Executive Student Director and she has her hopes set on the Ghana site. She is interested in pursuing a juris doctorate and aspires to become a civil rights attorney.

\textit{Jay}

Jay is a Senior with a Sociology major with and Human Development minor. She came into Howard with her associate degree completed because of dual enrollment opportunities during high school. She has participated in ASB since her first year at Howard in which she served as a Team Leader for Anguilla, an international site. And for her second and third year she served as the Site Coordinator for Chicago, Illinois. She is interested in pursuing a doctorate degree in psychology or counseling. Initially she planned to be an OBGYN but participating in ASB changed her mind and her new career goal is to be a Youth and Family counselor.

\textit{Joann}

Joann is a Sophomore with a Journalism major and History minor. She hails from Stockton, California and is the youngest of six siblings. Her dad is a musician and she is classically trained to play the violin and piano. During her freshman year she was a Team Leader for Savannah, Georgia, a site that was created for students that were placed on the waitlist. And for Spring 2020, she will be a Co-Site Coordinator for Oakland, California. She plans to pursue a JD next, focusing on international human rights law and women’s rights in the Middle East. In addition to that she is interested in creating her own magazine for young Black girls and women of color.
**Lily**

Lily is a Junior with a Political Science Major and a Spanish and Community Development double minor. She identifies as Afro-Latina because she also has Peruvian roots. She served as one of four Team Leaders for Flint, Michigan. Because of the immediate and ongoing water crisis, the site initiative was focused on combatting environmental injustice and promoting education through youth empowerment. In her unique situation, she was on the verge of leaving Howard, but her participation in ASB her freshman year kept her there. She steadily moved up from a participant to a team leader and now a co-site coordinator.

**Lisa**

Lisa is a Junior with a History and Economics double major. She served as a Site Coordinator for Detroit, Michigan, managing 42 students. She was originally assigned to be a Team Leader for Birmingham, Alabama but was re-assigned and had two months to plan an entire site from start to finish. Prior to this she attended the Spring 2018 ASB trip to St. Maarten, an international site. And she aspires to attain a JD/MPP or PhD because she is interested in research, drafting policy, being an attorney, ghostwriting policy for politicians and opening her own non-profit or at-risk home.

**Nikky**

Nikky is a Sophomore with a Marketing major. She served as a Team Leader for Birmingham, Alabama and received this assignment about two weeks prior to the trip. She was not super excited about her site assignment at first, because she is from Madison, Alabama but she recognized that the site did not matter if she was able to serve. Additionally, she will be the Memphis, Tennessee Site Leader for Spring 2020 and has been given an ample amount of time to prepare. Her career goals are a bit ambiguous, but she knows she wants to land a job that will
help to live a financially comfortable life. Her career interests are within the entertainment industry and she is considering working for a social media app-based company.

**2019 HU ASB Program Overview**

According to Mr. Vinson, “Dean Richardson was a visionary, he brought ASB to Howard in 1994, incorporating his background with ministry and mission trips.” During the second interview, Angela took the initiative to break down the program components. Her detailed description of the program, leadership roles, selection process, initiatives and day to day experiences were later verified by the subsequent student interviews, documents provided by Mr. Vinson during his interview, and the content of his interview. Several students described ASB as a student organization under the Office of the Dean of the Chapel, Angela stated, “It is definitely an organization, definitely treated like an org. We meet every week!” After interviewing Mr. Vinson, who oversaw the ASB program from 2013-2019, explained that ASB is a university wide program and student learning lab. The program became a campus wide initiative in 2006 when Howard students were compelled to travel down to New Orleans to offer hurricane relief, despite FEMA’s efforts to discourage student involvement. He stated that “Howard being Howard, we went anyway and sent 600 students. We opened the door for other universities to go.” He also confirmed that 1000 students participated in ASB 2019 and visited 21 cities, which will be detailed later. The HU ASB program motto is “open and flexible” which encourages students to adapt and stay positive regardless of any challenges they face while planning the trip or during the trip itself…five students mentioned it during their interviews.

The program is free for students and fully funded by donations. The students mentioned the Radio-thon during the interviews, and I asked Mr. Vinson to elaborate more. Radio-thon is a fundraiser that takes place one week before students depart in March. It includes a live radio
show that allows listeners to call in and make donations and while that is happening students are out on Georgia Ave (main street leading into Howard’s campus) soliciting donations from the community. The HU ASB website also has a donations button for donors to give year around. The program also has individual donors and corporate sponsors. And the students are the manpower acquiring each in-kind donation the program receives.

As Angela stated, “this is just not a typical organization. I know in my opinion; this is just not. This isn't ordinary at all.” There is a large steering committee that has about 50-60 students serving in various leadership roles. As soon as the students return from ASB, the next student executive director is selected by April, who then selects their executive team by May. By the end of the summer the rest of the steering committee is chosen including site coordinators, they may or may not receive their specific city at that time. Mr. Vinson explained that being on the steering committee is an intense experience because these students are given a rigorous task and little to no budget to work with. Howard has a culture of not accepting failure, so this a lot of pressure to perform and be successful.

**HU ASB Service Destinations**

Based on my interview with the outgoing Associate Dean, there are sites that Howard students visit every year and then more sites are added as needed. Sites can be added for several reasons including but not limited to directed donations, crisis or natural disaster response or a significant interest in students that sign up to participate supersedes current site capacity. On the promotional flyer for HU ASB 2019, there were nine domestic sites and four international sites (Table 4.2). However, by the time students left for their trips in March the program committed to sixteen domestic sites and five international sites (Table 4.3).
The noticeable increase in sites is because the HU ASB program coordinated cities that hosted two groups of students for different service projects. For example, Memphis, Tennessee hosted a traditional site and a STEM site that was funded by FundToo. In addition to that the Tijuana, Mexico trip hosted Howard Law students and they focused on language barriers and access to the United States. And New Orleans also hosted a traditional site for undergraduate students as well as a site for Howard Law students. Lastly, the Savannah, Georgia site was added to the program because there was an overflow of students that had been previously waitlisted.
Joann was recruited to be the Site Coordinator for Savannah, Georgia because she submitted her application late and was waitlisted as well but because of her previous involvement with the Chapel she was offered a leadership position within ASB.

**HU ASB Service Initiatives**

The program also has a variety of social justice initiatives (Table 4.4) that are assigned to each site. Additionally, it is common across the program for a site to include programming that serves multiple service initiatives based on the service projects and community needs. For example, Washington, D.C. was assigned education and homelessness and poverty based on service projects that included neighborhood beautification, feeding the homeless, working with homeless students and working with local organizations that focused on gentrification.

Table 4.4 HU ASB Service Initiatives

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**Findings**

The participants in this study are currently enrolled at Howard University (HU), where they completed the Spring 2019 Alternative Spring Break (ASB) program in March. The interviews were held in December at the conclusion of the Fall 2019 semester. The students’ perspectives range in experience with HU ASB, time at Howard, and leadership level within the program.
Once the coding process was complete and the final codebook was developed, I identified three salient themes within the data. The three research questions for this study guided the data analysis process and as a result, three overarching themes in the data answered these questions. The three themes are as follows:

1. Black women develop all four dimensions of emotional intelligence through Alternative Spring Break participation, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.
2. Black women develop leadership skills and other transferable non-cognitive skills through Alternative Spring Break.
3. Alternative Spring Break provides an intentional opportunity for Black women to experience academic and social integration.

**Theme 1: Black women develop all four dimensions of emotional intelligence through Alternative Spring Break participation**

Emotional Intelligence was pre-determined before assessing the data, this is known as creating ‘a priori’ codes, because this was the specific non-cognitive skill the research sought to examine as a result of student participation in Alternative Spring Break (ASB). The four dimensions of emotional intelligence are (a) self-awareness, (b) self-management, (c) social awareness, and (d) relationship management. To identify self-awareness the student or Associate Dean had to give examples of how the student exhibited emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, or self-confidence during their ASB trip. To identify self-management, the student or Associate Dean described emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, or optimism. For social awareness, the student or Associate Dean described the students’ ability to express empathy, organizational awareness, and service orientation. And for
relationship management, the student or Associate Dean gave examples where the students highlight the ability to develop others, inspire leadership, serves as a change catalyst or influence, able to manage conflict, and coordinate teamwork or collaboration. The following quotes from the students further illustrate these four dimensions of emotional intelligence.

**Self-awareness**

Self-awareness showed up most as the students described what they learned about themselves, during the trip as it related to their emotional strength, emotional health, and leadership capabilities. Angela expressed that she believed after traveling with new people for a week “you learn about yourself” and Janel said, “I learned that I work very well under pressure.” Several students mentioned building their confidence throughout the experience. Jasmine describes how she embraced her confidence, “I think I learned what I'm capable of and I say that not being boastful, but also just being confident. I learned to be confident as well.”

Many of the students referenced how their interests change based on their sites service initiative, which impacted their passion for service and minor selections. Joann states how her interest changed, and passion grew, “Like I said, I learned that I'm more passionate about, well, I don't know if I learned that I'm more passionate about it or if I became more passionate about homelessness and poverty through Savannah.” Janel said, “and my minor is community development, I just want to be in service.” And Lily echoed that same sentiment stating that, “it was this year that I added community development as a double minor, that decision came partly inspired by my experiences with ASB.”

As it related to exercising accurate self-assessment, multiple students discussed their ability to self-reflect before ASB to prepare for the experience. Jay reflected on how she had to prepare mentally for the trip, “So, I had to really prepare myself spiritually to take on everybody
else's burden or everybody else's problems while trying to just keep my sanity, but also being
able to pour into them.” Similarly, Jasmine noted, “I kind of just did a heart check for myself, I
was asking myself, like, make sure you're going on this trip for the right reasons as well, make
sure your mind and your heart is in the right place, or remove yourself.” And Lily shared how
during the trip she had to be extra self-aware, “first of all, I have to be were more aware of my
own emotions, during the trip and really take time to self-reflect in the brief moments of alone
time that I had, as well as others because so much of the my other participants experience was
the way I was feeling and dealing with my emotions.”

Lastly, two students shared some very personal examples of how they recognized their
own ability to cope with stress and depression. Lily described how participating in ASB helped
her work through depression:

So, I had been very depressed, and I was going through some very personal and
terrible issues, my freshman year. And I'm so grateful that I participated in ASB
that very first time because I almost didn’t. It was hard for me to go to classes or
function and do just about anything my freshman year. That experience really
awakened me from everything that I was going through, and it reminded me of
why I had come to Howard and college in the first place.

Jasmine shared how she had experienced an anxiety attack and didn’t know how to really
address it. And now that she has moved past that experience she tries to “show up” for her peers
and let them know that she is there for them whether they need to vent or cry, because she’s been
there. Jasmine reflected on how she used to deal with stress:

I think growing up I was not really in touch or in tune with a lot of my emotional
health, to be honest, my emotional feelings, when I got stressed and overwhelmed
I just made myself busy so I didn't have to deal with it. But I think going through
this entire nine-month experience really tested my emotional health and
intelligence.

Based on the experiences shared, eight of the nine interviews were very introspective and
reflective. Students were able to give concrete examples of how well they know themselves and
how ASB helped them to learn more about who they are as servant leaders, Black women, and individuals most importantly. This is evidenced by Lisa’s comment, “in short, a transformative life experience. I mean, I don't know anybody that has done an ASB, that is still the same person they were a week prior to. And with Nikky saying, “last year I just learned more about I guess being Black and realizing what Black means. I learned so much about myself what is it to be a Black woman in the world.” Both of these students shared deep convictions that speak to the program’s’ impact.

**Self-management**

Every student spoke to an example of how they experienced an opportunity to practice self-management through emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, or optimism. When it comes to being optimistic, Janel explained how she almost didn’t return to ASB the second time, “I definitely reconsidered my position in the program, but it just, I felt like there was more that I could do in the program than I did the year before, and I decided to stick with it.” Lily shared a similar excitement and how it impacted her desire to be a leader, “I learned that I'm capable of much more than I thought I was capable of. I learned that I have much more stamina than I thought I had. It's what helped me to take the next step forward to become a site coordinator this year because I realized I could handle it.” Additionally, Jasmine stated that “I shouldn’t doubt myself, even though sometimes I do. I still do. I was really able to understand that it can be done. It's possible. If you really just work hard, you can do anything.”

Being mindful that each participant served in a leadership role, seven of which were site coordinators, managing their emotions was consistently mentioned. Lily explains her thought process about daily self-check ins:

First of all, I have to be more aware of my own emotions, during the trip and really take time to self-reflect in the brief moments of alone time that I had,
because so much my participants experience was the way I was feeling and dealing with my emotions. I knew that it would, I was in a capacity, where it would be affecting my participants. So, I constantly had to be in tune with my emotions and what I was feeling and check myself daily.

Janel echoed how her participants were impacted by her ability to manage her emotions especially since she did not have a co-site coordinator or faculty advisor:

I always say that different coping mechanisms that look alright alone are very different when you're in front of other people. So as a leader and as the only leader I was never alone, I was never by myself. And then the even the showers are locker room style. So, there was never a moment that I was by myself. And during my times of frustration I would count and breathe. And so, in doing that, there's 30 other people watching you count and breathe, but I had to do that because that gives me time to think.

And Angela described how her reaction to her peers was a life lesson, impacting how she will interact with her peers in the future:

The thing I most regret about ASB, is I said something that hurt someone's feelings. And but I really regretted it, I don't usually regret things. But that's what I said was a buildup of anger I had towards him, because I felt disrespected from him throughout the whole process. And this is not an excuse but when I get tired and I'm exhausted like, I can't, I'm not good at putting up a face no more. It is what it is at this point. So, at the end of the trip I just said something rude and everybody heard me say it yeah, but I mean, you live and you learn, I'm not gonna lie. I don’t lowkey regret it. Because that's how I felt. And I would have said that to him regardless. I know myself; I would have still said that to him. But I wish I hadn’t said it in front of everybody else, but I learned from it, I ain’t gone do nothing like that again.

In this example, Angela is more self-aware and recognizes that she has to manage her reactions to her peers and because she’s in a leadership role, how she has to control herself regardless of how tired she might be.

Overall, several students spoke to their ability to recognize when they are overwhelmed, frustrated, stressed out or physically tired. They explained different stress management tactics including counting to ten, meditating, separating themselves from the group or asking for help from their peers or advisors. Students explained how preparation and communication played a
large part in their ability to succeed, and that their performance as a leader impacted their participants’ experiences. Multiple students explained how they have learned how to be better individuals and leaders because of their continued involvement with ASB.

Social Awareness

Five of the nine participants shared that they learned about ASB during their freshmen year, either through Freshmen Orientation, their Resident Assistant or Twitter. In addition, a couple of students were brought into ASB through their affiliation with being a Chapel Assistant or an ASB Freshmen Intern. Many students also shared how they had a heart to serve and rather do ASB than go to Miami for a traditional spring break and party. Jasmine shared, “So, I think my heart is just for people all it's always been for people and it's always been to serve others in any way that I can.” And Lily echoed this sentiment, saying “after I came back my sophomore year, I really gave myself to service, because that’s what I’m here to do.” Janel shared how she did go to Miami but had a change of heart:

So, the first time I was one of those students, my first spring break in college, I wanted to be young and fun. And so, I did the whole Miami thing, but it's just that you can only have so much fun with that. And I was like, okay, I'm ready to do something else, something that serves more than myself.

In addition to that, a few referenced how they did not get their ideal destinations, but doing the work was more important. Joann expressed that she made herself a promise, “that no matter where I got placed, even if I got placed in D.C. I was going to do the service.” Nikky shared the same sentiment in depth:

So, at first, I was kind of upset because I went to Alabama and I’m from Alabama. So, really…there were just two places I didn't want to be, Alabama and DC because I go to school in DC, and I'm from Alabama. But then like, I had to humble myself and know that it was not about me. It's about helping others. So, I accepted, and I went, and it was just a really fun thing.
In this example, Nikky realizes how she had to refocus her priorities, the ASB trip is not about her but more about the community she will serve. While she might have experienced a moment of disappointment with the site assignment, she had to understand that it is not only a vacation but an opportunity to give back to a community in need.

The primary characteristic that resonated across each interview is that students in leadership roles within the HU ASB program exhibit a social justice orientation, and they are committed to doing service. Lily stated, “I know ASB is something that I'm going to be doing rest of my time at Howard.” And for Jasmine, was immediately interested and said, “when I found out about ASB. I asked, what is this, I just heard service-learning and I said, well, let me go learn!” In addition, Jasmine, Lisa, Jay, and Lily all said that they wanted to foster a genuine desire to serve within their participants, that they are “planting a seed” that will grow beyond their own reach.

**Relationship Management**

Students participating in Alternative Spring Break in leadership roles have a unique opportunity to develop others, inspire leadership, serve as a change catalyst or influence, manage conflict, and coordinate teamwork with their peers, community leaders and the people they serve. For example, Jay mentioned how ASB impacted her, “so, it taught me a lot of patience. It taught me how to humble myself and how to deal with conflict amongst different people because I mean, of course, it's going to arise.” Jay went on to say what she learned about her participants:

…then working with our participants and them going through certain things because I found out a lot of my participants did ASB because they were trying to get something they were just in a place in life that they feel stagnant or they were trying, they were going through something.

Here, Jay is reflecting on her conversations with her peers, and the personal reasons students participate in ASB to challenge themselves beyond their comfort zones. Additionally, it was
important for her to really listen to their stories to ensure they had an experience that met their needs. Similarly, Lisa encouraged her peers by saying the following:

I don't want you to talk first, I want you to listen to what they have to say. Even if it's not even about their situation. If it's about a video game because as growing up that's all I would have wanted, was somebody to come in and listen to me.

Janel described how she had to put aside her natural disposition to take care of her participants:

I ain't worried about nobody's emotions for real. But you're spending 24 hours a day with these people all day and so regardless of what time they're supposed to be somewhere or what PowerPoint they're supposed to be teaching or how they facilitate activities, you have to think about who they are as a person, what experiences… it's impacting how they move and how they feel about you. How did they see your relationship, how can you best serve them and that’s all kind of emotionally based and it’s something that I had to learn very fast. So, I had people with dietary restrictions that ate things that they were allergic to. I had family emergencies, where I had to take people to the airport and the train stations. I had people who were going through disagreements, and they were trying to fight on the trip. And I was rolling with the punches and understanding like, yes, I'm responsible for all these people.

Although Janel begins her statement by saying she is not typically concerned with other’s emotions, her role as a leader pushed her to proactively consider their feelings. And in a moment of vulnerability, Lisa said how much she depended on her team leaders:

I don't know honestly, to be completely transparent, I was going through an abusive relationship at the time. So, my mentality was actually extremely trash, I think, other than planning wise, I had amazing team leaders. I told them the first day I met them, I was like, hey, I'm going through a very terrible time and I have XYZ going on. Granted you have XYZ going on with you, I'm just saying it's me, I need you to be doing everything else that I can't be doing right now.

There were mixed experiences for these students. While Lisa was able to depend on her team leaders Angela did not feel as supported so the dynamics of their relationships were opposing. A few students did mention that during the week they had to help their peers recognize the bigger picture, the reason they are there to serve in these communities but Janel said, “it was hard for me to understand why people weren't there
to do service.” This initially made it challenging for her, but she was able to help the students navigate their purpose and how they could make the most of their service trip. And these types of emotional struggles made developing relationships with their peers a challenge as well. However, one great benefit to serving as the Site Coordinator, these student leaders were able to develop relationships with nonprofit organizations, churches, city leadership and leaders at primary and secondary schools that can be used for years to come.

**Theme 2: Black women develop leadership skills and other transferable non-cognitive skills through Alternative Spring Break**

Service-learning is an opportunity for students to engage in experiential learning activities that encourage students to apply theory to practice. Thus, as a result of engaging in Alternative Spring Break students develop non-cognitive skills that are transferable to future academic and career endeavors. A few of the non-cognitive skills that emerged through the data include but is not limited to leadership skills, event planning, cultural humility, and problem solving. Each student shared several examples of how their experience was “transformational” and could be applied to their academic and career aspirations. Lisa stated that ASB was, “a transformative life experience,” when explaining why she would recommend it to others. A transformative experience happens when a student critically reflects on their previous frames of reference and it changes to “one that is more inclusive, differentiating, permeable, critically reflective of assumptions, emotionally capable of change and integrative of experience” (Taylor, 2007, p. 180).
Leadership

Leadership is not just a position title, but the women interviewed all served in a leadership role during the Spring 2019 ASB. Six served as site coordinators, overseeing site development and participant management and the remaining three students served as team leaders, working to support the site coordinator and their peers.

A reoccurring theme that emerged from the data was the frequency at which students were promoted to a leadership position. Jasmine who was appointed to the Director of Internal and External Communications laughed about how she was “voluntold to coordinate a site.” Janel shared, “I applied as a participant my sophomore year, but I ended up taking the place of one of the site coordinators. I had never done ASB before.” Angela had a similar experience, she said “I wasn’t even an intern as long as I thought I was gone be, I got switched to a site coordinator for Baltimore. I was just hustling as an intern.” And Lisa was assigned to another site to support a friend who thought he might not be able to finish his term as site coordinator and was depending on her to step up in his absence. She referenced her position change by saying, “so funny story, I was originally not a site coordinator I was originally a team leader for Birmingham, Alabama.” And Nikky was reassigned right before her trip, “well, so last minute, I was asked to be a team leader, a week or two before.” The students mentioned the university’s motto “excellence in truth and service” in six interviews. Which led me to infer that the students serve because it is engrained within the culture of the institution. Jasmine reinforced that theme by saying, “being a leader, I think, at our university, being a student and a servant leader, it says a lot about who you are. Says a lot of your character.” Fortune believed through ASB “I learned that I’m a servant leader.” So, students not only do the service project, but step into these leadership roles to answer the call. And Joann explained, “ASB has certainly affirmed me in my leadership abilities
and refined my leadership skills. It also challenged me as an organizer and servant. As someone who aims to own their own companies (magazine, film production) and always serve, the skills I gained through my experience with ASB will certainly aid me in my career, as they already do now.”

Along that same thread of appreciating the experience for its developmental qualities, the students shared what they learned. Jay said, “Chicago taught me a lot about myself, as far as leadership and dealing with pressure and all that, it really taught me how to really be patient. And Angela explained, “I kind of learned too, I wasn't a strong leader I thought I was. So, I need to work on being a stronger leader. Because when somebody gave me an attitude, I didn’t know what to do.” Through these reflective comments, it is evident that Jay and Angela both experienced a transformation, in which they have learned something about their own leadership skills that will help them become better leaders in the future. Janel shared her personal challenges with leadership as well:

I didn't have a co-site coordinator, nor did I have an immediate faculty advisor. I just had a security guard and that’s it. I'm leading, I was 20 leading 17 to 22 year olds, so as a young woman that you have to deal with and just people looking for a reaction out of you because you're a woman and I feel like that would’ve been different if I was a man in a leadership capacity. So that made it difficult. Just because I had to figure out communal relationships between participants and logistics and everything that comes with leadership for my individual self.

Lastly, several students returned to ASB to serve two or three years in a row. Lily discussed how she wanted to elevate her leadership responsibilities:

And so then I applied as a team leader instead of as a regular participant cuz I just figured it was the next step up to the next level of responsibility that I could handle but in hindsight, I wish I would have had more preparation, just prepare myself emotionally and before the trip because I didn't realize it was going to be such an it was an emotionally exhausting experience having a leadership position.

Joann shared a similar claim to wanting to move up within the organization:
Yeah, even just by the fact that, I've even applied to be site coordinator, I was really inspired by the trip. So much so that I was like I wanted to do it again. I didn't just want to be a team leader. I didn't want to go back to being a participant and I also wanted to just kind of give ASB my all because I’m really passionate about it so yeah.

And Lisa commented about one of her most rewarding experiences as a leader, “all of my participants if they didn't graduate reapplied to ASB; a lot of them ended up applying for Team Leader positions this year.”

Overall, assuming a leadership role is encouraged, and several students explained how the Associate Dean or past Student Executive Director paid attention to them and offered them a position. Additionally, several students were actively engaged with the Office of the Dean of the Chapel as Chapel Assistants. Joann described how “all the service projects are overseen by the chapel, when you’re chapel assistant you kind of get first pick for a lot of these things,” and that’s how she was selected for Savannah, GA (site created for waitlisted participants) and assigned as a Team Leader. The students affirmed that they are challenged by their roles, the time commitment, and their peers but it makes them a better leader.

**Event Planning**

As a byproduct of serving in a leadership role and developing leadership skills, many of the students referenced their role in creating the overall experience for their peers through managing a service initiative and a budget. These experiences forced them to be resourceful, creative and think critically. The scope of event planning ranged from creating a master itinerary, promotion, and recruitment, fundraising, and soliciting in-kind donations (i.e. meals and lodging), securing sites to work with for the service projects and on-site management of 50-100 volunteers. Jay mentioned that the students are working late into the night to plan for their trips, “we are in Carnegie basement til three, four o'clock in the morning.” She and Lisa only had two
months, but students typically have 9 months to plan if selected as a site coordinator within the traditional selection process. Lisa said “I had to do everything in two months versus having nine months. I was thinking about ASB, like, day and night.” Fortune described her responsibilities in detail:

I was the site coordinator for Lumberton North Carolina. My responsibilities as a site coordinator is to basically to plan the site. So, I'm calling nonprofit organizations to come out and work with them. I'm calling restaurants to donate meals to us. I'm contacting rec centers and churches to figure out where we'll be sleeping at. So, all of that is my responsibility as a site coordinator and then during the actual trip I helped to make sure everything is running smoothly. Everything, everywhere that we're supposed to be going to and that everything we're supposed to be getting we get.

Angela passionately described how she went above and beyond to prepare her team leaders:

I literally made a thick packet, I stayed up all night. Cuz I was like I need to, I need like a guide for my team leaders, so they don't have to ask nothing, literally nothing. I'm going to put everything that I knew about this whole trip in a packet for them. Right. [So, she asked them during the trip] Do y'all have y'all packets? And nah they didn’t have their packets. One girl said I actually lost my packet. And I knew this was going to happen. So, I made extras, I said, no problem.

Lisa also included that, “because all of the planning, I’m thinking about feeding, clothing, housing and travel for approximately 50 students, those are transferrable community planning and organizing skills,” when asked about how this experience prepared her for the future.

Mr. Vinson explained that ASB is a learning lab for the students and Jasmine mentioned it during her interview. She wanted to take her participants to a basketball game in New Orleans, but the ASB budget person sat her down to explain the overall budget:

So, let me show you this and he showed me this giant spreadsheet. He was like let me put your life into perspective, let me help you understand, because I know nobody's shown this to you before, and I was humbled. Real quick! It would have been fun, but we found other fun things to do instead. So, I was grateful for the learning lesson. That's why I like ASB, it’s a learning lab, don't just tell me no, tell me the “why” behind the no.
And Jay described her experience with paying for housing:

Okay, so I had to deal with a lot, the budget and everything else. So, financially, because one our housing was not free, so I was going, as well as the Associate Dean at the time was going back and forth negotiating with the person or giving them the tax form so we can get the tax off as well as just negotiating certain things. as well as when we were getting food for the rest of our days we ate at University of Chicago. So we had to get a quote for that and the and negotiating a them a price now on and I think that I want to say that the only two things that we really had that I really had a financially do and send emails for at all.

Janel mentioned that she understood money and budgets, on a smaller scale, but planning for 50 other people was a more daunting task. Lily explained that even though the program is fully funded they’re still expected to “get as many free donations as possible, rather than discounts.” Lisa shared her perspective, “it's really a budget, it's just more, so you work is hard for it to be free.”

Overall, the students learned a lot about themselves and how they can manage planning the event in addition to being full time students and leaders in other student organizations. Lisa said, “it just taught me a lot of time management and the skills related to correspondence and communication has also greatly improved my professional and personal career.” A large part of Alternative Spring Break is planning a community service in another city or country, they likely have not been to before. Fortune talked about how planning for an international site was challenging because she had to account for the differences in time zones. The students must take in account the service initiative and contact local non-profits, grade schools and service organizations to develop the inner workings of the site. In addition to managing a team and the general participants, helping them to positively engage with underserved populations and meet the needs of devastated communities.
Problem Solving

ASB is a large-scale, week-long event that takes place in a new city or country that the students have never been before in most cases, they’re doing as much as they can to prepare to have a successful event but it would be foolish to not expect any problems or hiccups once they arrive or as their week progresses. The following quotes showcase how these student leaders had to think critically and create solutions to unexpected problems. For Lisa, she was on her way to her site and had not yet secured all the meals they needed for the week:

> Everything, we had quite a few meals that was not done, the entire Detroit bus ride I was just on my laptop and my phone. Team leaders were saying, “make sure they all leave her alone real quick while she is figuring stuff out.” Every meal we didn't have covered, got covered on the bus ride to Detroit.

She continued to work up until the last minute to resolve an issue. Lisa explained how several resources were able to assist her meet the needs of her students from Howard Alumni clubs to churches. In Jay’s case, she had to manage two student groups with competing schedules:

> My choir and decided to come with me at my site as well as all the other participants. So, I had two working parts, I had everybody else but then the choir would go sing somewhere. So, you have to make up their own schedule for them.

As a Team leader, Nikky stepped up to streamline the shower process because the facility they stayed in did not truly accommodate the size of their group. Nikky said, “and then we had one and a half showers. So, only one shower half the time. So, I took it upon myself, I was like, I'm going to start a shower schedule.” In this moment, Nikky was able to provide a solution to a problem quickly, which provided a sense of structure and order to what could have been a complicated and chaotic situation.

The students also found themselves planning or re-directing their service projects after they had already arrived. When Janel arrived at her site, she realized she had to improvise programming because nothing was created beforehand. Janel shared that included, “the writing,
not only facilitating what your participants need but also what the community needs. I had to write impromptu activities for the different schools, different activities and curriculums that they're looking for us to present to students.” In New Orleans, Jasmine had to rethink the cultural activity she had planned, and she explained her experience:

You know when people say think fast and they throw you something? I feel like you have to think fast, but you also have to think smart. So, last year we were in a situation where a site had canceled on us and we were like, oh, buddy we can’t tell our participants that we're not going here. So, my co-coordinator and I were trying to think fast. And we ended up getting on the phone and calling the Museum, the Katrina museum and they said, yeah, come on. So, think fast, think smart. And as long as what you're going to do is effective in some type of way, shape, or form our students were able to experience something cultural about the city, Hurricane Katrina was a huge part of New Orleans.

Fortune had a similar experience, except she had 100 students to place at new sites to do a last-minute service project which is harder to manage:

My point of contact for that site called me and said that, basically, we couldn't come today because she had to go out to Houston and so I had to think critically, in terms of trying to figure out what we'll be doing that afternoon. And it was more difficult because when I was coordinating Spring 18, I had 100 participants. So, so it was so now my issue, trying to figure out something for 100 people to do and so I started calling some of my other points of contact…I had talked to the mayor, former mayor, and the superintendent because they all have connections to Howard.

The site leaders and team leaders work very hard to plan ASB, anywhere from two to nine months of planning to be exact. However, since there are so many variables and other parties they depend on in the city they’re visiting, it is likely that they’ll have to think critically and resolve an issue regardless of how much they have planned and prepared for it. Lisa shared how housing was too hard to secure in her original city, so she was re-assigned to a new city and had to start the planning process all over. There were instances where the students did not have a co-site coordinator or a faculty advisor and they had to manage everything on their own, which can be challenging when 50 of their peers are depending on them. Overall, the students met these
challenges and had successful service trips that lead to their interest in returning to the program as well as their peers. Through positions of leadership, these Black women were able to engage in critical thinking and problem solving through various scenarios under different levels of stress.

Cultural Humility

Cultural education is not limited to experiences where students are interacting with communities that do not look like them but is also just as prevalent in predominantly African American communities. During ASB students are immersed in communities where people may look like them on the surface, but their life experiences vary tremendously. The students described cultural experiences that included differences in food, language, violence, homelessness, illiteracy, and childhood experiences etc. across community types domestically and internationally. Janel emphasized, “I think that was more so, I had to prep my participants before they walked into these high school communities because there's just some things that they haven't experienced before.” Lily mentioned that in some cases, “almost all the students were Black and almost all the teachers were White,” and Angela observed that, “he was struggling. I don't know. He just seemed like he was struggling to keep his head afloat, I guess, working in Black communities can be hard for White people sometimes, I guess.”

The students also shared what it was like to enter communities that were brand new and outside of their comfort zone, Jasmine referred to it by saying, “I had never experienced that before. So that was just a culture shock to me.” Fortune explains how her experience was enriched during restoration projects on sacred Native American land:

We also focused on cultural immersion because there's a Native American tribe that's in Lumberton North Carolina. So, the majority of the population there is Native American. So just learning about their culture of things that they do customs and stuff that they have. We went to a powwow that they did, and they taught us dances and everything and told us more about their cultural issues that they face as Native Americans and everything.
And the students came face to face with real social justice issues and crises that impacted them beyond the initial service project. Lily reflected on her experience in Flint, Michigan by saying:

Because I already knew about the water crisis. I already knew what I was going into but going into the elementary schools in 2019 and see they have signs on their water fountains that say do not drink. We spent a lot of time we went to churches and other local we went to senior centers. We went to schools. We went to other little nonprofits and everybody had similar stories of the hardships that the water crisis had put them through as well as not just having to buy bottled water all the time, but the emotional toll, it took on people of seeing how the government and, uh, and leadership that really didn't care about you and care about your needs and, the water, the water crisis there. It had psychological effects on people as well because of the poisoning in the water.

Joann had a similar experience with the homeless population she served at her site:

So, I know that homelessness isn't a culture, but it is well, yeah. Yeah, okay. People tend to have their preconceived notions about homelessness but just going in talking to the homeless people, listening to their stories. There's a stigma against homeless people and even if you don't have that stigma in mind, all these people did something, but you just, approaching them as people listening to them as people with stories, not as, like, homeless people or less fortunate people. I mean, they are less fortunate. But not what that goes savior mindset not with any kind of preconceived notions, just trying to understand them listening to them.

Analyzing this comment further, Joann has a heightened awareness of this population now that she worked so closely with them, but she still has not grasped the right language to use when address people who are homeless versus calling them ‘homeless people’. She shows empathy and compassion towards this community, by wanting to talk to them and learn about their stories but there is still room for growth.

A major aspect of HU ASB is their ability to mentor and empower the youth. However, there are some barriers that the students faced. Jay said that, “it came into play with going into the different schools and talking to your kids because we all know Chicago is a different place, culturally, it just is a different type of communication.” And she explained that it was critical to, “to establish a relationship and kind of be personal with them in order for them to even open up
and to talk to you.” Several students referenced how the youth in other cities are exposed to completely different realities. Lisa went into detail about her experience with 7-year old children and her faculty advisor:

She's over the interpersonal violence protection program at Howard and so she was explaining her job title to seven year olds which was funny, but she was saying, do you know what domestic violence entails and one little boy was like yeah, that's what you call when my dad hits my mom or something. And I had to keep a straight face, but in my mind, I’m just like, ah! And then a little girl said something, like when my cousin is in jail or something like that. And I was just like, um...in my mind. But it’s like hey, this is real life. This is literally what happens, around you as you grow up. This still happens in Dallas, this happens all the time in your high school, just the fact that it's seven-year olds saying it this time.

Janel and Lisa shared two interesting experiences based on being from Texas. Janel said:

So even transitioning into the north, period. I feel like gun violence and what it looks like for kids and teens to live their daily lives through that. it looks very different than it does in the South. Like, I'm from Texas. There's really not much, not necessarily street smarts but just awareness about how large and how intimate this issue is. And so, everybody wants to shout no gun violence and stay away from guns and don't smoke, don't drink...but there's different life circumstances for people outside of this Howard bubble that we live in.

Lisa discussed in depth how she felt:

So, I wanted to go somewhere else, not necessarily international but just some other community that I've never been before. So, I can one learn their culture and see how their economic structures work cuz I’m an economics major and I wanted to learn as much as possible from them. So, I can learn how to better suit my community in Dallas. I guess really learning how it varies in every region, regional differences could be an intersectionality within the Black diaspora, I suppose. Howard is really good for understanding that Blackness is not one shade, nor is it one kind, and understanding the multiple intersections within it. And so, going to Detroit, it’s like I know my Blackness isn’t their Blackness my experiences while socioeconomically could be the same as them. But it still has a different impact on them because they live across the border from Canada, and I live across the board from Mexico. Completely different. They have such a rich culture for Blackness.

Effortless transparency is shown by Lisa through this moment of reflection, she is aware that while Black people have a lot of common experiences, she is also aware that there
are distinct cultural differences between someone from Detroit and someone from Dallas. The history of the city, socio-economic challenges and proximity to another country shape the experiences of Black people in Detroit, and she clearly appreciated the exposure to this during her trip.

There was twice as much content for this section than any other theme because the students listed off several memorable and impactful moments to learn something new about the communities they were serving. While none of the students participated in an international trip during Spring 2019, three were able to reference previous Caribbean based experiences and one referenced her 2020 trip to Ghana that she was planning. They also included thoughts about food, language, level of gratitude, race, and what going to college looked like for the high school students they mentored. It is evident that access to diverse experiences is common across the program and every site the students visit.

Theme 3: Alternative Spring Break provides intentional opportunities for students to experience academic and social integration

At Howard University, ASB is a hybrid experiential learning opportunity that is open to all students. As Fortune explained, “they're not going to deny anybody. So, if more people come, we just have to make more room.” I asked the students if they believed that their experience at Howard was better because they participated in ASB, and there was a resounding “yes” or affirming head nod when answering. Many of the participants indicated that they would recommend it to others and other institutions, because it offers an opportunity to travel somewhere new for free, serve the community and create new friendships. The following section details their feelings about the friendships and connections they were able to develop as well as how ASB enriched their undergraduate experience.
Friendships and Community

A key aspect of academic and social integration is the ability to make friends and build community while in the college environment. In every interview the students mentioned developing “lifelong friendships” as Lily put it and creating memories with peers they would have never interacted with if it weren’t for ASB. Janel said, “I had a great time I met a lot of new people. I made some great connections.” And Lily shared that she didn’t have many friends before ASB but, “I was exposed to, like, people have Howard students of all classifications all grade levels. And I really just formed began forming community with those people.” Nikky exclaimed that the trip was great because, “we just bonded and we got to know each other, we call each other Bham Fam.” And Jasmine shared how her trip to New Orleans allowed her an opportunity to see her peers work hard and loosen up on Bourbon Street:

You may not have known all 50 of those people by, the Saturday we left but by the Saturday we come back. It's like, you don't want to let those people go because you're so into them. You're so attached, and you just want to be around them all the time. I think that's another thing that ASB does is the bonds that you formed with people over the week whether you're interacting with them in a school, helping to teach kids or if you're on Bourbon Street, you get to see two sides of people.

Lily shared how she got the best of both worlds, developing friends within her peer group and with members of the community:

My intention was really just to go out there and serve and to give back to others. And so, I actually ended up gaining more than I went out there, intending to. I gained this whole added community of family and friends through the Howard students as well as some people out in Flint that I still keep in contact with today.

Another great aspect of the trip is the opportunity to build connections with the community members and leaders. Angela stated that one of her goals was to increase her networking skills, “well, honestly, I'm just hoping I [learn] networking skills. I like how I'm reaching out people in different cities like this. And I'm making connections.” And Jasmine
spoke to her experience with the youth empowerment initiative, “we did some education and some tutoring, and some college readiness panels that the principles had asked us to do. And with that, just throughout the week forming bonds with all the students there.” Lisa shared how one of the students she met during her first ASB trip to St. Maarten, has since came to the states for college because of their service trip and the bond they created.

**Enriched Undergraduate Experience**

A typical undergraduate experience focuses primarily on attaining a degree, and students attending traditional college campuses often seek an enriched undergraduate experience. This might include going to football games or joining a Greek letter organization, for others it might include studying abroad or participating in their dream internship. Regardless, students expect to have a dynamic experience that defies the boundaries of their classrooms, and the participants shared several ways that ASB provided that. Angela reluctantly stated, “I seriously love ASB It’s my favorite org, I don’t say that out loud…but it’s definitely my favorite org. I know that thing like the back of my hand.” And Nikky shared how she just wanted to see what all the hype was about, saying “I just wanted to experience it because people said it was like a such a great thing to do. So, I just wanted to see and experience the great thing for myself. And I accomplished that.” And Janel felt that it’s their duty to serve, and “ASB allowed [her] the opportunity to fall in love with service and help others do the same.”

For several students, they were able to see their majors come to life and apply theory to practice. Angela described how the political science terms social constructs and gentrification that she “learned in class” she could see “in real life.” Angela is a political science minor, but Lily is a political science major and she expanded upon how theory was applied to practice:

I have a political science background here in undergrad and so a big part of that is learning about policies and learning about actions of local governments and how
they affect their communities. So, I really got to, I [already understood] that before I came to Flint. And so, when I saw it happening when I saw it in action it was easier for me to quickly realize what was going on. As well as, like, yeah, it was with ASB every time, you're really taking things that you pick up on in classrooms and in books, you're really applying those to your service with every trip.

Janel has a major in criminology and a minor in community development. She describes how she was able to connect the two programs through her service project:

If I did have a concentration, it would be juvenile justice. And this program or this ASB week definitely [showed me] what juveniles look like and what delinquency looks like in specific areas and communities and how that impacts Black lives regardless of the legislation and the rules and the policy that pertain to each state, so much about delinquency doesn't even apply to Black juveniles. Therefore, we see Black kids being charged as adults.

Lastly the students explained in depth how ASB impacted their overall undergraduate experience. Nikky referenced her excitement for a classmate to join her next time and how the program is providing opportunities for students to, “go to different places, we have opportunity to travel overseas to Africa, for free.” Joann summarized her experience by saying:

It just teaches you a lot about yourself and a lot about the world around you. It'll make you better at Howard, we're being trained to be servant leaders. Howard is all about service and servant leadership, this will really teach you how to be a servant leader, it will really make you more passionate about service literally open your eyes and there are a lot of things going on in this world. And we're all aware of it but do we really understand it? Well, I mean, yeah, the way everybody talks about ASB, I just kind of felt like if I didn't do it, I'd be missing out on this experience. Also, Howard is about, I mean, our motto, truth, and service. I remember hearing somebody this past semester describes ASB as a rite of passage for Howard students, because we're about service.

Jay said ASB, “definitely impacted my experience by the different friends and opportunities I’ve had because of it.” And Nikky shared similar thoughts stating that, “you gain so many friends and irreplaceable experiences” Jasmine offered the following sentiments:

It really does open a lot of opportunities and a lot of doors. I've received a couple of scholarships and stuff like that, through this program. Being able to be a leader in the program has gotten me scholarships and also just exposure, people have
asked me to come talk to their organizations, “can you talk to them about what leadership is” and stuff like that. I was invited to a freshman dorm to serve on a panel about leadership in college. I would say, you would receive a life changing experience. As simple as that, it’s a life changing experience and that can be a physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually life changing experience.

In summary, every student enjoyed their experience with Alternative Spring Break because it offered them an opportunity to develop new friendships, serve in communities where they could leave an impact and because they were given opportunities to grow. The students showcased their ability to connect their academic programs to their service projects which is the premise of service-learning and for some it helped them to add on additional minors in community development because they found themselves so passionate about the work they were doing with ASB. In addition to that, the students shared how their leadership positions helped them to be better Howard students and servant leaders on campus.

**Student Reflection Submissions**

An important component of service-learning is the reflective aspect, during ASB trips students are required to write personal reflections. In the evening time, students are asked to share their reflections in small groups and a team leader or site coordinator will facilitate a discussion around what is shared. Traditionally, this is done every single weeknight during an ASB service trip. Therefore, I asked the students to send me any documentation of their reflections (Appendix G) prior to departure, during the trip, or after returning to Howard.

The analysis process for the reflection submissions included the following steps. I used a constant comparison method of thematic analysis. As patterns emerged from the data, I used a qualitative analysis to triangulate the data with the surveys, student interviews, and staff interview. I was able to track the themes by the number of times it was seen in each submission
(“mention”) in addition to the number of times the theme was mentioned in each submission (“weight”) which helped to assess the depth of reflection (Castleberry et al., 2016, p. 3).

Angela shared her handwritten notes from the planning process to prepare for her trip. Her notes included contact information for individuals and organizations that would provide meals, reminders to have Mr. Vinson to make a payment or send forms, participant meeting agenda, a supply list, what her team leaders were assigned to, and which sites she secured and their proximity to each other, etc. It provided insight into how she organized and prepared for her site. At the very end of her submission, there was a handwritten note that said the following:

Did ASB as a site coordinator, I’m such a boss ass b*tch! But I need to work on what I say and the time and place the speech is delivered. I really hurt Richard’s feelings and he didn’t deserve that at all. I feel terrible not for what I said but how I said it.

She did mention this experience in her interview, and it is important to understand that she recognized her error early on and is practicing self-management. Writing this out shows her ability to be self-aware, socially aware, and better manager her interactions so that relationships are not damaged.

I also received a reflective “journal entry” from Joann. The entry covers her site in Savannah, GA and her service initiatives homelessness and higher education and homelessness. She goes onto say her, “involvement with the Salvation Army particularly was a highlight.” She describes the impact collecting data for the Salvation Army had on her:

The experience was incredibly heavy, witnessing the living conditions and hearing the personal stories of many. It was emotional, heart-rending, and incredibly humbling. I wished that there was something I could do to immediately improve the situations of those that I met and found myself somewhat frustrated by the fact that something like that is impossible. I promised many that I would uplift them in prayer, thinking that it was the very least I could do.
She recognized that while she cannot solve homelessness, she can do her best to participate in volunteer activities that help in some way. And she is committed to “service and goodwill.” She seemed grateful for her experience and fired up for the upcoming ASB 2020 trip.

And Lily shared her Instagram posts from her ASB 2018 trip to Beaumont, Texas and her ASB 2019 trip to Flint, Michigan. Her post about Flint is emotionally charged and she shares that “Flint does not have clean water, five years later and Flint does not have clean water.” She was clearly invested in her service project and the social injustice she witnessed upset her. She was discontent with the suffering the community suffered as a result of drink poisoned water. She explains her service project included youth empowerment and community restoration to combat illiteracy and environmental injustice. And she was grateful to have an opportunity to serve in this community that seemed to need it so desperately. She also thanked the organizations and individuals that made her trip possible. Her post was thoughtful and inspiring, and her friends commented on the post saying that they were proud of her.

Overall, the students that were able to submit a reflection showed their growth across the four dimensions of emotional intelligence. In addition, they were grateful for the experience and the opportunity to serve in communities where people looked like them. And it was visible that across the different service initiatives they found something to be passionate about and are committed to doing the work!

Chapter Summary

In summary, ASB is a transformational experience for the students in which they learn so much about themselves, their peers, and the communities they committed to serve. For several of the participants, going to ASB was a great opportunity to travel somewhere new at no cost to them, make new friends and engage in a service-learning project they were proud of. Mr. Vinson
explained that the students are introduced to ASB their freshmen year, during Freshmen Orientation, and that was consistent across the interviews. Most of them had also participated or coordinated the university wide Day of Service that happens prior to the start of their freshmen year. And once the students participated, they continued to come back year after year and applied for leadership roles with increased responsibilities.

During each interview, students were asked which non-cognitive skill they felt most confident with and which they felt was strengthened as a result of participating in ASB. Janel and Jay both answered emotional intelligence for both, explaining that they already had a grasp of their own emotional capacity and how to work with others but still learned more through the program. Lily and Fortune shared that they both saw a difference in their ability make a connection between their academics and the service project as well as having a positive campus experience because of their involvement. Lisa felt that emotional intelligence was not an issue for her, and she really saw a difference in her ability to think critically. And Nikky also felt that emotional intelligence was also a strength, but she learned how to be more culturally competent. Joann and Jasmine both described how their emotional intelligence was developed because of ASB and they were able to learn more about themselves and how to work with their peers. And I really enjoyed Angela’s response, she said that none of the skills were developed per se, but she had a chance to showcase her full skill set through ASB.

The experiences shared by the students interviewed for this study, highlight the Howard University Alternative Spring Break program for its ability to develop emotional intelligence in various ways and provides an opportunity to engage Black women. Janel said that ASB was a positive experience and she grew as “as a leader, a friend, as an informed Black community member.” The students in this study lead a large group to complete a service-learning project,
managed site development and execution, created friendships with students they would not have interacted with otherwise and promoted civic engagement and social justice domestically and internationally.
Chapter Five: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

While alternative break opportunities are gaining popularity across the nation, Howard University’s Alternative Spring Break (HU ASB) has sustained 25 consecutive years of programming from 1994-2019. Howard University is the only HBCU to have an Alternative Spring Break program with this longevity and consistency and is the first HBCU to offer this type of co-curricular programming. Under the leadership of the Dean of the Chapel, the program has grown into a campus wide initiative and learning lab that includes an academic course, leadership opportunities and several domestic and international destinations. Alternative Spring Break replaces a traditional vacation in which students travel away from their campuses to spend the week completing service projects in a community in need. Through service-learning opportunities like ASB, Black women can accelerate their ability to integrate their academic programs and social activities during their undergraduate experiences. This study focused specifically on Black women because it is important to understand how this underserved student population experiences academic and social integration and which co-curricular activities facilitate the process.

In summary, this dissertation consisted of the following chapters (1) Introduction (2) Review of the Literature (3) Research Methods (4) Data Presentation and Analysis, and (5) Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations. Chapter I outlined the purpose and significance of the study including the history and significance of service learning, HBCUs and their involvement with social justice issues, research questions and definitions of key terms. Chapter II covers three overarching themes in the literature; engaged learning through alternative spring break, developing emotional intelligence in college students and the lived experiences of
Black women. Chapter III described in detail the methodology and design, participants and sampling procedures, HU ASB as the research site, the process for data collection and analysis and steps to remain credible and dependable throughout the study. Chapter IV provides a detailed overview of participant demographic information and personal profiles. Chapter IV also discusses the major findings and themes that emerged through data collection including in-depth one on one interviews with students and the outgoing Associate Dean, reviewing the program website and documents as well as reflective journal entries from the students to answer the three research questions.

The use of an instrumental case study design was intentionally selected to focus on the relationship between Black women and their lived experiences during an Alternative Spring Break trip and how these students developed emotional intelligence through a college-based travel program grounded in service-learning pedagogy. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to summarize the results of the study presented in this dissertation including a discussion of the major findings based on the data analysis. This chapter also includes the implications for theory, policy, and practice as well as the limitations of the study. Lastly, this chapter will offer recommendations for intentional opportunities to engage and support Black women and additional opportunities for future research focused on Black women and their specific needs.

**Research Questions Answered**

After interviewing nine Black women that successfully completed the Spring 2019 HU ASB program, I was able to gain an understanding of their lived experiences and how their involvement with ASB fostered the development of emotional intelligence and other transferable non-cognitive skills. Additionally, their narratives provide insight into how they experience academic and social integration at their campus.
**Research Question One.** What are the lived experiences of Black women that participate in Alternative Spring Break?

Participants’ responses reflect a clear picture of their planning process and leadership responsibilities before and during the trip. The students describe the challenges they faced as young women in leadership roles and establishing themselves among their peers. They also break down the daily schedule including service initiatives and social activities. Each student also shared the details of their interactions with peers, service organization leaders and community members. There was an abundance of data collected that did exceeded the focus of this study and therefore was omitted from the findings.

The students were detailed in their descriptions including the challenges they faced, including planning the service trip, securing in-kind donations and same day cancellations. They explained how they felt accomplished for participating, connecting with new communities, and becoming more passionate about social justice issues and civic engagement. And they expressed what aspects of ASB motivated them to return to the program and assume additional responsibilities, especially when their peers were excited to return the following year.

**Research Question Two.** How does their involvement with Alternative Spring Break develop the four dimensions of emotional intelligence?

Consistent across all nine interviews is the belief that ASB challenges students to be more self-aware and practice self-management as it impacts their peers experience. Students discussed several examples of being socially aware because of their upbringing, cultural awareness, and desire to serve others in need. However, ASB provided them a new opportunity to engage in service initiatives they had not been inclined to before, as well as work with new people from their university and encourage them to be more service oriented.
Participants discussed basic and advanced levels of relationship management. One of the major components of their experience as leaders during ASB included organizing the ASB program for their peers by working with service organizations, churches, and schools. They depended on previous connections to determine work sites as well as soliciting in-kind donations for lodging, transportation, and meals. The students also explained how they understood the importance of nurturing these relationships because they were asked to return. Lastly, they experienced developing friendships with their peers, which was a consistent benefit described throughout each interview.

**Research Question Three.** How does participation in Alternative Spring Break impact their ability to experience academic and social integration?

Several students mentioned the university motto “truth and service” as it is engrained into the campus culture and influenced their desire to participate in a service-learning project during their traditional spring break vacation. HU ASB is introduced to students before the start of their freshmen year during Freshman Orientation and it is referred to as a rites of passage experience that they should participate in before graduating. And students look forward to participating, because the program is raved about as soon as they enter the campus community.

Participants also explained how their undergraduate experiences are enriched by their participation with ASB. They have earned scholarships, speaking and presentation engagements, other leadership roles and internships because of their participation. They are also able to apply what they have learned in the classroom to a service project which provides experiential learning and non-cognitive skills that can be applied to future academic, personal, and professional goals. Every participant raved about how they encourage other Howard students to participate and they would encourage other schools to offer ASB to their students because it has several benefits.
Discussion

The study found that Black women are placed in a situation that develops all four dimensions of emotional intelligence because of what they learn about themselves, their peers, and the world around them. Students reported that they were able to connect their course work to their service projects or declared a minor related to community development because of their participation. Students reported that participating in ASB helped them work through personal issues, mental health issues, anxiety, or thoughts about leaving Howard University for various reasons. Students reported that ASB provided the opportunity to meet peers they would not have interacted with otherwise and build friendships that they believe will be long-lasting. Overall, students had a social justice orientation and are passionate about civic engagement, their projects increased their passion towards specific service initiatives.

The findings illuminated the lived experiences of Black women that participated in Alternative Spring Break at Howard University during the Spring 2019 semester. The three themes that emerged as a result of this study describing the impact of ASB on a Black female students’ experience are as follows: (1) Black women develop all four dimensions of emotional intelligence through Alternative Spring Break participation, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management (2) Black women develop leadership skills and other transferable non-cognitive skills through Alternative Spring Break, and (3) Alternative Spring Break provides an intentional opportunity for Black women to experience academic and social integration. These themes provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of these Black women at an HBCU and how their co-curricular involvement with a college-based travel program and service-learning may foster the development of emotional intelligence and increases their ability to successfully integrate academically and socially.
Implications for Theory

The following section connects the three themes previously mentioned to the literature and conceptual framework used for this study. This developed a new way to understand the lived experiences of Black women was explored by pairing emotional intelligence and academic and social integration together. This is supported by Zhoc et al. (2018) stating that “EI also contributes to students’ development of generic outcomes, including social, cognitive and self-growth outcomes” (p. 988.)

Connecting Emotional Intelligence

Theme 1: Black women develop all four dimensions of emotional intelligence through Alternative Spring Break participation, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management

Emotional Intelligence is perceived to be a positive contributor to personal and career success (Calvert, 2012) and it is an important variable to consider when evaluating job performance and life satisfaction (Kao, 2009). The students discussed in detail how ASB provided an outlet to demonstrate as well as develop emotional intelligence, which is seen in theme one. The data showed an overwhelming response for self-awareness and relationship management, despite the questions did not specifically address the four dimensions of emotional intelligence. As student described their experiences, they highlighted examples of each dimension, some more detailed than others.

Joann expressed that aspects of emotional intelligence were evident in their reflections as a group at the end of every night, “it really forced people just think about what happened that day, how they felt about that day what they learned from what they experienced, a lot of people cried.” One aspect of emotional intelligence is being socially aware, and during this experience,
students were more socially aware and shared how the community they were serving in really
touched them through verbal and emotional expression. And Janel stated that ASB created a
space for her to grow “as a leader, a friend, and as an informed Black community member.”

**Connecting Academic and Social Integration**

**Theme 2: Black women develop leadership skills and other transferable non-cognitive skills through Alternative Spring Break**

Academic and social integration can be promoted through several opportunities, ASB serve as one way for students to connect their academic and social experiences while developing transferable non-cognitive skills. Parks et al. (2019) state that “undergraduate programs are increasingly examining EI in their students as a possible marker of future professional skills such as decision-making, stress management, and critical thinking” (p. 1492). And participants were able to speak their ability to practice problem solving and preliminary critical thinking skills, decision making, event planning competencies and cultural humility leading up to and during their ASB trips.

Lily shared, “every time I think I have reached the extent of my leadership capacities, ASB challenges me and pushes me to grow even more.” Leadership was one of the major non-cognitive skills developed through ASB that emerged from the data because every participant served in a leadership role, varying in level of responsibility and commitment. “The capacity to engage in socially responsible leadership is developed” through ASB on the individual, group, and societal levels (Dugan & Komives, 2010, p. 526). Which is important to recognize because leadership skills are sought after by employers in future employees.
Theme 3: Alternative Spring Break provides an intentional opportunity for Black women to experience academic and social integration

“In higher education, there is wide agreement that student success should include not only traditional measures of academic achievement, but also the attainment of desired student and personal development outcomes, as well as the degree to which students are satisfied with their college experience” (Zhoc et al., 2018, p. 987). Janel mentioned, “I know I am more prepared for post-grad life because of ASB.”

The students were asked if they thought they had a better undergraduate experience as a because of their participation in ASB because “quite simply, the more students are academically and socially involved, the more likely are they to persist and graduate” (Tinto, 2012, p. 257). A couple students emphasized how ASB saved them from leaving the institution and kept them engaged by helping them to learn what they are passionate about. Only one student reported a negative outcome of her commitment to ASB, Lisa explained that she failed a class because of external issues in addition to her desire to create he best ASB experience for her peers. She was overwhelmed but wanted to have the same quality experience she had during her first trip.

Implications for Practice

The primary implication of this study is the implementation of a standardized ASB program at colleges and universities nationwide, including a mandatory reflection activity which is a major component of service-learning. The standard could be set after a thorough program assessment of the Howard University Alternative Spring Break program. The HU ASB program has seen consistent success and growth for 25 years and could serve as a blueprint for new programs nationwide. Kuh (2008) states that service-learning is a high-impact practice that gives “students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing
efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community” (p. 28). Programs must incorporate reflection activities, like journal entries or group discussions. The questions that guide these reflections could be standardized as well. And programs could implement a ‘pre’ and ‘post’ test process that assesses whether the students experience academic and social integration because of their participation with ASB.

As it stands, Break Away is considered the largest and oldest organization that fosters the implementation of Alternative Spring Break. But this organization does not have any HBCUs in its membership of 200 colleges and universities (Break Away, 2020). This is alarming and needs to be reconsidered, because of the positive implications of ASB for Black students. Break Away provides several resources to their member schools and HBCUs might benefit from those resources as well.

Additionally, HBCUs should implement academic support programs for Black women similarly to Black male initiatives that are popular and continuously growing across PWIs, HBCUs, HSIs and community colleges. Intentional programming might help Black women navigate issues around academic ability and performance, race, gender, recruitment, retention, persistence to graduation and career exploration and preparation. An example of this is the African American Female Initiative at University of Arkansas at Little Rock that uses a student development model. The program includes “a holistic approach, the four components of the program are Transitional, Mentoring, Academic Support, and Professional Preparation” (University of Arkansas, 2020, para. 1).

**Implications Post COVID-19**

While this study focused on the Spring 2019 HU ASB experience, during the completion of this dissertation, the Spring 2020 HU ASB programming was cancelled weeks leading up to
departure. The novel Coronavirus disease (also referred to as COVID-19) caused a global pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020) that prevented all non-essential domestic and international travel consequently preventing college students nationwide from experiencing Spring Break, including scheduled Alternative Spring Break service trips. This untimely and unprecedented global health pandemic halted the service trips every participant in this study spent a year planning. Therefore, it is important to consider how this will impact Alternative Spring Break programs moving forward. This includes health and safety precautions, travel restrictions, border control and a fear of travel due to exposure to contracting Coronavirus.

**Limitations**

*Personal Limitations*

There are several limitations within this study, despite the positive findings and overwhelmingly positive student experiences. The first limitation was the participant pool, the participants were selected through convenience sampling and there might have been a better mix of experiences represented in the study, specifically, any students who were not student leaders. Additionally, the researcher would have like to have gathered at least six more interviews, but the pool was limited. Of the student contacts provided, three participants did not work out.

Secondly, measures could have been put in place to conduct interviews in person that would have worked well for the interviewer and interviewees. Thirdly, interviews should have taken place closer to the time of return from the trip. This would have helped students to remember more details about their experiences and provide more reflection materials. At the time of their interviews, too much time had passed, and students were on winter break and not with their school materials.
Lastly, the hardest limitation to overcome was maintaining open and cooperative communication from the program staff. Initially the methods for this study included a pre and post survey component but the lack of communication resulted in a complete reconstruction of the research study. Therefore, I could not assess a change in skill development before and after the trip. The researcher made necessary adjustments to accommodate each of these limitations, but they are important to consider when approaching future research studies.

**Limitations for HBCUs and Black Women**

Alternative Spring Break is not a standardized program across colleges and universities, especially HBCUs. As reported earlier, only 20 out of 101 HBCUs offer any programming related to ASB, service trips or service-learning. Which means there are roughly 83 HBCUs not offering this to its students, and Black women on these campuses are not engaging in this high-impact practice. HU ASB is fully funded, in which students do not have any expenses including travel, lodging and meals. Many institutions especially HBCUs are not able to offset costs in this way, but they could implement fundraising or a university budget line item specifically for ASB. Across the 20 HBCUs with ASB or related programming, there are inconsistencies with the office hosting the program and the leadership, additionally the programs operate differently, and that also impacts the student experience. Additionally, HBCUs struggle with telling their stories (Gasman et al., 2015) therefore it is possible that more than 20 to offer ASB or service-learning programming but their websites do not clearly list it and there are few if any related news stories or social media posts to document the program, its history or its impact.

Another limitation for Black women is the lack of travel experience. This includes domestic and international destinations, money to afford travel expenses, or as simple as it sounds, owning luggage. Additionally, these students often enter college without a passport,
meaning they have never been outside of the United States. HU ASB offers several international destinations but as Jasmine described in her interview “nine times out of ten, if you say you have a passport, you have a better shot at going somewhere international just because it's on record when we’re matching students to sites.” She also mentioned “I was fortunate enough to already have passport. I just got it. I think the summer before my freshman year. So, it was brand spanking new.” Black women need the exposure and educational experience as it relates to life skills that are fostered through college-based travel programs.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Institutions of Higher Education

Historically Black Colleges and Universities have historically graduated more Black students and that continues to be the standard across the nation. Black men continue to receive intentional and meaningful programming structured to provide ongoing assistance with recruitment and academic support to increase retention and graduation rates. However, that is not enough, it is imperative that universities pay attention to Black women to ensure they meet their academic and career goals as well.

Black women have endured several negative experiences as members of multiple marginalized identities in higher education. But all universities, not just those that are recognized as historically Black, can strive to meet the needs of Black women. Additionally, institutions might consider the inclusion of Emotional Intelligence into the standard college curriculum because research states that it could lead to personal, social, and societal benefits (Vandervoort, 2006).

Lastly, universities recruiting and enrolling Black women should also consider implementing additional academic support programs that include experiential learning.
opportunities like service-learning to increase their ability to experience a positive academic and social integration. As Tinto’s (1993) theory insists, students of color are more likely to feel connected to the institution and persist to graduation due to positive academic and social integration.

**Recommendations for Faculty Members**

Service-learning opportunities are traditionally tied to an academic course, Alternative Spring Break however may not be even though it includes a service project and reflection activities. Therefore, faculty members should consider how to be more engaged with the ASB program on their campus. Faculty members might participate as ASB advisors and travel with students to help them connect their service projects to academic courses and content. Faculty members might also contribute to ASB by collaborating with the program staff to develop the program curriculum. And faculty members can create service-learning based courses that engage students in social justice issues in neighboring communities. And on a larger scale, impacting campus academic policies and infrastructure, faculty members can create service-learning based courses that engage students in social justice issues in neighboring communities.

**Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals**

Across several campuses, Alternative Spring Break is an initiative that is housed within a Student Affairs division in some capacity. Consequently, the ownership and implementation of this program lands on the shoulders of student affairs professionals, in which they are expected to apply theory to practice. Although these programs are primarily student-operated, there are still full-time professionals that maintain program records, assist with the transition of leadership and coordinate budgets and fundraising. Therefore, it is critical that these professionals stay abreast of the latest trends in alternative break programming.
At Howard University, the program is free to students, but that may not be possible at every institution, so finding ways to fundraise or reduce expenses is important as many students may not have the funds to participate. That was a common reason for participating, freshmen cannot afford to take a traditional vacation, so HU ASB gave them opportunity to travel for free. It would also be valuable for student affairs professionals to create learning outcomes for the ASB program and conduct consistent assessment measures to discern if the students are meeting the program’s expectations. One way to offset program expenses could include an exchange program with neighboring colleges. An ASB program could be a citywide collaboration in which institutions pool their resources to engage more students and share the planning, execution, and expenses.

Lastly, universities seek to create competent graduates that will contribute to the workforce, and employers are seeking emotionally intelligent employees. Therefore, student affairs professionals should develop emotional intelligence-based training for student leaders so that they are self-aware, have tools to exercise self-management and are prepared to manage the relationships with their peers and the community as they plan for their ASB trip. And it would be valuable for student affairs professionals to create learning outcomes for the ASB program and conduct consistent assessment measures to discern if the students are meeting the program’s expectations.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

In conclusion, the data answered the following research questions: (1) What are the lived experiences of Black women that participate in Alternative Spring Break? (2) How does their involvement with Alternative Spring Break develop the four dimensions of emotional intelligence? (3) How does participation in Alternative Spring Break impact their ability to
experience academic and social integration? Moving forward, additional questions that can be explored are (1) What high-impact practices impact student success for Black women? (2) How can Emotional Intelligence be integrated into the student experience throughout all for years? and (3) What factors impact the academic and social integration for Black women at PWIs?

And considering the limitations of this study and the recommendations for universities, faculty, and staff there are a few notable recommendations for future research. The first recommendation is to continue more research that focuses on the lived experiences of Black women and providing a platform to voice the positives and negative experiences they have during their undergraduate career. The second recommendation is to continue to do more research on Black women’s involvement in experiential learning opportunities like service-learning and its impact on their academic and social integration. Another research opportunity would include a comparison of experiences of Black women in ASB programs at HBCUs and PWIs. Research could also be done on the experiences of Black women in other service-learning based courses or programming and their ability to develop emotional intelligence as a result of their participation. Lastly, research on the reasons why Black women are so resilient and so successful despite their experiences and lack of structured academic support program would also be critical in understanding these students.

Chapter Summary

Traditionally, Historically Black Colleges and Universities have focused on the institutional structures that support Black student’s educational resilience toward degree completion, (Joseph et al., 2017). Black women are enrolling in undergraduate programs and completing bachelor’s degree programs at faster rates than their male counterparts, yet they do not receive the same concentrated academic support. Jones-DeWeever (2014) explain that Black
women hold 66% of all bachelor’s degrees awarded to Black Americans. And Guerra (2013) stated that while they are increasing in numbers, African American women are not maintaining the same pace as their White, Latina, or Asian American female counterparts. Hence why Alternative Spring Break would strategically enhance the students’ experience and positively impact retention, persistence, and completion rates for Black women.

Implementing service-learning as a pedagogical framework for approaching student engagement is useful in fostering academic and social integration. Therefore, this study examined how Alternative Spring Break, a college-based travel program grounded in service-learning can be implemented as a meaningful strategy to assess emotional intelligence development and to support Black women during their undergraduate careers. Overall, participants describe ASB as a unique opportunity and they believe everyone should participate at least once during their time at Howard. Lisa stated, “I'm so thankful that Howard has such a program that teaches you the power of giving back.” And Jasmine added that she believes “the mission and the purpose of the program are the biggest reasons why [she] would encourage anybody to participate at least one time. Everybody should have this type of learning experience within the learning lab [because] it's a cultural experience, a social experience and [you get to be] a servant leader.”

It is critically important for Black women to gain travel exposure during their undergraduate careers. This research focuses on one program format, but students can travel through other opportunities such as study abroad, conferences, internships, exchange programs, speaking engagements, events hosted by clubs and organizations, etc. This type of exposure whether domestic or international pushes these students beyond their comfort zones, challenges
them and gives them real world experiences in which “their education would be enriched and their understanding refined” (Johnson & Finch, 2016, para 1).

In conclusion, I studied the oldest and most robust Alternative Spring Break program at an HBCU and listened to the stories of nine Black women. I was incredibly impressed with the programs’ history, consistent growth, and overall impact on the participants. The student operated program is changing the lives of their students and their surrounding communities. I encourage the 20 HBCUs with ASB to restructure and improve their programs and I implore the 81 HBCUs without an ASB program to implement the program at their institution. Alternative Spring Break exposes students to travel, service-learning, social justice issues, social and cultural aspects of a new place and they learn about themselves through reflection activities. Alternative Spring Break serves as holistic approach to student development and it can increase the national and global impact of HBCUs.
Appendix A: IRB Approval

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST

TO: Aeryel Williams
   Education

FROM: Dennis Landin
      Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: March 8, 2019

RE: IRB# E11566

TITLE: The Role of Non-Cognitive Skill Development for Black Women though Travel in Higher Education i.e. Alternative Spring Break: A Case Study


Review Date: 3/7/2019

Approved X Disapproved

Approval Date: 3/8/2019 Approval Expiration Date: 3/7/2022

Exemption Category/Paragraph: 2b

Signed Consent Waived?: Yes

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –
Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:
1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
8. SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.

* All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsu.edu/irb
Appendix B: Student Interview Pre-Survey Questions Protocol

Student Interview Pre-Survey Questions Protocol

Consent Page

IRB Consent Page

This form is so that we can gather electronic consent, basic demographic information and provide you with a brief definition of non-cognitive skills.

Participation, Confidentiality & Consent

Study Title: The Role of Non-Cognitive Skill Development for Black Women through Travel in Higher Education i.e. Alternative Spring Break: A Case Study

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research project is to illuminate the lived experiences of Black women that participate in Alternative Spring Break programs, and assess which non-cognitive skills are developed as a result of their participation.

Study Procedures: The study will be conducted in two phases. In the first phase, subjects will spend approximately 10 minutes completing an online survey before their ASB trip. If selected, students will be asked to participate in a formal interview after their ASB trip. Each interview will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes. In the event that the interview cannot take place in person, participants may participate in a web-based interview (e.g. Skype, Google Hangouts, FaceTime) or a phone call interview.

Risks: There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. More specifically, no physical or psychological harm should result from these discussions. Participants are not required to answer any question with which they feel uncomfortable.

Benefits: The results from this study will inform higher education administrators about the college experiences of African American female students.

Investigators: The following investigators are available for questions about this study, Aeryel Williams (PhD Student) awil456@lsu.edu and Ashley Clayton (Assistant Professor) aclayton@lsu.edu

Performance Site: Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Number of Subjects: 10

Subject Inclusion: Subjects in this study must 1) attend Howard University, 2) identify as a Black/African American woman, and 3) be 18 years or older. Populations excluded are those who are not enrolled in college, identify as male, do not identify as Black or African
American, and those who are minors (under the age of 18). To participate in this study you must meet the requirements of both the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law. Your survey answers will be sent to a link at lsu.qualtrics.com where data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. Qualtrics does not collect identifying information such as your name or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. Some surveys may ask participants if they wish to participate in a follow-up interview and to provide contact information. At the end of the survey you will be asked if you are interested in participating in an additional survey in the future. If you choose to provide contact information such as your phone number or email address, your survey responses may no longer be anonymous to the researcher. However, no names or identifying information would be included in any publications or presentations based on these data, and your responses to this survey will remain confidential.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT:
The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, or www.lsu.edu/irb.

Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. (Print before clicking next.)

**Electronic Consent (Y/N)**

Clicking on the “Agree” button indicates that you have read the above information, you voluntarily agree to participate, and you are 18 years of age or older. Clicking on the "Disagree" takes you to the end of the survey. *

- Agree
- Disagree

**Demographic Info:**

- Pseudonym: (fill in)
- Interview Date
- Interview Time
- Age: (fill in)
- Gender: (Female, Male, Gender fluid, Gender Non-conforming, Other, I prefer not to disclose)
• Race/Ethnicity: (White/Caucasian, Black/African American, Black/Afro Latina, Asian, Native American, two or more races, I prefer not to disclose)

• Overall GPA Fall 2018: (fill in)

• Financial Aid Status: (I receive financial aid (scholarships, loans, grants, I do not receive financial aid)

• Classification in Spring 2019: (Freshmen (0-29 hours), Sophomore (30-59 hours), Junior (60-89 hours), Senior (90-120 hours), Other)

• Projected Graduation Date: (fill in)

• Is this your first trip organized by your institution? (yes or no)

• ASB Site Location: (Albany, GA, Baltimore, MD, Birmingham, AL, Camden, NJ, Chicago, IL, Flint/Detroit, MI, Ghana, Haiti, Memphis, TN, New Orleans, LA, Puerto Rico, St. Thomas, USVI, Washington, DC, Other)

Non-Cognitive Skills Definitions:

• Do you understand the following definition of Emotional Intelligence: “the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one’s emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships with good judgement and care” (Verma, 2018, para. 2)? (yes, no, please explain further during interview)

• Do you understand the following definition of Financial Literacy: “the education and understanding of knowing how money is made, spent, and saved, as well as the skills and ability to use financial resources to make decisions? These decisions include how to generate, invest, spend, and save money” (National Financial Educators Council, 2020)? (yes, no, please explain further during interview)

• Do you understand the following definition of Cultural Humility: “a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another’s culture, but one starts with an examination of her/his own beliefs and cultural identities” (Yeager & Bauer, 2013, p. 251)? (yes, no, please explain further during interview)

• Do you understand the following definition of Problem Solving: “Problem solving is the act of defining a problem; determining the cause of the problem; identifying, prioritizing, and selecting alternatives for a solution; and implementing a solution” (ASQ, 2020, para. 1)? (yes, no, please explain further during interview)

• Do you understand the following definition of Academic and Social Integration: Academic: “A measure of the general expansion of the individual’s intellectual breadth and scope, of the person’s ability to think systematically and critically, and of his stimulation in his academic coursework” (Tinto & Cullen, 1973, p. 56). A construct related to how well a student feels that he or she fits into the academic life of an institution (Brown, 2002). Social: “The development (through peer associations, campus events activities, faculty/staff contact, student organizations, etc.) of sufficient congruency with some part of the social system of the college” (Tinto & Cullen, 1973, p. 60). “A match between the individual student and the social system” (Ting, 2008, p. 6). (yes, no, please explain further during interview)
Appendix C: Student Interview Questions Protocol

Student Interview Questions Protocol

1. Please provide your pseudonym that you chose for this study
2. Tell me a little about yourself.
3. What are your academic and career goals?
4. How and when were you introduced to the Alternative Spring Break program?
5. Please describe your site, the nature of your service-learning project and responsibilities?
6. Why did you commit to participating in a service-learning trip during your Spring Break?
7. What did you do in order to prepare for this trip? What do you wish you knew?
8. Please describe your overall trip experience.
9. What did you hope to gain from participating in this trip? Did you accomplish that goal?
10. How did your identity as a Black woman impact your experience?
11. What did you learn about yourself during your service-learning trip?
12. Which non-cognitive skill area do you feel most confident with and why?
13. Can you describe how emotional intelligence was developed during your ASB experience?
14. Can you describe how financial literacy/fiscal responsibility was developed during your ASB experience?
15. Can you describe how cultural humility was developed during your ASB experience?
16. Can you describe how critical thinking/problem solving was developed during your ASB experience?
17. Can you describe how your academic and social integration was developed during your ASB experience?
18. Which non-cognitive skill area do you feel you strengthened most through ASB and how?
19. How can what you learned about yourself and your project be applied to your personal, professional and or academic goals?
20. Would you recommend other college students participate in ASB? Why or why not?
21. If some asked you what they would receive as a benefit of their participation, what would you say?
22. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your ASB experience?
23. Do you have any reflective journals or notes from this trip?

Thank you. Once the transcript is available, I will send it to you for you to confirm that what you said was recorded accurately.
Appendix D: Staff Interview Questions Protocol

Staff Interview Questions Protocol

1. Tell me a little about yourself.
2. Does your office maintain data/records on student participation each year (sites, race, gender, class, returning participants, pre/post trip feedback, etc.)?
3. How long did you work with the ASB program?
4. When are students first introduced to the Alternative Spring Break program, and how?
5. Please describe the program structure including duration, planning, leadership opportunities, expectations for students.
6. Does the program have specific learning outcomes associated with it?
7. Is there an application process and if so, what does the application process consist of for students and student leaders?
8. How do you select the steering committee, site leaders and team leaders?
9. What would cause a site leader to be appointed months or weeks before the trip?
10. Since the program is fully funded, how do you all cover the funding for this program?
11. Can you explain the radio-thon?
12. What is the course AFRO 127 - Alternative Spring Break?
13. Is there a penalty for students that do not show up on the day to leave for the trip?
14. How do you help students prepare for the week-long service project?
15. How do you think race and gender plays a role in their service projects or travel experience?
16. In what ways do you think students develop emotional intelligence during their ASB experience?
17. In what ways do you think students develop financial literacy/fiscal responsibility during their ASB experience?
18. In what ways do you think students develop cultural humility during their ASB experience?
19. In what ways do you think students develop critical thinking/problem solving skills during their ASB experience?
20. In what ways do you think students develop academic and social integration during their ASB experience?
21. Would you recommend other college students participate in ASB? Why or why not?

Thank you. Once the transcript is available, I will send it to you for you to confirm that what you said was recorded accurately.
Appendix E: HU ASB Interview Follow Up Survey

HU ASB Follow Up Survey Questions Protocol

Survey Description
This is a brief follow up survey is to help fill in a couple gaps. I just need to clarify a few demographic points and content questions. Thank you in advance for your participation and continued support.

Demographic Questions

Pseudonym (please select the fake name you chose for this study)

- Janel
- Angela
- Lily
- Lisa
- Joann
- Jay
- Nikky
- Jasmine
- Fortune

2019 ASB Site Location

- Albany, GA
- Baltimore, MD
- Birmingham, AL
- Camden, NJ
- Chicago, IL
- Flint/Detroit, MI
- Ghana
- Haiti
- Memphis, TN
- New Orleans, LA
- Puerto Rico
- Savannah, GA
- St. Thomas, V.I.
- Washington, D.C.
- Other: ________________
What is your race/ethnicity?
- Black: African
- Black: African American
- Black: Afro Latina
- Black: Caribbean or Caribbean American
- White/Caucasian
- Asian
- Native American
- Two or more races (at least one being Black)
- I prefer not to disclose

What is your gender?
- Female
- Male
- Gender fluid
- Gender Non-conforming
- Other
- I prefer not to disclose

Overall GPA Spring 2019?
Write in answer

Financial Aid Status
- I receive need based financial aid (federal loans)
- I receive merit based financial aid (scholarships, grants)
- I receive need based and merit based financial aid
- I do not receive financial aid

Are you a First-Generation Student?

“A first-generation college student is defined as a student whose parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have not completed a bachelor's degree. This means that you are the first in your family to attend a four-year college/university to attain a bachelor's degree” (Chapman University, 2020, para. 3.)
- Yes
- No

Classification at the end of Spring 2019
- Freshmen (0-29 hours)
- Sophomore (30-59 hours)
- Junior (60-89 hours)
- Senior (90-120 hours)
- Other: _____________

Age at time of interview (Dec 2019)
Projected Graduation Date by Semester and Year (ex. Spring 2020)

Follow Up Interview Questions

Why did you choose to attend Howard/a HBCU?

How does being enrolled at an HBCU impact the development of your identity as a Black woman?

As a result of your participation in ASB, do you think you're having a better experience as a student at Howard? Yes or No, and why?

Based on your leadership experience with ASB, do you think you've gained transferable skills that could be applied inside and outside of the classroom? Yes or No? And why or why not?
## Appendix F: Codebook

### Theory-Driven Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. EI - Self-Awareness</td>
<td>Student describes or gives examples of what she believes characterizes emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, or self-confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. EI - Self-Management</td>
<td>Student describes or gives examples of what she believes characterizes emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative, or optimism</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. EI - Social Awareness</td>
<td>Student describes or gives examples of what she believes characterizes empathy, organizational awareness, service orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. EI - Relationship Management</td>
<td>Student describes or gives examples of what she believes characterizes developing others, inspirational leadership, change catalyst, influence, conflict management, and teamwork/collaboration</td>
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</table>
| 5. Academic and Social Integration | Student or Associate Dean states or alludes to a belief that students experience an opportunity to make a connection between their academic and social experiences as a result of participating in ASB  
   a. Student describes opportunity to apply what they have learned to the community they service, (i.e., experiential learning or theory to practice)  
   b. Student expresses opportunity to be better connected to Howard based on ASB participation |
<p>| 6. Black Experience | Student makes a direct/indirect reference to specific elements of having an experience specific to being Black (i.e., culture, race, socio-economic status, language, other experiences outside of school) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</table>
| 7. Leadership Development | Student or Associate Dean makes direct/indirect reference to specific elements of students’ opportunity to lead, serve as a leader or enhance leadership skills  
  a. Student provides an example or experience in which a leadership role was held prior to ASB 2019  
  b. Student describes how they accepted a leadership role for ASB 2019 and or how they exhibited leadership skills during this experience |
| 8. Friendship | Student makes direct/indirect or general/specific references to building camaraderie or connections with peers |
| 9. Social Justice Orientation | Student states or alludes to being interested in community service, civic engagement, or social justice issues (i.e., volunteer service, social activism, community organizing, and civic advocacy) prior to their participation in ASB 2019 |
| 10. Resilience | Student refers to influences on her ability to continue despite adversity  
  a. Challenges with planning process  
  b. Challenges with peers during the week  
  c. Overcome personal challenges as it relates to academics |
| 11. Cultural Humility | Student describes or gives examples of what she believes characterizes the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures and understands their historical realities through the life-long process of self-reflection (Suffrin, 2019) |
| 12. Problem Solving | Student describes or gives examples of what she believes characterizes the process of actively and skillfully think outside of the box and create a solution to an unexpected problem or obstacle |
| 13. Event Planning | Student or Associate Dean makes general/specific references about planning ASB as an event for their peers including risk management |
| 14. Fiscal Responsibility | Student or Associate Dean makes direct/indirect references to opportunities to participate in fundraising activities or soliciting in-kind donations like food or lodging within consideration of a larger budget |
| 15. Professional Development | Student refers to influences on her future career goals as a result of participating in ASB |
Appendix G: Reflection Submissions

Angela

ASB Savannah, Georgia was an amazing experience. Our initiatives were homelessness and education. Throughout the week, worked closely with the Salvation Army, donation centers, and multiple public schools. Our involvement with the Salvation Army particularly was a highlight for me. Part of our work included collecting data to help improve the many services and programs offered by the Salvation Army, which meant interacting and engaging in conversation with many homeless individuals. The experience was incredibly heavy, witnessing the living conditions and hearing the personal stories of many. It was emotional, heart-rending, and incredibly humbling. I wished that there was something I could do to immediately improve the situations of those that I met and found myself somewhat frustrated by the fact that something like that is impossible. I promised many that I would uplift them in prayer, thinking that it was the very least I could do.

ASB reminded me of the significance of service and goodwill and reinforced my lasting commitment to them both. Though I know that there are no quick and instant solutions to large problems, such as homelessness, ASB inspired me to always seek whatever work I can do to help—any work, as no help is too small or unimportant. I am so grateful to have been able to participate this year and cannot wait for ASB 2020.

Joann

ASB Savannah, Georgia was an amazing experience. Our initiatives were homelessness and education. Throughout the week, worked closely with the Salvation Army, donation centers, and multiple public schools. Our involvement with the Salvation Army particularly was a highlight for me. Part of our work included collecting data to help improve the many services and programs offered by the Salvation Army, which meant interacting and engaging in conversation with many homeless individuals. The experience was incredibly heavy, witnessing the living conditions and hearing the personal stories of many. It was emotional, heart-rending, and incredibly humbling. I wished that there was something I could do to immediately improve the situations of those that I met and found myself somewhat frustrated by the fact that something like that is impossible. I promised many that I would uplift them in prayer, thinking that it was the very least I could do.

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Lily
Flint, Michigan

Flint doesn’t have clean water. Flint doesn’t have clean water. Five years and millions of dollars later and Flint, Michigan still doesn’t have clean water. Water poisoned by lead, bacteria, and greed flows through the pipelines of Black neighborhoods, through the faucets of Black households, pours into cups held by Black hands, flows through the bloodstream of Black babies and wells up in the eyelids of Black mothers, Black fathers, Black people until the tears overflow and poisoned water is running down Black faces.

Water is a basic need for all life. Poisoned water taints every single aspect of one’s life. Affects how you live. Or don’t. Black people in Flint were drinking poisoned water, which has caused immediate, noticeable suffering to the community as well as long-term physical and psychological consequences that are not yet fully known.

This past week I was blessed to have served my brothers and sisters in Flint, working to combat environmental injustice and illiteracy through restoration and youth empowerment, as part of Howard University’s Alternative Spring Break program. The photos/videos in this post might not appear to have anything to do with water, but they have EVERYTHING to do with water, and yet so much more. Thank you Flint, for allowing me to step into your city and drink your bottled water and spend time with your communities. Thanks to Ebenezer Ministries, First Trinity MBC, AARP, Genessee County CARD, The Muslim House, Jaden Smith, Flint Crepe Co., and Flint Community Schools for all that you do to care for our people. Thank you to my wonderful participants for the sincerity with which you worked and the energy with which you played. Thank you to...
Appendix H: HBCU Alternative Spring Break Report

HBCU ASB Benchmark Report

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2019), there are 101 recognized HBCUs in the U.S. in which 20 have an Alternative Spring Break (ASB) or service trip listed on their official website.

- HBCUs with ASB: 19.6%
- HBCUs without ASB: 80.4%

Howard University is the only HBCU with a robust Alternative Spring Break Program; 21 sites (domestic and abroad), FREE for students, with 25 years of uninterrupted service.

HBCUs with ASB or any service trip archived

- Albany State University
- Bowie State University
- Florida Memorial University
- Hampton University
- Harris-Stowe State University
- Howard University
- Huston-Tillotson University
- Jackson State University
- Mississippi Valley State University
- Morehouse College
- Morehouse School of Medicine
- North Carolina A & T State University
- North Carolina Central University
- Savannah State University
- Spelman College
- University of Maryland- Eastern Shore
- University of the District of Columbia
- Univ of the Virgin Islands - St. Thomas
- Univ of the Virgin Islands - Albert A. Sheen
- Virginia State University

NCES List of HBCUs in Alphabetical Order (100) retrieved 12/18/2019
https://nces.ed.gov/COLLEGENAVIGATOR/?s=all&sp=4&pg=1
Morris Brown & Knoxville College not included on NCES database

To develop this report, I reviewed all HBCU official websites and used all the information provided to complete these fields of information.
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<th>HBCUs in Alphabetical Order</th>
<th>ASB (Y/N)</th>
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<th>Number of International Sites</th>
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*ASB under ULead in Architecture*

no evidence it still exists
References


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Vita

Aeryel “Sunshine” Williams was born in Cincinnati, Ohio on June 10, 1990. She attended four high schools, alternating between Atlanta, Georgia and Houston, Texas. Eventually graduating Cum Laude from Westfield High School, where she was involved with several community service initiatives, honor clubs, dual enrollment, and multiple leadership positions.

Aeryel continued serving in leadership positions throughout her entire undergraduate career at the University of Central Florida. She was recognized with the Freshman, Sophomore, and Junior Outstanding Leader Awards, as well as Woman of the Year Award, and Who’s Who Amongst Students at American Colleges and Universities at the conclusion of her senior year. Her most prized leadership role was serving as the President of the Caribbean Students’ Association because she worked her way up and really enjoyed all the exposure to her culture and the many opportunities to travel provided through this organization. Additionally, she was awarded the scholarship for most involved freshman and several additional scholarships for her academic and campus involvement. She is also a proud graduate of the LEAD Scholars program, a co-curricular leadership development program. She graduated from the University of Central Florida in 2012 with a bachelor’s degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with dual minors in Leadership Studies and Marketing. And in 2015 she graduated with a Master’s of Nonprofit Management with a concentration in Higher Education from the University of Central Florida and a Master’s in College Student Affairs with a concentration in Conflict Resolution from Nova Southeastern University.

During her time at Louisiana State University, she served as the President of the Black Graduate and Professional Student Association (BGPSA), a Student Government Senator representing the Graduate School, a Doctoral Representative for the Higher Education Student
and Professional Association (HESPA) and a member of the Vice President of Student Affairs Student Cabinet. And she served as an event chair for the Annual MLK Jr. Week Commemorative Celebration Committee and had the honor of bringing Shaun King and John Carlos to campus. Aeryel is also a published author, *Broke Girlz Travel Too*, was self-published in 2017 during the second semester of her doctoral program. The premise of this book influenced her dissertation research. Other areas of research that interest her include the following: college-based travel programs, academic support for Black women, first-generation college students, access and retention efforts for underrepresented student populations, graduate student success, and mentoring and representation for Black students.

For the past ten years, she has worked in higher education across academic and student affairs. But Aeryel pursued a doctoral degree because her long-term professional career goal is to be a Vice President of Student Affairs. Prior to achieving that goal, she hopes to have a full career in the following functional areas, diversity, equity and inclusion, African American cultural centers, study abroad, student leadership and activities, and career services and development. Additionally, she would like to teach First-Year Experience courses. She hopes to have a long-standing career in higher education and student affairs.

She anticipates graduating from Louisiana State University with a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Research with a concentration in Higher Education Administration in August 2020. She hopes to continue her research endeavors by becoming a respected scholar-practitioner in higher education and student affairs.