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STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON STUDY ABROAD:
THE CASE OF LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY'S SUMMER INTERNSHIPS
IN THE FRENCH ALPS

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 Department of French Studies

by
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ABSTRACT

While many studies have been conducted on study abroad programs, few have sought to examine the inner workings of a short-term, non-traditional (non-classroom based) program, particularly from the participants' point-of-view. This in-depth case study explores a short-term (4-week) cultural and linguistic internship program, "LSU in the French Alps," as well as the perspectives of four program participants. This research was conducted during four phases of the study abroad experience: the pre-departure orientation (4 days on LSU's main campus), the in-country stay (4 weeks in the French Alps), re-entry into the United States (first 10 days upon return), and post study (6 months after re-entry).

Extensive participant observation was essential to gaining an "emic," or "insider," view of the program, its surroundings and its participants. Data sources included individual interviews with participants, numerous questionnaires about their experiences, participants' reflective papers and their final video project. The fieldwork conducted in this study uncovered details about the immigration history among the Ubaye Valley, parts of Mexico, and southern Louisiana. The development of this program abroad and its founding principles and goals were also unearthed.

Findings revealed that the lack of structure and organization of the pre-departure orientation left the participants anxious and unprepared for the program's internships. The participants suggested ways to improve the pre-departure orientation and the program in general. They experienced minimal culture shock in France. However, some stress within the group was reported, as the participants grew frustrated with the constant interaction with one another. They perceived numerous benefits and positive effects from studying abroad, including in all areas of development which were investigated in the study (academic, personal, career, cultural and

linguistic). Every participant believed the most substantial growth occurred in his or her cultural acquisition, followed by personal development. They also revealed what and how they learned from their experiences during the program's internships and their outside-the-classroom contacts with host nationals and the French culture. The results have opened up new possibilities for inquiry into non-traditional programs and their connections to experiential learning.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Current State of Study Abroad in the United States

The discussion of study abroad¹ programs, international programs abroad and international education in general has become more prevalent in the field of educational research. In the past decade, numerous study abroad organizations and research groups have been established or have expanded; in the meantime, the U.S. government has taken an active role in promoting study abroad opportunities to students in this country. In fact, in 2004, the U.S. Congress established the 17-member “Lincoln Commission” (the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program) to discuss U.S. college and university study abroad programs and how best to expand participation and develop new types of programs. According to then Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr., at the time a ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, study abroad benefits its participants and our country in several ways:

Study abroad is not merely a life-changing experience for those who pursue it; as the world becomes smaller, it is essential that our citizens understand other nations. To maintain our global leadership, we must give our students greater international educational opportunities. (AIFS, 2009, para. 3)²

In addition, at the time, the committee’s Chairman, Senator Richard G. Lugar, discussed the advantages of international exchanges and how such experiences add to our country’s security and competitiveness, among other rewards:

Today, America's national security and our competitive ability are increasingly dependent on our relations and understanding of the rest of the world. Educational exchanges with foreign countries and the study of foreign languages are essential to our cultural diplomacy and an excellent way for young people to gain valuable experience that will aid them throughout their lives. (AIFS, 2009, para. 4)³

¹ The definition of “study abroad” used for this dissertation stems from Kitsantas (2004): “all educational programs that take place outside the geographical boundaries of the country of origin” (p. 441).

² AIFS stand for the “American Institute for Foreign Study.” Senator Biden made this statement about study abroad during his work with the Lincoln Commission (2004 or 2005). This information was accessed in 2009 and is available online at: <http://www.aifs.com/future.asp>.

³ Senator Lugar also made this statement during his 2004-2005 committee work. It was accessed in 2009.

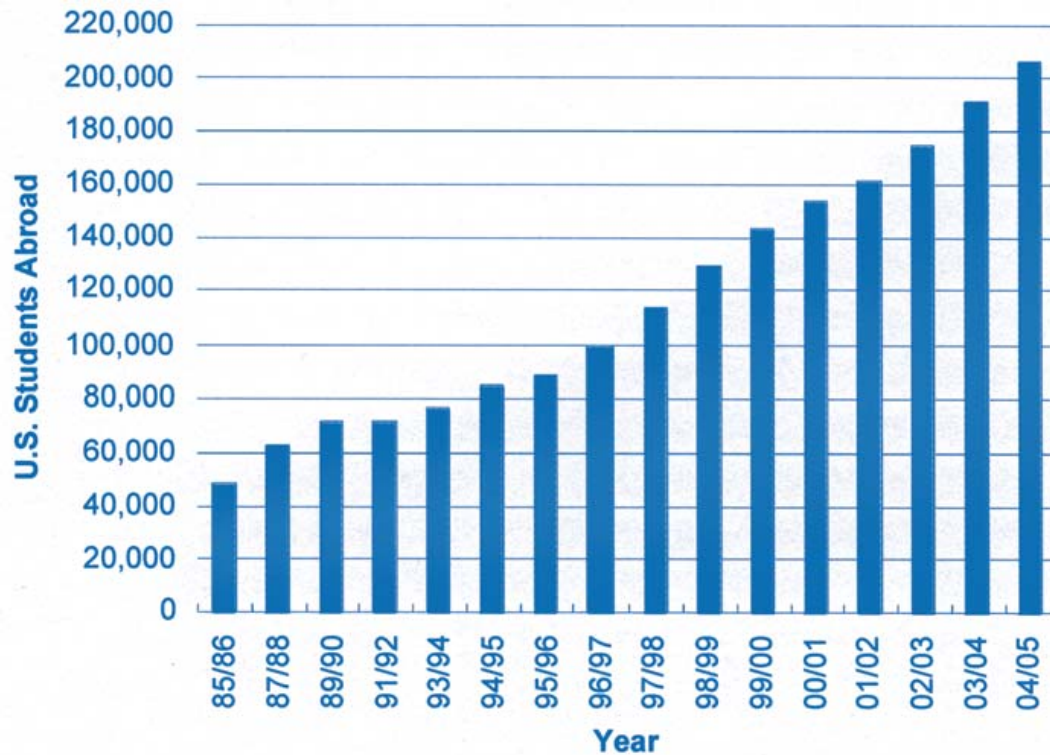
Furthermore, the year 2006 was declared the “Year of Study Abroad,” as detailed in a resolution designated by the U.S Senate and study abroad directors from across the United States (Dessoff, 2006, p. 21). This declaration is not surprising, since American students have been studying abroad in record numbers. Every year since 1985, the Institute of International Education (IIE), in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, has published its *Open Doors Report* on international educational exchanges⁴ (IIE, 2009). In the report for 2009,⁵ the total number of students studying abroad via an accredited U.S. institution reached 262,416, an 8.5% increase from the previous year (IIE, 2009, para. 1). To put this number in perspective, just before the research for this study was begun, the *Open Doors* press release of 2005⁶ indicated that in 2003-2004, 191,321 American students studied abroad (IIE, 2005b). In just a period of four years, study abroad participation rose over 71,000 (37%) students nationwide. In fact, the *Open Doors* press release of 2009 indicated that participation in study abroad has increased four-fold in the past two decades: “four times as many U.S. students [are] participating in study abroad in 2007/08 than in 1987/88” (IIE, para. 1). Finally, another publication for the IIE, Obst, Bhandari and Witherell (2007, p. 6), summarized the upward trend in participation in study abroad programs by American college students. The table below shows the increase of such participation over nearly two decades:

⁴ Reports include both figures on the number of international students who studied in the United States and American students who participated in abroad program outside the U.S. See <http://www.opendoors.iienetwork.org/> for specific details (press releases, data charts, etc.) when *Open Doors* reports are mentioned.

⁵ *Open Doors 2009* was released in November 16, 2009. These numbers reflected American student participation in study abroad for the 2007-2008 academic year. For a copy of the 2009 press release, see <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/?p=150651>.

⁶ For a copy of the 2005 press release, see <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/?p=69735>.

Table 1.1 Upward Trend of U.S. Students Studying Abroad, 1985-2005⁷



The college experiences of more and more students are being influenced by foreign study. With such a staggering increase in participation in these programs, it is essential to further investigate the recent trends and current state of study abroad for American college students.

With these statistics, a question to pose is, “Why such an increase?” In the *Open Doors 2005* press release, IIE President Allan E. Goodman stated, “many U.S. campuses now include international education as part of their core educational mission, recognizing that increasing the global competence among the next generation is a national priority and an academic responsibility” (IIE, 2005b, para. 4). This mentality, bolstered by the necessity to produce future leaders who demonstrate the international skills to compete in the global market and work with diverse populations, has prompted institutions of higher education to strengthen their

⁷ Courtesy of Obst, Bhandari and Witherell (2007, p. 6): http://www.iienetwork.org/file_depot/0-10000000/0-10000/1710/folder/62450/IIE+Study+Abroad+White+Paper+I.pdf.

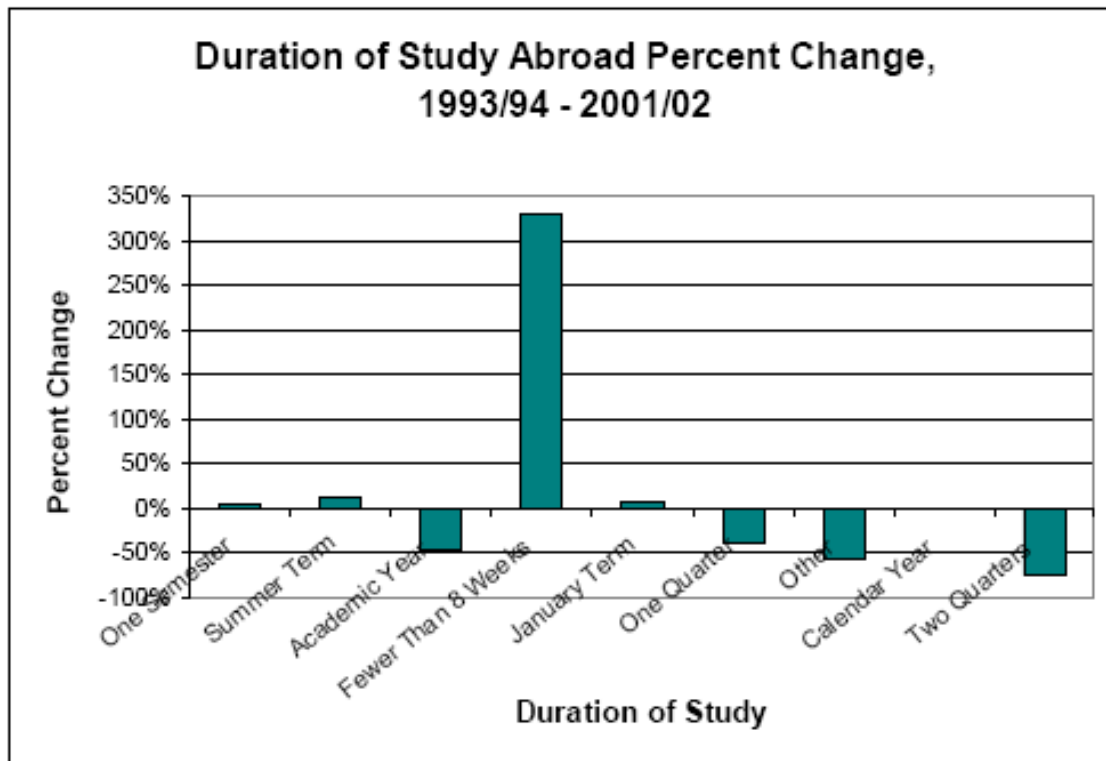
commitment to international education. American undergraduates, instead of fearing the experience of study or travel abroad in an unstable world, are stepping up to that challenge in record numbers.

Trends toward Short-term Programs

However, one should not assume that, simply because American students are studying abroad in greater numbers, they are remaining at their destinations for longer periods of time. On the contrary, according to *Open Doors 2009* (IIE, 2009a), although data shows that American students continue to study abroad in larger numbers, they are participating in programs of shorter duration. The report indicated that the majority of U.S. students (56.3%) who participated in study abroad in 2007-2008 went on programs of “short-term” duration,⁸ which was slightly higher (about 1%) than in 2006-2007. According to Dwyer and Peters (2004), the “junior-year abroad” concept represented 72% of most study abroad participation in the 1950s and 1960s, but was only 20% of the programs in the 1990s. Furthermore, *Open Doors 2005* reported that just over 14% of all American study abroad students in 1993-1994 chose full-year programs, which decreased to 6% in 2003-2004. *Open Doors 2009* found that the percentage of study abroad participants who spent an entire academic or calendar year abroad decreased to just 4.2% of all study abroad participants in 2007-2008. Table 1.2 illustrates the duration of study abroad percent change from 1993-1994 to 2001-2002. Quite apparent is the huge increase of over 300% in the percentage of participants who have been choosing short-term programs (fewer than eight weeks).

⁸ In this dissertation, the term “short-term study abroad” refers to a program with duration of eight weeks or less, during the summer, January term or academic year (IIE, 2009a). “Mid-length” study abroad is one or two quarters of duration up to one semester and “long-term” is an academic or calendar year abroad (IIE, 2009a).

Table 1.2 Duration of Study Abroad Percent Change⁹



It is logical to question why participants are choosing these programs of shorter duration. The *Open Doors* report of 2005 offered up the top explanation for the emergence of short-term programs—funding issues. Dwyer and Peters (2004) reported that students had chosen shorter programs because they were unable to afford to participate in programs lasting a semester or a year. Also, students seemed to be choosing shorter programs because they had fewer difficulties with inflexible home-campus curricula (particularly in the sciences and professional programs, such as nursing and education), which required them to be on campus during the academic year.

Frequently, students cited family obligations or employment responsibilities as a barrier to study abroad participation or as a reason for choosing a short-term program over a longer one. Dwyer and Peters (2004) affirmed that short-term study abroad programs had several advantages for today's students, including increased accessibility due to lower program costs and time

⁹ Please see The Lincoln Commission (2004, E-6): <http://www.lincolncommission.org/lincolnbriefingbook.pdf>.

commitment. In instances where students were forced to deal with the strict semester curriculum requirements of their home institutions, family obligations, or the need for full- or part-time employment, shorter programs offered a taste of the international experience. Regardless of the shorter duration, these programs still provided some level of personal, academic, linguistic or career development. Furthermore, the *Open Doors 2009* press release projected that the slowing economy of 2008-2009 would have a lasting impact on study abroad trends in the coming years, and that American colleges and universities will have to renew their commitment to study abroad for their student body:

While this data reflects academic year 2007/08, prior to the economic downturn, it is likely that trends toward less expensive destinations and shorter stays will continue, reflecting the effects of the economy. Anecdotally, student interest in study abroad has remained high in the past year despite financial challenges that might keep some from participating, and campus leaders have expressed an interest in trying to make sure that international opportunities remain available. Many are placing an emphasis on sustaining financial assistance for study abroad. (IIE, 2009a, para. 2)

It should be noted that despite the growing numbers in participation, the number of students studying abroad (prior to 2007) represented less than 1% of all students enrolled in U.S. institutes of higher education (Obst, Bhandari, & Witherell, 2007). In fact, at the end of the 1990s, nearly 48% of college-bound high school students indicated an interest in studying abroad during their university experience (Wheeler, 2000). However, as stated earlier, it was found that only about one percent of college students follow through on their indicated interest and actually do study abroad (Wheeler, 2000). Therefore, numerous scholars (Bollag, 2003; Desruisseaux, 2000; and McMurthie, 2005) concur that more attention needs to be given to the continued development and sustainment of international education and programs of foreign study. Thus, institutions of higher learning and international education organizations must continue their efforts to promote these programs. This can be facilitated by further research on topics central to

study abroad (student motivation, funding opportunities, career and language development, program duration, program types and destinations).¹⁰ More specifically, with their increasing popularity, short-term abroad programs have begun to play a more vital role in international education as a whole; therefore, it is also essential to bring issues central to short-term study abroad to the forefront of educational research.

Emergent Programs Abroad

The most understudied, yet increasingly popular programs of non-traditional structures, such as field studies, internships and work-abroad, necessitate further research. In the *Open Doors 2005* report (IIE, 2005a), a special segment on study abroad internship and work-abroad programs was included in the research data. The report¹¹ highlighted that the total number of American college students who participated in “newly designed” programs of “for-credit” internships or work-abroad programs was up 52% in 2002-2003 from 1999-2000. In fact, Dwyer (2004a) found that “participation in internships has increased tenfold across the five decades of study abroad. Participating in an internship is having an increasingly stronger impact on students’ career directions” (p. 20). Examples of such short-term, for-credit programs include volunteer programs for humanities majors, teach-abroad programs for education majors, internships in foreign businesses for business majors, volunteer programs or research projects for sociology majors and volunteer programs at health clinics in underprivileged countries for majors in the health sciences. Rai (2004) mentioned specifically that short-term teaching abroad (generally ESL positions), volunteer or service abroad and unpaid internships are on the rise: “[a] growing number of American students are obtaining internships in foreign countries. This increase has occurred even though most of the internships are unpaid and students pay to work in

¹⁰ For more information, see Holland & Kedia (2003), Marcum & Roochnik (2001) and McMurthie (2007).

¹¹ See <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/?p=70971> (IIE 2005a) for more information.

another country” (p. 213). Rai (2004) also stated that the trend continued across virtually all disciplines, including engineering, journalism, business, education and law. These short-term experiences are seen as a supplement to a résumé and, when applicable, they often indicate improved skills in a foreign language.

These programs are often non-traditionally structured and, while they may include a component of classroom instruction, generally strive to give the participant a real-life or hands-on experience in which the student may encounter the language and culture in its natural setting. While it is commonly assumed that the study abroad experience improves student knowledge and benefits its participants, researchers and institutions continue to ask such questions as: In what ways and how significantly are participants influenced by their study abroad experience? What motivates participants to go abroad and why do they choose the programs in which they enroll? Why are students choosing to participate in programs of short-term duration and how are these programs affecting students’ college careers and lives? However, since there is a lack of educational research in the area of short-term, “non-traditional” programs, little information is available to answer these questions on the potential effect of such an abroad experience on participants. The study and subsequent findings discussed in this dissertation address this gap in research and add to the educational research about the effects of an academic (for-credit), short-term internship program abroad.

Historical Ties of Ubaye-Mexico-Louisiana

In the fall semester of 2004, I learned about a recently developed study abroad program at Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge which embraced many of the progressive (short-term and non-traditional) aspects of study abroad in the twenty-first century. In the preliminary stages of research, I learned much about the program and its history. In the summer

of 2001, the Department of French Studies at Louisiana State University introduced a new program for advanced French-language students; this program, however, was unlike anything that had been previously conceived. The program, “LSU in the French Alps,”¹² was specifically designed as a short-term cultural and linguistic immersion for French majors and minors. For almost a month each summer, a small group of LSU French-language students have the unique opportunity to travel to Barcelonnette, France, a village in a remote valley¹³ in rural France, to participate in cultural/linguistic internships at local shops. They also spend time hiking, biking, eating, and speaking with their local hosts. Students reside in a lodge on the outskirts of the village of Barcelonnette with their instructor from LSU, who serves as an on-site director and accompanies the students on most or all the activities and excursions.

Mrs. Seola “CeCe” Arnaud-Edwards, a woman with familial ties to the Ubaye Valley-Louisiana immigration history and one of the founding members of the program in the French Alps, as well as LSU faculty members served as resources for information concerning the program. The program was created to be a live connection between LSU/Louisiana and the Ubaye Valley, which share many historical ties and stories of immigration.

The Location of the Village of Barcelonnette and the Ubaye Valley of France

The village of Barcelonnette is the home base of the “LSU in the French Alps” program. Barcelonnette is the largest village and the cultural, commercial center of the Ubaye Valley, which is located in the Provence-Alps-Côte d’Azur region of France.¹⁴ In Figure 1.1, one can

¹² The program was originally called “LSU in the Ubaye Valley,” but since the Ubaye Valley is not a well-known location, the program name was changed to “LSU in the French Alps” in order to improve awareness in its location in France.

¹³ For more details, see the maps included on the next few pages of this dissertation.

¹⁴ For a more detailed view of the location of Barcelonnette and the Ubaye Valley, see the maps in Figures 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3.

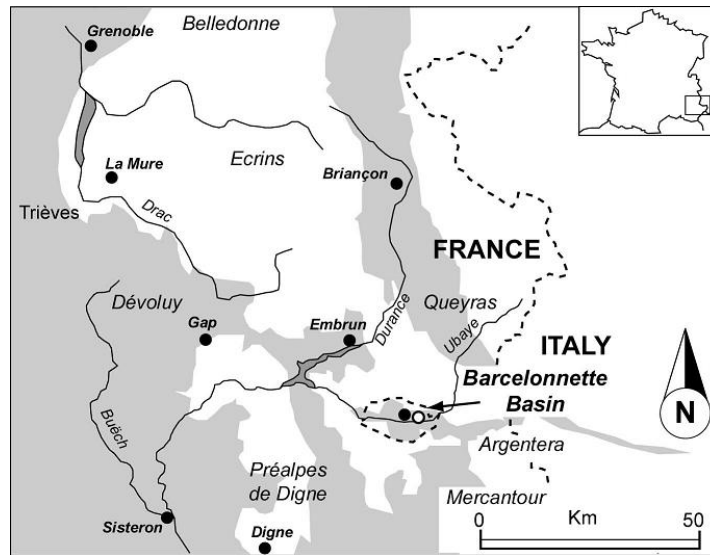


Figure 1.1 Map of the Ubaye Valley of France¹⁵

see the Barcelonnette Basin near the center of the map, which is within about an hour's mountain drive from the city of Gap. Figure 1.2 situates the Provence-Alps-Côte d'Azur region in France and Europe and provides a close-up map of the region (in the circular area). The valley is strategically located within relative proximity to Nice, Grenoble and Marseille, France, as well as Cuneo, Italy; however, with its location in the middle of the very mountainous Southern Alps, travel to these cities can be long and treacherous during the winter months. Therefore, Barcelonnette and the Ubaye Valley are known for being remote, although quaint and picturesque. In its official English-language brochure, the *Communauté des Communes Vallée de l'Ubaye* ("The Community of Municipalities of the Ubaye Valley")¹⁶ describes the Ubaye Valley with great fondness:

¹⁵ Map courtesy of the Université de Caen Basse-Normandie (2009):

http://www.unicaen.fr/mountainrisks/spip/IMG/jpg/Fig_1_01_Alpes_du_Sud.jpg.

¹⁶ The *Communauté* works in conjunction with the Office of Tourism from each respective village in the Valley, each of the mayor's offices, the well-respected *Musée de la Vallée à Barcelonnette* ("Museum of the Valley in Barcelonnette") and the *Sabença de la Valeia* (*Connaissance de la Vallée*, or "the Knowledge of the Valley"), which is a scholarly society and research association and a small publication house with its headquarters in Barcelonnette. The *Sabença* was founded in 1980 and works to study and report, present, or publish historical and cultural information about the Valley. It has published several books and edits the journal *Toute la Vallée—La vie en Ubaye* ("Everything about the Valley—Life in Ubaye").

It is one of France's hidden treasures. From its source near the Italian border to the Serre Ponçon lake in the west, the Ubaye River is bordered by stunning scenery. Over 60 kilometres long, it passes towering mountain peaks, lush alpine meadows and delightful small towns and villages. Blessed with a climate that combines the blue skies of the south coast with a freshness that comes with altitude, the Ubaye Valley has the perfect conditions for all types of outdoor activities.¹⁷ (2008b, p. 2)

While the Ubaye Valley may be considered by many as a hidden treasure in France, it is also known for its outdoor activities since it is a haven for hiking, mountain biking, competitive cycling,¹⁸ whitewater rafting, skiing, mountain parasailing, paragliding and much more. It is also known for being the gateway of France's Mercantour National Park.



Figure 1.2 Map of France with Overlay of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region¹⁹

¹⁷ For more information, see the official brochure from the *Communauté* for the Ubaye Valley:

http://www.ubaye.com/telechargements/brochures/Ubaye_UK.pdf.

¹⁸ The 16th leg of the 2008 *Tour de France* ended in Jausiers in the Ubaye Valley. With a population of just over 1,000 inhabitants, Jausiers was the smallest town to host in the *Tour de France*.

¹⁹ Map courtesy of the *Communauté* (2008c): <http://www.ubaye.com/fr/page.aspx?IdPage=41#>.

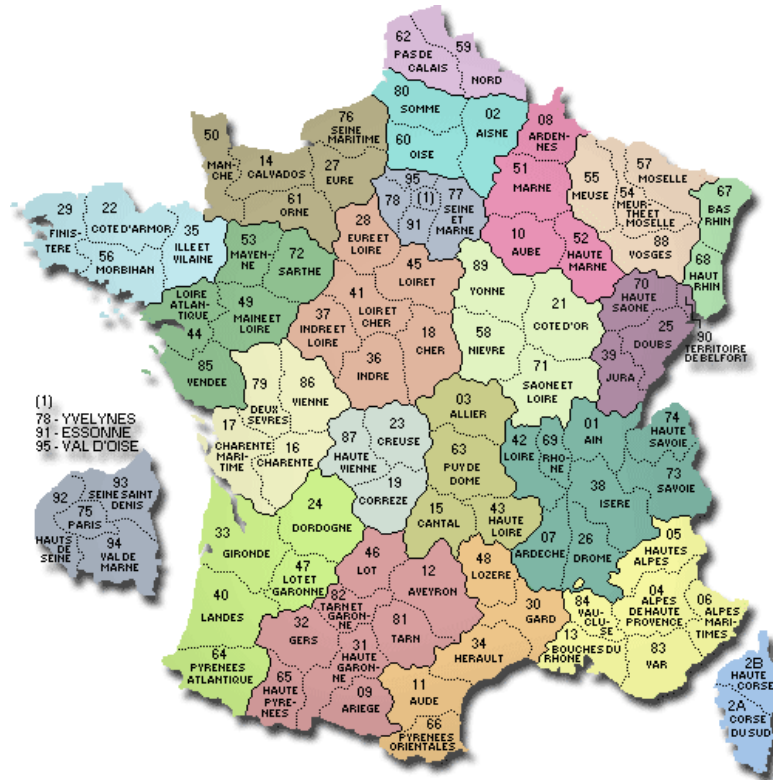


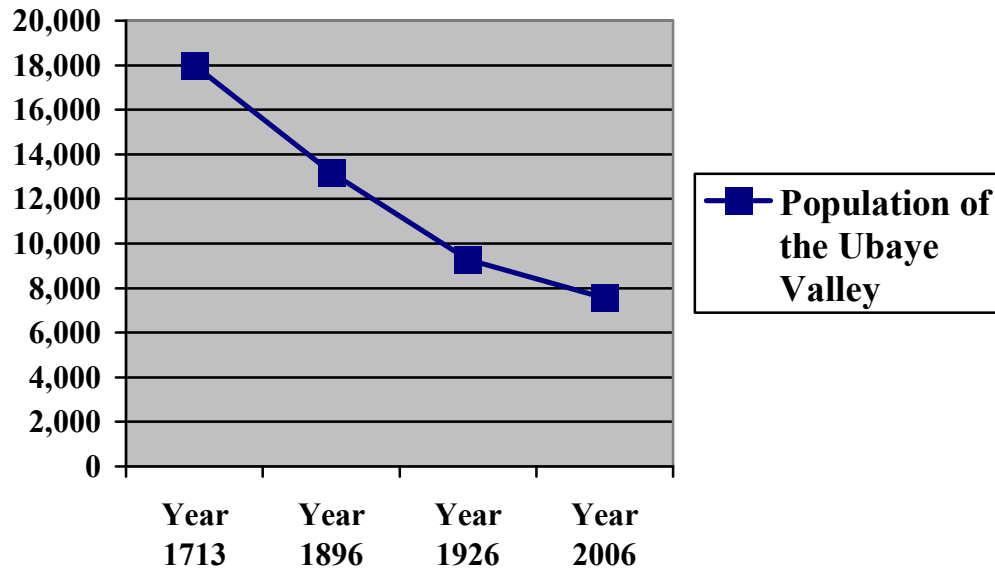
Figure 1.3 Map of the Departments and Regions of France²⁰

Currently, the “capital” of the Ubaye Valley, Barcelonnette, has a population of about 2,900 residents and sits at an elevation of approximately 3,717 feet (*Communauté*, 2008a). Over the centuries, the Ubaye Valley itself has experienced a continual decrease in population (as shown in Table 1.3), from about 18,000 inhabitants in 1713 to 13,200 in 1896, then to 9,271 in 1926 and to just 7,569 in 2006²¹. The reason for this decline in population can be summed up in one word—emigration.

²⁰ This map can be found at: <http://www.infoconcert.com/style/festival/departements.png> (InfoConcert, 2009). The Ubaye Valley, including the villages most significant for the LSU program (Barcelonnette and Jausiers), are located in the French department of “Les Alpes de Haute Provence” (“The Alps of High Provence”), which can be found on this map in the far southeast corner of France, labeled number “04”, “Alpes de Haute Provence.”

²¹ Information gathered from the main database of historical information from the main website for the *Communauté* (2008b).

Table 1.3 Declining Population of the Ubaye Valley, 1713-2006



Stories of Emigration from the Ubaye Valley

Before the twentieth century, the principal source of revenue for the valley was from the textile business, particularly wool and silk. Peddlers and merchants from the Valley used to travel near and far to sell their products, from across Provence to the far extremes of all Western Europe. In general, agriculture has always been a large part of life and survival in the Ubaye Valley.²² On its website, The Agency for the Touristic Development of the Alps of Haute-Provence (*L'Agence de Développement Touristique des Alpes de Haute-Provence*) introduced Barcelonnette as “a land of emigration” and stated that “a landmark in its history was the adventure of the Barcelonnettes [the residents of Barcelonnette] (2009).”²³ The Office of Tourism in Barcelonnette also commented on the journeys of its former residents: “Barcelonnette

²² Although I gathered much of this information during my fieldwork in the Ubaye Valley, much historical information was reaffirmed and further gathered from several texts published in the Valley, including *Villas en Ubaye: Retour au Mexique* [*Villas in Ubaye: A Return to Mexico*] (Association pour le Patrimoine de Provence, 2002); Arnaud, F., Charpenel, A., Martin, L., Signoret, A., Borel, E. (Eds), (2004); Cugnet, G. (2005, Automne); Hippolyte, J.-C., & Hippolyte, L. (2005, Automne); Homps, H. (2005, Automne); and *Toute la Vallée: La Vie en Ubaye*. (2005, Automne).

²³ This information can be found on the Agency’s English-language website about the region: <http://uk.alpes-haute-provence.com/geographie/valleesalpines.htm>.

is by nature a land of travels. This land from where our ancestors left to discover the world, cross the oceans [. . .] this was the outcome of the travel of the pilgrims” (*Communauté*, 2008a).²⁴ In the on-line magazine *Mountain Passions*, the seasonal migratory habits of the Barcelonnettes are discussed in detail:

The people of the high valleys, who endured long periods of isolation each winter, were able to survive by providing the timber, wool, animal hides and silk needed by the people in the plains below. In an effort to improve things the men would leave the valleys each year, as soon as the passes reopened, to find work in the towns and cities, returning with their earnings at the first signs of winter snows. During their long absences the women would remain to work the land and weave the wool and hemp. Thus was born the tradition of seasonal migration in the mountain villages. (Moss, 2009)²⁵

In fact, when one sets foot in the village of Barcelonnette, it becomes immediately apparent that there is a certain, albeit odd, fascination with Mexico. After talking to some of the town’s people and learning more about the Ubaye Valley’s history, one comes to understand this fascination as a dedication to its people’s history. About two centuries ago, many Ubayens embarked on their seasonal migration and left permanently—for Mexico. Specifically, the name “Arnaud” can be heard repeatedly in conversations about Ubayen emigration history, and upon researching the topic, the name becomes more and more significant and synonymous with the overall story of Ubayen emigration:

The Arnaud brothers (who pioneered the emigration) arrived in Mexico in 1818, and within fifty years owned numerous shops, a network of sales representatives in every country and outlets in Europe. Their success attracted friends and family from Ubaye to cross the Atlantic and join their compatriots. Little by little, the new entrepreneurs became industrialists rather than shopkeepers, and controlled the textile industry in Mexico. They also built up a solid financial structure and established numerous banking institutions, even putting their signature at the foot of bank notes.

[. . .] All the emigrants remained deeply attached to their valley of origin. Called “the Barcelonnettes” in Mexico, they were however, “the Americans” or “Mexicans” to

²⁴ I translated from French into English all the texts cited from the *Communauté*. See the Office of Tourism’s information about Barcelonnette on the main Ubaye website from the *Communauté*, accessed at <http://www.ubaye.com/fr/page.aspx?IdPage=28>.

²⁵ Information about the Mexican Festival accessed via Internet at http://www.mountainpassions.com/summer/ubaye_festival_mexique.htm.

those who had stayed in Ubaye. Those who had achieved success returned to live in France, to Paris or the Côte d'Azur. They also built some superb homes in Ubaye – the Mexican villas. They invested in public buildings such as founding the Barcelonnette Bank, developing public transport, the Town Hall, public squares and the reconstruction of the church. There are many contemporary reminders of what the “Mexicans” brought to Barcelonnette. (Moss, 2009, para. 5-6).

As noted in the above citation, the emigrants were very proud of their Ubayen heritage and remained forever connected to their homeland; however, they were labeled as outsiders in many of the areas they settled. In Mexico, they were never considered truly Mexican and were called, “the Barcelonnettes”; upon their return to Ubaye, they were labeled as “the Americans” or “the Mexicans” by their fellow Ubayens who had never left the valley. Hippolyte-Piolle (2006) summarizes the grandeur of the emigration from Ubaye to Mexico: “[e]migration to Mexico reached such a magnitude that most people with origins from Ubaye had some ‘Mexican’ cousins” (p. 5).

Indeed, “the Mexicans” made quite an impact on the Ubaye Valley upon their return. In its main English-language brochure, the *Communauté* of the Valley has also included historical information relating to the emigration of its people and the curious Mexican villas that appear in the valley:

In Barcelonnette, and throughout the Valley, are numerous grand Mexican-style villas, some of which are now museums and hotels. These were built by locals who went to Mexico in the late 19th century and returned to the Ubaye having made their fortunes. The Valley has six museums, each one focused on a particular aspect of Ubayen life. There is also the recently opened ‘Maison du bois’ which combines games, interactive exhibitions about the wood industry and a children’s playground, with demonstrations and walks. (*Communauté*, 2008b, p. 22)²⁶

In fact, many tourists are curious and full of wonder when they come upon true Mexican villas in the middle of a remote mountainous valley in France:

Before going on the mountain paths, take a little time to visit this oh-so colorful town [Barcelonnette]. On *l’Avenue de la Liberté*, you should be puzzled by the authentic

²⁶ Accessed at http://www.ubaye.com/telechargements/brochures/Ubaye_UK.pdf.

Mexican haciendas. These haciendas and their parks were built between 1880 and 1930 by emigrants who returned from Mexico. This amazing story can be read in the Sapinière villa, which is a museum dedicated to the Ubye Valley.²⁷ (Webtourist, n.d.)

The emigrants from Ubye settled in numerous areas of Mexico. Several textile factories were opened by the Barcelonnettes in the state of Veracruz, Mexico. The Santa Rosa textile factory in the *Ciudad Mendoza* (Mendoza City) was opened in the 1880s and is still operating today (Homps, 2004). In the spring of 2001, this factory, in the presence of over 40 members of the *Sabença* organization from Ubye, opened a new community museum dedicated in part to the Ubye-Mexico story of emigration.²⁸



Figure 1.4 Map of Mexico (State of Veracruz Highlighted)²⁹

²⁷ Accessed at <http://www.webtourist.net/france/barcelonnette/tourist-information.phtml>.

²⁸ Figures 1.4 and 1.5 highlight the state of Veracruz. In Figure 1.5 in the central-western area of the region (left, center area of the highlighted state of Veracruz on the map), one can see the cities of Orizaba (also the location for the Valley of Orizaba) and Ciudad Mendoza.

²⁹ Map courtesy of the Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed at <http://media-2.web.britannica.com/eb-media/55/99155-004-D79DC0E3.gif>. From this map, one can see that the state of Veracruz, Mexico is located on the Gulf of Mexico, which provided easy access for the Ubyen-Mexican immigrants to travel to southern Louisiana.



Figure 1.5 Map of the State of Veracruz, Mexico³⁰

In November 2004, the village of Barcelonnette and the Valle de Bravo, Mexico³¹ became “sister cities,” or joined in *jumelage* or “twinning.” They chose to become partnered in order to work toward reaffirming the historic and cultural ties that have united their lands since the era when the first emigrants from Barcelonnettes arrived in Mexico. Furthermore, with assistance from the Museum of the Ubaye Valley, the Office of Tourism of Barcelonnette described Valle de Bravo, Mexico as:

One of the most beautiful and most picturesque villages in Mexico, standing at 2,000 meters and with a population of 12,000 residents (outside the tourist season), [. . .] today the quality of its landscape and mountain ranges, the diversity of touristic, cultural and sport activities today also link the two cities [Barcelonnette and Valle de Bravo] in their “twinning.”³² (*Alliance Réseaux*, 2008a, para. 10)

³⁰ Map accessed at <http://www.explorandomexico.com/map-gallery/1/54/> (2009).

³¹ See Figures 1.6 and 1.7 for maps of Ubayens’ location in Valle de Bravo.

³² I translated from French (and sometimes Spanish) into English all texts cited from the *Alliance Réseaux*. This quote was found on the web link specifically for the Barcelonnette-Mexico connection: http://www.barcelonnette.com/fr/il4-3_p50-barcelonnette-et-le-mexique.aspx. Also see the Office of Tourism’s website dedicated to Barcelonnette (www.barcelonnette.com), and affiliated with *Alliance Réseaux*.



Figure 1.6 Map of Mexico Highlighting the State of Mexico³³

In conjunction with the twinning, a colloquium for the advancement of research of the Ubaye-Mexico emigration story was held in conjunction with the *Universidad Autónoma de Puebla* (University of Puebla, Mexico) in 2004. It was entirely dedicated to the discussion of the Ubayen entrepreneurs who immigrated to the different states of Mexico and the history of the Ubayen-Mexican emigration (Homps, 2004). Much of the Ubaye Valley's historical research and cultural activities are headed by the Museum of the Valley in Barcelonnette, or *Le musée de la Vallée à Barcelonnette*. Therefore, the Museum plays a leading role in telling the stories of the many emigrants from the valley and the history of the entire Ubaye Valley:

[. . .] In 1995, in coordination with the *Universidad Autonoma de Puebla* (BUAP) and the Association of French Roots in Mexico (*Racines Françaises au Mexiques*), the museum created a center of documentation and records dedicated to the archives of the Ubayen emigration and focused on Mexico and the study of the migratory movement.

[. . .] The Valley Museum collects and identifies photographs, documents, manuscripts, letters, commercial correspondences, albums, objects and clothing. It welcomes and informs all descendents of emigrants about their search for their roots.

³³ Map in Figures 1.6 and 1.7 are courtesy of the website for the “Cabalgatas de Sierra” (2009), accessed at http://www.mexicohorsevacation.com/maps_static.htm.

[. . .] Since May 2004, the Valley Museum in Barcelonnette has been “twinned” [partnered] with the community museum in Mendoza City, which is located in the textile factory (still in business) that was founded in 1896 by Alexandre Reynaud (Orizaba Valley, State of Veracruz, Mexico).³⁴ (*Alliance Réseaux*, 2008c)



Figure 1.7 Map of the State of Mexico

In fact, to build a stronger connection and open the possibilities for collaborative research, the Museum of the (Ubaye) Valley and the aforementioned community museum in Ciudad Mendoza (Veracruz) established this “twinning.”

Today, the Museum of the (Ubaye) Valley houses a room dedicated entirely to the story of emigration from the Ubaye Valley. The room, “*Les Barcelonnettes au Mexique*” (“The People of Barcelonnette in Mexico”), is described below:

[. . .] Ubaye residents, developing very early “the art of being a merchant,” left the Valley in order to sell their products of linens and silks in Provence, Dauphiné and Piémont. In the middle of the 19th Century, permanent emigration replaced seasonal emigration and drove entrepreneurs from the Valley to the Americas [. . .] to Mexico, where around

³⁴ See http://www.barcelonnette.com/fr/il4-1_p165-la-memoire-de-l-emigration-ubayenne.aspx.

1818-1820, Jacques Arnaud (1781-1828) opened a fabric store in partnership with his brothers Dominique and Marc-Antoine, thus blazing the trail for the “silk producers of Mexico.”³⁵ (*Alliance Réseaux*, 2008e, para. 3)

Again, the family name “Arnaud” appears in the discussion of the history of Ubaye. The Arnaud brothers, Jacques, Dominique and Marc-Antoine, clearly played an important role in the history of emigration in the Ubaye Valley.

Besides the historical displays at the museum in Barcelonnette, one can see a truly live presence of Mexican and Hispanic flavor in the Ubaye Valley, particularly in Barcelonnette. Every summer since 2002, a “Mexican Festival” has taken place in Barcelonnette. Colorful costumes and musical performances from Mexico, Cuba, Argentina and other areas of South America fill the streets of Barcelonnette, which is said to “take on another identity” during the festival: “[f]ull of joy and conviviality, the Latino-Mexican festivals completely take over the town for 10 days” (Moss, 2009, para. 2). In addition, Barcelonnette is the home of numerous Mexican restaurants, Mexican/Latino art exhibits, Latino theater events, salsa-themed social events, Mexican poetry readings as well as a travel agency which always advertises in its front window flight specials to Mexico! Finally, Barcelonnette’s main theater is named “*El Zócalo*,” after the main plaza or square in the heart of the historic center of Mexico City. It is truly unique to find such a pocket of Mexican influence and interest in Latino culture this deep in the heart of France.

Emergent Stories of Immigration: The Louisiana Connection

For nearly two centuries, the travelers’ tales of the three Arnaud brothers became infamous in the Ubaye Valley. Their journey to Mexico from the Ubaye Valley was told from generation to generation. However, one day, the Arnaud family story would be forever altered,

³⁵ See http://www.barcelonnette.com/fr/il4-1_p168-le-musee--salle-par-salle.aspx (*Alliance Réseaux*, 2008e). For more information on the Valley’s Museum see: http://www.barcelonnette.com/fr/il4-3_p51-le-musee-de-la-vallee-a-barcelonnette.aspx (*Alliance Réseaux*, 2008d).

as would the history of the Ubaye Valley. The Jacques Arnaud family's discovery of its ties to the Ubaye Valley is a relatively recent one. In *Kaleidoscope Magazine* (the magazine of the LSU College of Arts & Sciences), the long journey to the discovery is reported in great detail:

The discoveries began in 1990 when Alfred Arnaud, Jr., a postal worker living in South Dakota, visited the town of Jausiers in the Ubaye Valley of the French Alps. Alfred explained to his French counterpart at the local post office that he was a sixth-generation descendant of one of the town's historical favorite sons, Jacques Arnaud, born in Jausiers in 1781, and the postal clerk took him to a building near the eastern entrance to the town. On the building was a plaque extolling the adventures of "les frères Arnaud" (the Arnaud brothers), explaining that, from this building in 1821, the brothers began their emigration to Mexico, and, thereby, an enterprise that would later bring prosperity to the village. Although Jacques Arnaud made his fortune in Mexico, however, he chose South Louisiana as his home, a fact that was unknown to his French descendants. Alfred photographed the plaque [in France] and later shared the photo with his cousin Seola (CeCe) Edwards-Arnaud [correction: Seola (CeCe) Arnaud-Edwards], who is also a sixth-generation descendant of Jacques Arnaud, and their cousin-in-law Louise Arnaud. (p. 18)

Therefore, as recently as 1990 did the true story of emigration of the famous Arnaud brothers come to light for the citizens of the Ubaye Valley. For decades and nearly two centuries, it was thought that Jacques Arnaud had emigrated to Mexico; nothing was known about his arrival to, or family in, South Louisiana.

As a result of Alfred Arnaud Jr.'s familial discovery in Jausiers, Seola Arnaud-Edwards and her husband Richard (Dick) Edwards, along with Louise Arnaud, were prompted to take their family historical information and travel to the Ubaye Valley in 1992. In my conversations with Mrs. Arnaud-Edwards and with many residents of Ubaye, this trip marked a turning point in the history of the Ubaye Valley. It was explained to me by Mrs. Arnaud-Edwards and members of the Sabença (Ubaye Valley) that prior to the (American) Arnaud family visits to Ubaye in the 1990s, the Ubayens had no idea of their connection with Louisiana. Much had been documented about the Ubaye-Mexico connection, but a connection with Louisiana was never suspected. An article in *Kaleidoscope* sums up many of the stories that were told to me during my fieldwork in

Ubaye: “[i]n Jausiers, CeCe [Seola] spoke with one person, an elderly man she met in the church, telling him that she was a descendant of Jacques Arnaud, and within the hour, the entire village knew of her arrival and had heard the news of her ancestry” (p. 18). Local Ubaye residents and Ubaye Valley museum historians told me that the entire valley was buzzing with the news that Jacques Arnaud had settled in South Louisiana and that one of his descendants (who spoke French) was in town.

In her article detailing the story, Seola Arnaud-Edwards (2006) discusses, in her own words, the events of that momentous trip to the Ubaye Valley:

I had brought my book and documents that proved my lineage and relationship to Jacques Arnaud. Some, like Pierre Martin Charpenel, were skeptical. He later said that when he was told I was in the valley claiming to be a descendant he replied, “Yeah sure! And I descend from the Pope!” However, by the end of our museum visit, all present were convinced that I was indeed Jacques Arnaud’s great-great-great granddaughter.

Our revelations had the effect of a bombshell! None of the three Arnaud brothers had returned to France, so nearly 200 years after their departure all memory of them had been erased except that they had gone to Mexico, started a prosperous business and one of them (Jacques) was assassinated while carrying a large amount of money. They did not know that Jacques Arnaud had first lived in Louisiana and had a family there. Nor did they know that the town of Arnaudville³⁶ existed or that it was named after him. They were stunned by the news! (p. 1)

During my research in Ubaye, I heard the ongoing joke, which is referenced above by Seola Arnaud-Edwards: “[c]oming to Ubaye and saying you’re a descendant of Jacques Arnaud is like going to the Vatican claiming you’re a descendant of the Pope!” Indeed, this development would change Ubaye’s history of emigration.

³⁶ *Arnaudville* was indeed founded by Jacques Arnaud. Arnaudville is a small town (population under 2,000 residents) in St. Landry Parish (but the community straddles St. Landry and St. Martin Parishes) and is about 20 miles from Lafayette, Louisiana. Arnaudville is also the childhood village of Seola Arnaud-Edwards. See Figures 1.8, 1.9 and 1.10 for maps of Arnaudville’s location.



Figure 1.8 United States Map Highlighting Arnaudville, Louisiana³⁷

After this first visit to Ubaye in 1992, Seola Arnaud-Edwards began her work to unite South Louisiana and the Ubaye Valley. According to the *Kaleidoscope* magazine, “[i]n 1994, forty residents of the Ubaye Valley community of Jausiers traveled to Arnaudville in South Louisiana’s St. Landry Parish³⁸ to initiate the process of ‘twinning’ the two small towns. The twinning ceremonies were completed in 1997, and the two towns became ‘sister cities’ or ‘communes jumelées’” (pp. 18-19). Over the next few years, residents from both the Ubaye Valley and South Louisiana continued to exchange ideas on how to strengthen the ties between the two areas.

After the history-changing discovery of the Louisiana-Ubaye-Mexico connection, many people (particularly the Ubayens) dove into the research of what truly happened with many of the emigrants from Ubaye. Below are different descriptions of the famous trio, *les trois frères Arnaud* (the three Arnaud brothers), and a variety of details into their lives. In the Lafayette, Louisiana *Daily Advertiser*, Bradshaw (1997) wrote about the story of Jacques Arnaud and how *Arnaudville* came to be:

³⁷ Map courtesy of Epodunk (2009) on <http://images.google.com> and <http://www.epodunk.com/cgi-bin/genInfo.php?locIndex=66906>.

³⁸ Louisiana has “parishes,” which are known as “counties” in all other U.S. states.

Jacques Arnaud, one of the three Arnaud brothers from Jausiers, France, established himself in Louisiana in 1804. His family had a silk factory. The area called *La Jonction*, because of the junction there of Bayou Teche and Bayou Fuselier, became known as *L'habitation des Arnaud*, then became Arnaudville. The town was chartered in 1870. [. . .] Jacques's great-grand son, Alcee, became mayor of Arnaudville in 1905. [. . .] Jacques made a fortune in Mexico after coming to Louisiana. During his last voyage there, when he was carrying home \$35,000, he fell into an ambush and was killed by bandits. He was buried in Mexico. (p. 1)

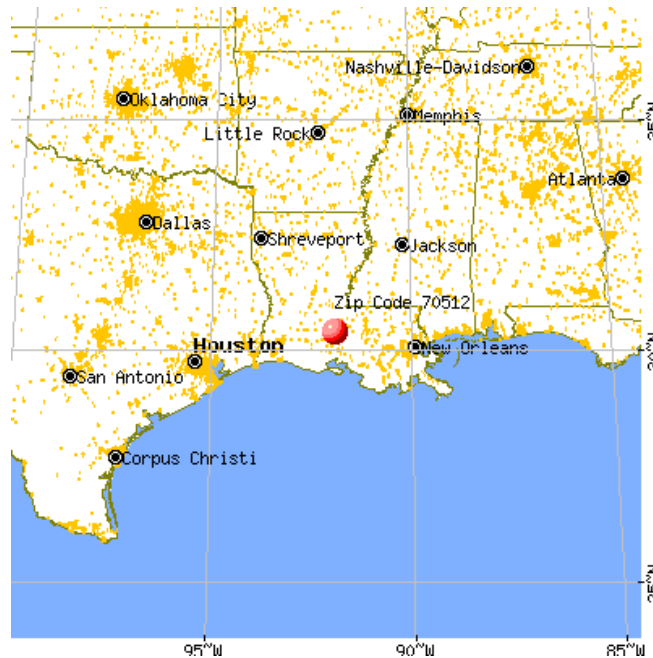


Figure 1.9 Map of the Gulf Coast Highlighting Arnaudville, Louisiana³⁹

The (approximate) birthdates and dates of death for *les trois frères Arnaud* have been established: Jacques (1781–1828), Dominique (1784-1848), Marc Antoine (1788-1849) (*Alliance Réseaux*, 2008b). In fact, the main Barcelonnette webpage (in conjunction with the *Alliance Réseaux* and the Museum of the Valley) briefly describes their trek from Ubaye to Mexico and Louisiana:

Originally from Jausiers, Jacques and Dominique left in 1805⁴⁰ for Louisiana and Mexico, and were the first Ubayens to launch the phenomenon of emigration to Mexico. Marc Antoine joined them in 1826. In Louisiana, Jacques gravitated toward agriculture,

³⁹ Map courtesy of the City-data website (2009): <http://pics4.city-data.com/zfar/zfar23519.png>.

⁴⁰ Projection of Jacques Arnaud's dates of arrival in Louisiana varies slightly by reference, ranging from 1804 to 1805.

livestock and plantations. However, he remained associated with his brothers in some industrial and commercial business in cotton and textiles. Jacques was assassinated in 1828 and has since left behind an ancestry of more than 5,000 people.⁴¹ (*Alliance Réseaux*, 2008b)



Figure 1.10 Map of Louisiana Highlighting St. Landry Parish⁴²

In *Les Barcelonnettes au Mexique (The Barcelonnettes in Mexico)*, Coste (2004) further describes the descendents of Jacques Arnaud by quoting Seola Arnaud-Edwards:

Today, Jacques Arnaud's descendents probably number around 5,000. The majority live in Louisiana, but many have dispersed to the four corners of the world, across the United States and abroad. We find among them doctors, lawyers, teachers and politicians. The agricultural tradition is still strong.⁴³ (p. 112)

In fact, several recent publications have been dedicated to the search for facts and truths in the stories of the Ubaye emigrants, since it is becoming more and more apparent that their emigration and voyages led them all around the world. In his publication for the Sabença in Barcelonnette, *De l'Ubaye aux rives du Mississippi: Les Barcelonnettes commerçants-plantieurs de Louisiane (From Ubaye to the Banks of the Mississippi: The Businessmen-Planters from the*

⁴¹See http://www.barcelonnette.com/fr/il4-3_p54-hommes-celebres.aspx.

⁴² Public domain map courtesy of the general libraries of the University of Texas at Austin (2009) and accessible at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:St_Landry_Parish_Louisiana.png.

⁴³ My translation from French to English.

Barcelonnettes in Louisiana), Hippolyte-Piolle (2006) discusses much of the history of Ubayen emigration:

After the French Revolution, emigration toward other continents became a new fact. Many Ubayens left, primarily for Mexico, but also for the United States (Louisiana, Texas, New York, and for the Gold Rush in California), for Argentina [. . .] and North Africa. One cannot understand the present face of the valley if one forgets about these migrations, which were followed by the slaughter of WWI and the modern rural exodus.⁴⁴ (p. 5)

Hippolyte-Piolle (2006) also has written about Ubaye migratory connection to Louisiana. In fact, besides the Jacques Arnaud family, his research found that, unknown to the people of the Ubaye Valley, many more people from Barcelonnette had moved to Southern Louisiana:

The goal of this book is to tell the original and forgotten story of about fifty Ubayens who emigrated within 140 km. of Arnaudville and only 50 km from New Orleans, on the banks of the Mississippi, in what is now one of the most visited places in Louisiana: the plantation road. It is a story of the people of Barcelonnette [. . .] who, although they had made their historical imprint on the banks of the Mississippi, were not known in France by their cousins. Some of these Barcelonnette people have their biography in American books; certain others participated in the Civil War; a descendant of a man from Barcelonnette (Étienne J. Caire) was gubernatorial candidate for the State of Louisiana; at least four buildings which belonged to immigrants from Barcelonnette, are documented in the National Register of [American] Historical Places.⁴⁵ (p. 5)

Truly, the story of emigration of the Arnaud family⁴⁶ and other families from the Ubaye Valley to southern Louisiana and other areas of the world (particularly North America) is a fascinating, yet emerging one.⁴⁷ Scholars, particularly those at the Sabença in Barcelonnette

⁴⁴ My translation from French to English.

⁴⁵ My translation from French to English.

⁴⁶ During my research into the history of the Arnaud family (particularly Jacques), I was able to find many family and archival records. In two volumes of Arnaud family records housed in “Special Collections” at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette Library, I discovered *Arnaud Family Records, 1600s-1997*, which include mainly photocopies and typescripts of documents related to the Arnaud family, many of whom are direct descendents of Jacques Arnaud. In my quest to learn more about the Arnaud family, I also examined detailed personal Arnaud family documents, which were graciously photocopied and given to me by Mrs. Seola Arnaud-Edwards. More information on the Arnaud family records can also be found in Hebert’s *Southwest La. Records* (2009), which can be accessed at <http://www.acadiansingray.com/Family%20histories.htm#ARNAUD>.

⁴⁷ It should be noted that one of the areas of research and interest for me that has stemmed from this dissertation research has been a fascination with these emigration/immigration stories. My thesis for my MA degree in French discussed some of the immigration stories to Quebec from the mid-1900s; therefore, the inclusion of emigration and immigration in this dissertation was quite a nice development.

and at the museums in the Ubaye Valley continue to research the emigrant family stories in order to gain more information on these unsolved mysteries.

Development of the “LSU in the French Alps” Program

It was in 1999 that the story of the Ubaye-Louisiana connection took another turn, when Seola Arnaud-Edwards “again became the catalyst to bring people together,” as she worked with the LSU Department of French Studies and the Friends of French⁴⁸ organization “to establish a language and culture immersion program in the Ubaye Valley. The town of Barcelonnette enthusiastically agreed to host groups of students from LSU, and a new program was born” (LSU College of Arts & Sciences, *Kaleidoscope*, p. 19). The LSU internship immersion program began in 2001 when a small group of LSU French students arrived in Barcelonnette, where they spent three weeks⁴⁹ visiting local families and working in neighborhood shops.

When I first inquired about the program, numerous LSU faculty members affiliated with the program discussed it and its internships with me. Unlike other internship programs that focused on business or a specific trade, this internship program focused on French cultural and language learning. For example, in the internship at the local café, students did not serve drinks or sandwiches, but rather sat on the terrace and talked to clients, who may have been local residents or visitors to Ubaye. Clients were more often than not delighted to speak to American college students so eager to practice French. At the chocolate shop, students learned about confectionary art in France; at the Office of Tourism, they learned more about the region, the history, and the people of the valley, since they talked to the workers and to visitors alike. The

⁴⁸ According to LSU’s Department of French Studies’ webpage (2010) on the Friends of French Studies ([http://appl003.lsu.edu/artsci/frenchweb.nsf/\\$Content/Welcome!?OpenDocument](http://appl003.lsu.edu/artsci/frenchweb.nsf/$Content/Welcome!?OpenDocument)), “[t]he Friends of French Studies will serve as an official liaison between the Department of French Studies, the Center for French and Francophone Studies, and affiliated programs, on the one hand, and the state and community on the other.” In addition, it states that the goal of the Friends of French Studies is “to preserve and promote Louisiana’s unique Francophone heritage and culture, including Cajun, Creole, and classical French traditions.”

⁴⁹ The program which was studied for this dissertation research was four weeks in duration, which is also its current (2010) duration.

local school provided students with immediate access to young French people and a look at the French education system. In the previous years, students also participated in internships at a local café, a clothing store, the Office of Tourism, a chocolate shop, the local school, a florist, a bike shop, and several other establishments.

When I first heard of the program, I was immediately captivated by its uniqueness and decided to learn more about it. Previous participants in the program could not wait to share their stories with me and how the experience in the Ubaye Valley “changed their lives” and how they could “not wait to go back” and visit their “grandparents” at “home” in Barcelonnette. Certain faculty members familiar with the program with whom I spoke claimed that Ubaye participants have a “more authentic contact” with host nationals than do other participants in most programs and explained how each student “returns to Louisiana as a changed person.” I learned that the *Maire Adjoint*, or deputy mayor of the town, Mr. Jean Mercier, played a significant role in organizing the internship and activity schedule in conjunction with the director from LSU. The program seemed to truly be an affair of the whole valley, with nearby towns hosting dinners and activities for the students.

The program has been advertised as “a linguistic and cultural immersion in French through interaction with French natives” (*LSU Academic Programs Abroad*, 2009).⁵⁰ The program literature states that: “Students will improve their oral language skills and their understanding of French culture by participating in many activities and doing unpaid internships in local businesses” (*LSU Academic Programs Abroad*, 2009). The small-town setting is emphasized and participants are promised daily interaction with host nationals, a plethora of

⁵⁰ See the webpage for “LSU in the French Alps,” now detailing the 2010 summer program: http://ocs-web2.ocs.lsu.edu/apa/summer/lsu_in_the_french_alps.asp.

outdoor activities and historical excursions, as well as the chance to explore the historic ties between the Ubaye Valley and Louisiana.

For most of its sessions, including the summer in which this dissertation's fieldwork was undertaken, the program included a pre-departure segment⁵¹ at LSU (four to five days in length) and a three-day visit to Paris with the LSU faculty director and the program participants.⁵² In the summer during which I studied this program, the culminating project was for participants to work together to create a video of their experiences. Participants also kept a journal in French and were required to participate in all the cultural, historical and outdoor activities and excursions as well as their assigned internships. For every program session since its inception in 2001, students have stayed at the *Jean Chaix* mountain lodge located on the outskirts of Barcelonnette. Participants share rooms with other participants in the program (or have their own room) and are provided three meals per day. They eat their meals with the entire LSU group and often share conversations with the other guests at the lodge. During the summer months, *Jean Chaix* usually accommodates a variety of groups (generally European), from vacationing couples to large groups of mountain cyclists.

The costs for lodging and food are included in the total price for participation in the program—the current (2010) cost of the “LSU in the French Alps” program is \$3,250, plus LSU summer tuition and airfare. This total includes accommodations at *Jean Chaix*, all ground transportation on site and three meals at the lodge.⁵³ Finally, participants can earn six credit hours in French during this summer program. Available courses include: “Advanced

⁵¹ For the summer program from which I collected this dissertation data, the pre-departure program was four days in length and no specific itinerary was given to the participants during the pre-departure program.

⁵² For several past programs, there have been overnight and weekend excursions to Aix-en-Provence and other locations. None occurred during the summer program from which this dissertation data was gathered.

⁵³ Numerous scholarships for the participants are available, particularly through the Friends of French Studies organization.

Conversation/Oral Communication,” “Special Topics in French/Francophone Cultures and Civilizations” or an independent study. The program website has statements of high expectations for instruction and student learning during the experience abroad:

The level of instruction that you will receive in this course is actually superior to what you would receive on the Baton Rouge campus, since you are essentially “in class” and with your instructor (and local native speakers) 24 hours a day. (LSU Academic Programs Abroad, 2009)

As stated earlier, the reported goals of this program have always been interdisciplinary, though improvement in French language and knowledge of French culture has been the leading goal. In addition, it is expected that participants in this program will learn about the history of the Ubaye Valley and Louisiana connection and French daily life in a real-world setting. In order to gain more insight into the program’s history, original foundation and continuing goals, I asked Seola Arnaud-Edwards to provide me with her unique perspective. When I asked her in an email correspondence, “What do you think students learn most from this program, especially considering it is a relatively short amount of time?,” she responded:

The students learn that far away from home in a remote, breathtakingly beautiful valley of France people know about Louisiana and love it! They [French people] are pleased and honored to welcome the LSU students into their homes, their shops, on their slopes and playgrounds. They are happy to share their lives and their language with the students, who are eager to learn and practice it. (Personal communication, September, 2009)

Next, I asked Mrs. Arnaud-Edwards to list three of the top goals of the program, in terms of what students learn. She stated:

1. I wish they would know what important ambassadors they are for our university of LSU, our state of Louisiana and our wonderful country, the U.S.A. And, knowing this, that they would bring their best selves.
2. The students would learn to appreciate the unique historical French heritage of Louisiana, its fabulous culture and *joie de vivre* and that each would learn to wear that heritage proudly, and then each do their share in preserving the French language in Louisiana while improving their communication skills with French people!

3. To expand the program to include other universities, like Tulane (NOLA) and SHSU (Huntsville, TX) who have both expressed an interest in sending one or two of their students along with ours. We could try it once and go from there. (Personal communication, September, 2009)

Finally, I asked Mrs. Arnaud-Edwards to give me any details about the program that she thought were essential to know for someone who was unfamiliar with it. She responded with details about the program's beginnings:

The idea for this program occurred to me in 1998 when four Ubaye couples (the Merciers, Roberts, Boscos and Galluets) were visiting LSU with us. When the former French Studies Department Chair and Friends of French [Studies] President had organized a little reception to introduce the LSU French Faculty to our French friends [. . .] it was after this social that I proposed the Ubaye Valley Program and the response was, "Why not!" and it set things in motion! Incorporating Louisiana's shared history with the Valley (in the person of Jacques Arnaud, Jausiers native, who was my great-great-great grandfather) gave us a natural starting point and the nascent LSU-Ubaye program was inaugurated in June 2001 with a group of 10 LSU students who spent 3 weeks in the Ubaye! They returned with rave reviews and we were off! (Personal communication, September, 2009)

As Mrs. Arnaud-Edwards indicated, the historical connections between the Ubaye Valley and Louisiana, as well as the participants' potential learning, were carefully considered from the program's beginnings. These areas were also essential to researching the program and its participants' perspectives.

A Study on the "LSU in the French Alps" Abroad Program

This dissertation is an in-depth case study of this short-term (about 4 weeks), non-traditional program ("for-credit" cultural and linguistic internships) in the French Alps. The coursework begins on LSU's main campus with a pre-departure orientation week. This usually includes a fieldtrip to Arnaudville, Louisiana. Upon return to the United States, participants typically work together on a final group project, such as a video or guidebook, as a culminating activity. At the time of this study, there were no formal re-entry meetings with faculty when students returned to the United States.

This program deserves close study as it fits the category of study abroad program (short-term internships), which the IIE's *Open Doors 2005* report has urged scholars and educators to research more diligently. In addition, the "LSU in the French Alps" adds the unique feature of a culturally-intense internship (focused on learning the French language and culture) as opposed to a more traditional internship program in which the participants' goals are to learn a trade or about an aspect of business. Research on this program fits well with my career (foreign language instructor), my past research (second language acquisition/pedagogy as well as immigration) and interest in study abroad. My past experiences led me to investigate the research potential of the "LSU in the French Alps" program. It was indeed quite feasible to do an in-depth study of this program and its participants because I took on the role of participant observer and was able to work with a small number of students in a program of short duration. Since I was given full access to the program, the research could be complex, thorough and multi-faceted.

Prospective Questions

As a result of my initial investigation into the recent trends of study abroad and the "LSU in the French Alps" program, I began to reflect on the program and the participants' experiences. In addition to uncovering detailed information about the structure and the history of the LSU internship program, this research investigates the historical ties between the Ubaye Valley of France and Louisiana. Using qualitative case study research (Creswell, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003) with aspects of ethnographic research (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1998; Wolcott, 2001), this study explores the following prospective questions:

1. **Participants' Perspectives on Pre-departure Orientation:** How do the participants react to the pre-departure orientation week and do they feel that it significantly prepared them for this immersion experience?

2. **Participants motivations and goals:** Why do the participants choose this program (motivation) and what do they hope to accomplish as a result of participation in the program (goals)?
3. **Culture shock:** Do students foresee experiencing any culture shock and once in the Ubaye Valley, how do the participants believe they experience culture shock, if at all?
4. **The Effects of Study Abroad:**
 - a. How do the participants view their learning on this program, particularly in regard to learning the French language and culture? What do participants perceive they learn on this type of short-term abroad program in which instruction is non-classroom based with internships and excursions?
 - b. How, if at all, do the participants believe the experience on this program has influenced their lives and their knowledge and goals (academic, personal, linguistic, cultural or professional)?

These questions⁵⁴ put me on a path to discover more about the program. My inquiries were met with open arms, and after reading several previous studies in the field, I began to see the research potential in the Ubaye Valley program and to envision a study surrounding my questions. Since study abroad has been a large influence in my life, I was excited by the possibility of turning this idea into a dissertation, for it brought together my love of French and second language acquisition in a study abroad context. Furthermore, with this study, I was also able to include my

⁵⁴ Focus questions for this query are presented in questionnaires and interviews with the participants just after the pre-departure program, during the in-country experience and post study. In regard to the participants' view about their learning, I asked them questions during pre-departure to gain insight into their anticipated learning. I also asked them similar questions toward the end of the program, and again post study, to compare their pre-departure expectations with their perceived learning at the end of and after their experience. This probe helped to discover if the participants learned what they anticipated they would learn and how, if at all, did this vary.

interest in immigration stories and trends, and my knowledge of the Spanish language and Mexico (immigration ties among the Ubaye Valley, Mexico, and Louisiana).

After talking with several professors in numerous departments and after extensive reading, I came to realize that an exploratory case study method⁵⁵ would be best suited for this research. This program is “unique” in its history and structure, yet encompasses two of the most recent, though under researched, areas of study abroad programs (short-term duration and “non-traditional” structure). When this LSU program was developed, few educators with whom I spoke had ever heard of such a program type. While it still remains a distinct program in terms of its cultural, linguistic internships (vs. business or trade internships), programs of similar duration and structure (i.e., site internships for nursing, teaching, community service or ethnography) continue to emerge in the U.S. Therefore, these recently-developed programs need to be studied in order to understand what is being learned by participants and to see how this type of program will affect the future of study abroad and in particular, world language learning and education.

The goals of this study are to gain in-depth insight into the intricate workings of this short-term internship program as well as to discover and reveal the detailed individual reactions and personal experiences of the participants.⁵⁶ Therefore, this dissertation presents the unique stories of each program participant as well as their perspectives toward specific aspects of their learning, the program and the overarching case study of the “LSU in the French Alps” summer program. This study seeks to improve the research base in this understudied area of education, short-term, non-traditional program, and to begin building a more solid foundation of research

⁵⁵ The methodology used in this study will be discussed at length in Chapter 3.

⁵⁶ In short, the participants in this study were four undergraduate students who participated in the “LSU in the French Alps” summer program during the mid to late 2000s. To protect the anonymity of this study’s participants, the exact year of their participation is not being revealed. More detailed information about the participants will be discussed in Chapter 3.

for these newly developed short-term and/or non-traditional programs, with the hope to improve the future of international programs abroad.

Potential Audience and the Organization of Chapters

I believe the information presented in this study will benefit and interest various groups of people. They include but are not limited to: students with interest in study or work abroad, foreign language educators and administrators, educators at the secondary and the post-secondary levels (not exclusive to foreign language faculty), colleges and universities, international programs offices, study abroad companies, and government organizations. With more studies of this nature, program directors, faculty, researchers and students alike can learn more about the plethora of opportunity and variety in study abroad programs in the twenty-first century.

In the past decade, the “LSU in the French Alps” program itself has been a work in progress, as it was envisioned, discussed and created. Many of the short-term study abroad programs, particularly those of non-traditional structure (i.e., internships and service learning), are similarly works in progress, as they have been recently created and have been modified by trial and error. Our goal must be to learn from each of these programs, from their participants and from one another, in order to begin to fill the existing research gaps. With diligent research, it will be possible to make the future of study abroad experiences even more meaningful than in the past.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. This first chapter has introduced the current state of study abroad and recent initiatives in this field of study. It also helps the reader understand more about the historical connections of immigration among the Ubaye Valley, Louisiana and Mexico, and the specific locations (towns) of interest are discussed. To further

focus this dissertation, the program researched in this study, the “LSU in the French Alps” short-term summer internship program, is briefly introduced. Also unveiled are details about the origin and development of the “LSU in the French Alps” program, and specifics about the program, including location, price, lodging and activities. Also explained are the study’s research questions, general outline and goals.

In chapter 2, the prior related research and literature in this field of study are reviewed. Topics include the emergence of studies from the participants’ perspectives, the effect of study abroad on participants, issues of program duration, culture shock, and finally, non-traditional programs and out-of-classroom learning experiences. Governmental initiatives and independent research into the trends of study abroad are also reviewed.

Chapter 3 gives an in-depth description of the qualitative research methodology employed in this study, including the research design and the procedures carried out during data collection and analysis. Incorporated in this chapter is also a discussion of the case-study approach, the development of the research questions and the instruments used for data collection, as well as the specific procedures used in data analysis. Furthermore, the study’s participants and my role as a researcher are introduced. The chapter concludes with the soundness of the research methodology.

The subsequent chapters report the findings of this study, including the themes that emerged from fieldwork and various aspects of participants’ perspectives. Chapter 4 discusses the participants’ perspectives and their perceptions and self-ratings of their learning and experiences, as well as my observations during the pre-departure, in-country, internships, re-entry and post-study phases of the program. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the findings with particular focus on the implications for future research. It also summarizes the study and

presents concluding remarks regarding the future for study abroad programs for American students.

CHAPTER 2: THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of previous literature is an essential part of a dissertation, as the researcher's discussion helps create a potential framework for the study. In this study, it is crucial to determine the trends, relevant issues, and themes of international education and study abroad, which represents the context of the "LSU in the French Alps" program. Several broad functions of the review of related literature, as described by Marshall and Rossman (2006), provided specific guidance for this dissertation. First, the review of literature can discuss the general research questions or inquiries that the researcher brings to the research. The initial inquiries brought forth during the proposal stage of this study needed to be better informed with prior literature in order to gauge the current status of study abroad, and to identify specific research gaps. In the literature review, the researcher also shows evidence of his or her knowledge of the scholarly traditions of the subject and prior related research. Next, Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggest the literature review "shows that the researcher has identified some gaps in previous research and that the proposed study will fill a demonstrated need" (p. 43). In this chapter, I reviewed several bodies of literature that informed me of the pertinent issues in study abroad research: 1) the emergence of international education organizations (subsequent publications) and governmental initiatives for study abroad; 2) "training" for study abroad; 3) culture shock; 4) issues of program duration; and 5) the potential effects of study abroad.

Recent Initiatives and Trends in Study Abroad

As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, recent research and inquiry into educational programs abroad have been fueled and guided by governmental initiatives and study abroad organizations (e.g., The Lincoln Commission, *Open Doors* and the IIE). Upon review of previous and ongoing research, it becomes clear that many more initiatives and organizations

have been involved. In November 2003, the “Strategic Task Force on Education Abroad”⁵⁷ presented a multi-billion dollar proposal for study abroad enhancement to the U.S. Congress (Bollag, 2003; Fredrix, 2003). The task force found that educational institutions needed to seriously contemplate the objective for providing their students with the opportunity to improve their global awareness, especially in a post-September 11th world (Marklein, 2003). Fredrix (2003) discussed the lofty goals of the task force initiative: after the year 2010, the desired number of abroad participants was 2.6 million (20% of the projected undergraduate population), and by the year 2040, the goal jumped to 6.5 million students (50% of the projected undergraduate population).⁵⁸

The task force also proposed a program to help fund student participation. With a proposed \$3.5 billion over 10 years, 5 million fellowships would be given to study abroad candidates (Marklein, 2003). Every proposed fellowship would give each student approximately \$7,000 toward a study abroad experience. As we have entered into 2010, it is obvious that the number of study abroad participants has not reached the proposed numbers of the NAFSA panel; however, the task force continues to meet and work to achieve its goals for the new decade and beyond.

In 2009, *Open Doors*⁵⁹ also reported on the 2007-2008 statistics of the preferred study abroad destinations of American college students. These statistics revealed a continued shift in where students chose to study abroad. The *Open Doors* press release for 2009 broke down study abroad destinations into several groups, including continent, regions and country, and included many different statistics about recent trends:

⁵⁷ This task force was established by NAFSA (The Association of International Educators).

⁵⁸ Keep in mind that the number of students studying abroad each year (as of 2007) represented less than 1% of all the students enrolled in U.S. institutes of higher education (Obst, Bhandari, & Witherell, 2007).

⁵⁹ The specific link to *Open Doors* 2009 statistics on study abroad destinations is:
<http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/?p=150833> (IIE, 2009b).

While the four countries that are perennial leaders in hosting U.S. students – United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and France—are in Western Europe, Open Doors reports that fifteen of the top 25 destinations are outside of Western Europe and nineteen are countries where English is not the primary language. In 2007/08, students electing to study in Africa increased by 18%, those going to Asia increased by 17%, and those going to Latin America increased by 11%.

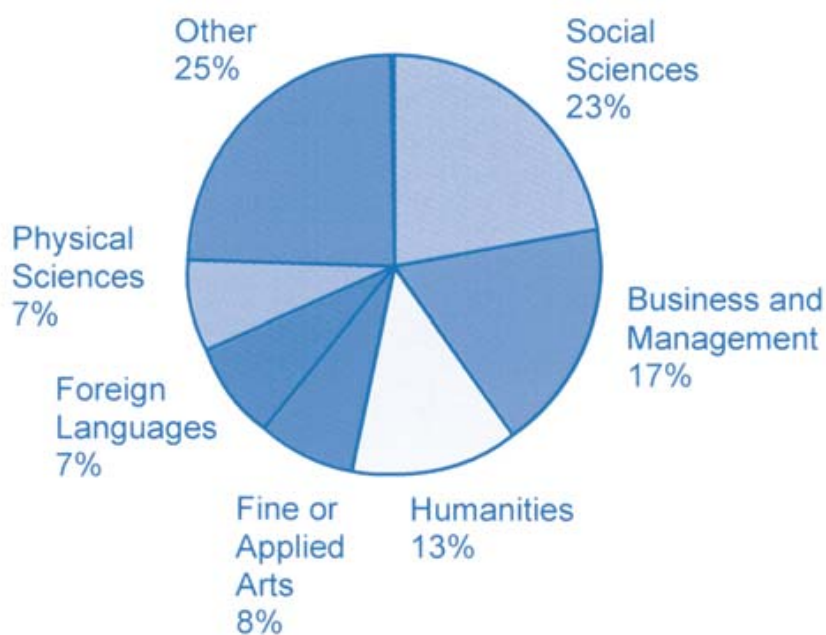
[. . .] Europe continued to host the largest share of U.S. students (56%), while Latin America hosted 15% of all Americans studying abroad, Asia hosted 11%, Oceania (Australia, New Zealand and South Pacific Islands) hosted 5%, and Africa hosted 5%. The number of American students studying in the Middle East increased by 22%, though the region is host to a little more than 1% of the total number of students studying abroad. (IIE, 2009a, para. 5-7)

Therefore, while Europe remains the most popular study abroad destination, its overall popularity has declined in recent decades as other countries become more accessible for U.S. students. Specifically, *Open Doors* (IIE, 2009) revealed that “[w]hile [participants] head[ing] to Europe rose from 138,871 to 147,676, this represents a smaller proportion of students than in prior years, with the European share of U.S. study abroad students declining over the past decade” (IIE, 2009a, para. 7). This information can lead us to ask how American colleges and universities determine where they will establish and/or continue new programs and why students choose these “new” destinations. Since the answers to these issues are currently debatable, more scholarly research is needed to gain more definitive insight for the future.

In addition to geographic information about study abroad participation, *Open Doors 2009* listed the fields of study, gender and ethnicities of study abroad participants. The leading areas of study for Americans who participated in programs abroad were as follows: “[t]he social sciences (21.5% of those studying abroad), business and management (20%), humanities (13%), fine or applied arts (8%), physical/life sciences (7%), foreign languages (6%), health sciences (4.5%), education (4%), engineering (3%), math/computer science (2%) and agriculture (1%)” (IIE, 2009c, para. 11). In their research for the IIE on the current trends in U.S. study abroad,

Obst, Bhandari and Witherell (2007, p. 18) included statistics which summarized the fields of study of U.S. students abroad in 2004-2005:

Table 2.1 Fields of Study of U.S. Students Abroad, 2004-2005⁶⁰



Social sciences, business and management, and the humanities have consistently produced the most study abroad participants. Particularly important to this study is the statistic that only 6% to 7% of all study abroad participants during the first years of the twenty-first century were foreign language majors.

In fact, in a publication for the American Council on Education (ACE), Green (2002)⁶¹ also discussed the dismal findings for enrollment in foreign language courses—a 50% decline in higher education foreign language enrollments since the 1960s (from 16% to just 8%). Less than a fifth of the students take more than four credits of internationally-focused coursework during

⁶⁰ Courtesy of Obst, Bhandari and Witherell (2007, p. 18): http://www.iienetwork.org/file_depot/0-10000000/0-10000/1710/folder/62450/IIE+Study+Abroad+White+Paper+I.pdf.

⁶¹ The ACE report is available online at http://www.acenet.edu/bookstore/pdf/2002_promising-practices.pdf. Also see a report about the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, which can be accessed at http://www.forumea.org/documents/lincoln_commission_report.pdf.

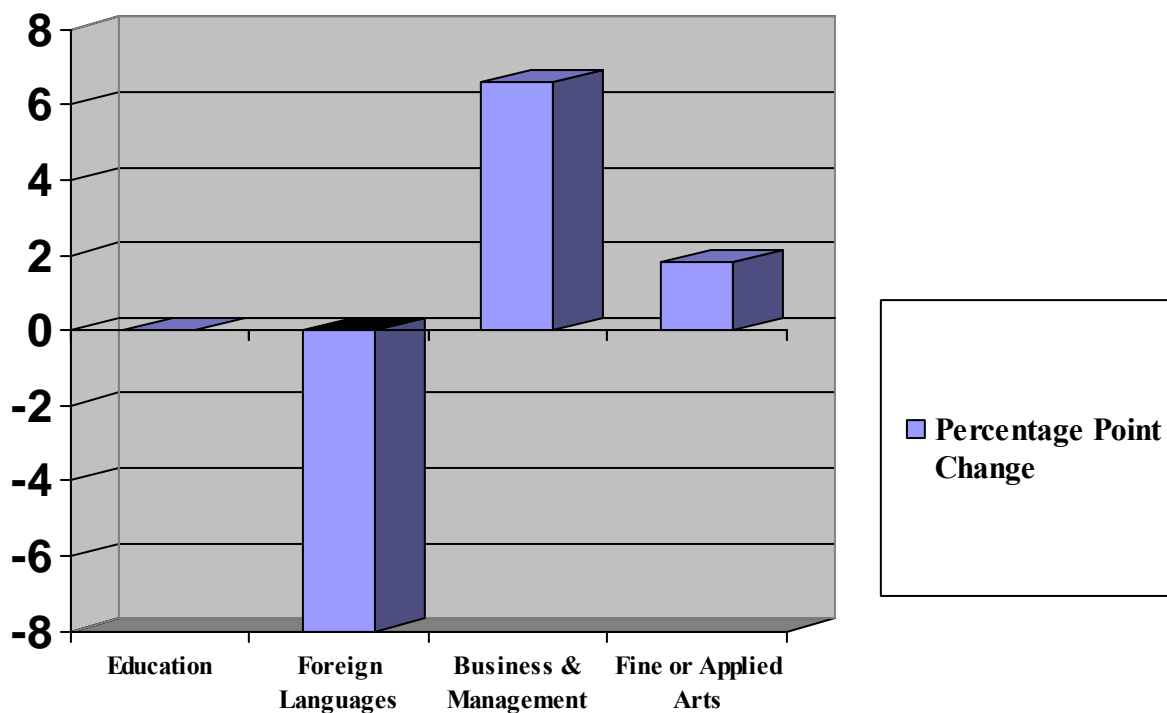
their degree program (Green, 2002). These findings are clearly not concurrent with the goal to create a more globally-minded, bilingual American college graduate of the twenty-first century.

In its briefing book, the Lincoln Commission pointed out similar statistics: “in a generation, the average number of U.S. students studying a foreign language has fallen from 16 percent to 8.7 percent” (2004, B-4). When the numbers are examined, one can easily see how the distribution in fields of study abroad participants changed in under a decade. Below are two figures⁶² that show the percentage point change (from 1993-1994 to 2001-2002) of each field of study’s portion of the overall total of participation in study abroad. The Lincoln Commission’s briefing book (2004) also discussed ways to improve U.S. college student participation in foreign study programs, as well as the development of new program types. It provided much insight into many areas of study abroad, including the need for the expansion, specific outcomes, trends, access, barriers, costs, safety and quality control.

The decline in the percentage of social sciences and foreign language students is notable, as is the rise of participants from business and management and the physical sciences. Specifically important to this study is the decline in the number of participants who represent foreign languages. With such a decline in overall enrollment in foreign languages and this percentage drop in numbers as part of the total study abroad population, there is a great need for the development of study abroad programs that meet the needs of foreign language majors and minors. In fact, the Lincoln Commission (2004) found that it was a matter of national security, international economic competitiveness, and diplomacy to create new generations of American college graduates who understand diverse languages and cultures. This goal will not be achieved if the number of American students who study foreign languages and/or go abroad (to become

⁶² Charts adapted from the Lincoln Commission briefing book (2004, E-4).

acquainted with both language and culture) continues to decline. In accordance with the Lincoln Commission and several other initiatives, educators and researchers have been searching for ways to restructure current study abroad programs, create new program types and attract more students, particularly in the area of foreign language programs.



**Figure 2.1 American Students Abroad—Fields of Study
Percentage Point Change 1993/1994-2001/2002**

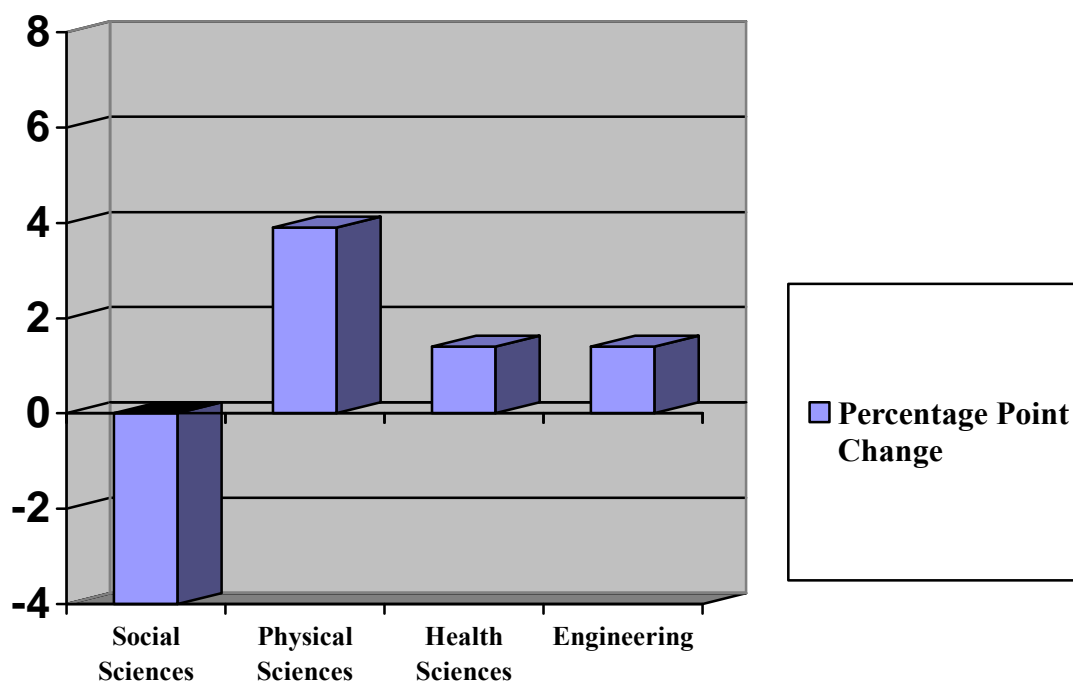


Figure 2.2 American Students Abroad—Field of Study (Continued)
Percentage Point Change 1993/1994-2001/2002

The next area to discuss, ethnicity and gender, brings up several issues about access to study abroad opportunities. The profile of the most common study abroad participant—a Caucasian female student in her junior year—was found more often than any other type of student in the last decade (IIE, 2009c).⁶³ For over a decade, between 82% and 85% of all study abroad participants from American institutions of higher learning has been Caucasian (IIE, 2009c). The most recent IIE report (2009c) also showed that in the past decade, Asian or Pacific Islander students have represented the second largest percentage (4% to 6%), followed by Hispanic students (5% to 6%), African-Americans (3 to 4%), multiracial students (about 1%) and Native American or Alaskan Native students with less than 1%.

⁶³ *Open Doors 2009* indicated that almost 36% of all study abroad participants were in their junior year of college (21% were seniors); 65% were female. For *Open Doors 2009* figures on ethnicity, gender and academic level (year of undergraduate study, graduate status, and so on), see <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/?p=150839> (IIE, 2009c).

Emerging Study Abroad Research Centers and Publications

The recent governmental initiatives on study abroad have been accompanied by growth in international education institutes and research centers, such as the IIE (Institute for International Education), the IES (International Education of Students) and NAFSA (Association of International Educators). In fact, upon reviewing the literature, it became clear that researchers from such educational groups and institutes were the leading force for study abroad research. As referenced earlier, the annual *Open Doors Report* (IIE) has for decades provided invaluable statistics on multiple facets of international education, including both American college students going abroad as well as international students entering the U.S. The reports are now available on-line and are frequently referenced in study abroad research. Their data are the most inclusive of all U.S. study abroad programs and reveal trends in the field of study abroad programs.

Several large projects and centers on study abroad research have also been created. Begun in the late 1980s by Carlson, Burn, Useem, and Ychimovwicz, the “Study Abroad Articulation Project” (SAAP) was a large-scale initiative that examined international policy and curriculum in higher education. Multiple publications resulted from this project (Carlson, Burn, Useem, & Yachimovwicz, 1990; Burn, 1991; Carlson, 1991; Jurasek, 1991), which completed eight institutional case studies of study abroad practices in higher education. The research included such topics as: the study abroad vs. the American on-campus group (language acquisition); the long-term effects of study abroad on participants; and pre-departure coursework and re-entry programming. The results of SAAP indicated that study abroad experiences have an overwhelmingly positive effect on the participants. The study abroad group was found to have surpassed the American group who remained on campus in many areas of learning (language, intellectual and intercultural development, personal growth, and international perspective)

(Carlson et al., 1990). It was also suggested that pre-departure and re-entry programming be further researched in order to assist study abroad sojourners by helping them avoid obstacles to their successful experiences abroad.

In other ground-breaking research, in 2004, several publications were released (including Dwyer, 2004a, 2004b; Dwyer & Peters, 2004) from a group of researchers from the IES who had completed a case study which examined 50 years (1950-1999) of data from study abroad alumni (American college students).⁶⁴ The IES study explored the long-term effects of study abroad in terms of personal, professional and academic development. Again, the study abroad experience was found to have lasting positive effects on the participants in all these areas of development.

Another important development in study abroad research was the establishment (1995) of *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*.⁶⁵ The journal has allowed individuals to share their research on the pertinent issues in international education. In a special upcoming issue (Spring 2010), “A History of US Study Abroad: 1965 to Present,” *Frontiers* will include research in many areas of the changing trends in study abroad: the diversification of the student profile; the diversification of geographical locations; study abroad and campus internationalization; the diversification of education abroad across the curriculum; changing program designs and strategies; the professionalization of the field of education abroad; assessment of, and standards for, study abroad; and the growing focus on intercultural learning in study abroad programs. Most of these concerns are of utmost importance to the issues surrounding this study of the “LSU in the French Alps” program. In fact, in a preview of the *Frontiers* section that will discuss the professionalization of the field of education abroad, Sideli (2009) revealed that in addition to the growing number of national associations and research

⁶⁴ This study by the IES will be discussed further in the review of literature on the effects of study abroad.

⁶⁵ See the back issues of *Frontiers* at <http://www.frontiersjournal.com>.

groups, there has been growth in the number of graduate student theses and dissertations which focus on education abroad, as well as an increased number of professional conferences and refereed publications.⁶⁶

At Penn State University, the Center for Advanced Language Proficiency Education and Research (CALPER) was established. CALPER conducts research in all languages, but a specific group of researchers, workshops, projects, and publications are designated for advanced language development and study abroad. In an announcement on its homepage, CALPER summarized several issues that are pertinent to study abroad research:

In the development of advanced language ability, study abroad is generally understood to be the quintessential learning experience. It is assumed to offer access to interaction with native speakers in a wide variety of settings, to bring students into close contact with the cultural and interactive practices of the host country, and to yield dramatic increases in language proficiency, cultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence. As previous studies have shown, the outcomes of study abroad experiences vary significantly across individuals in terms of specific linguistic features and overall proficiency. These differences may be partially explained by variation in the quality of learners' experiences with regard to access to social networks and subsequent opportunities for interaction in the target language. (CALPER, 2009)⁶⁷

Headquartered at the University of Minnesota, CARLA (Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition) is another important research group focused on study abroad. In addition to its research in immersion education, assessment initiatives, and foreign language learning technology, CARLA is home of the project dedicated to the advancement of study abroad, "Maximizing Study Abroad."⁶⁸ In its research, CARLA discovered a need for study abroad materials and began work on a series of guidebooks⁶⁹ to "help students, program

⁶⁶ See <http://www.frontiersjournal.com/upcomingissues.htm> for more details.

⁶⁷ See "Announcement" at <http://calper.la.psu.edu/studyabroad.php>.

⁶⁸ See <http://www.carla.umn.edu/maxsa/index.html> (CARLA, 2009a).

⁶⁹ For an overview of these guidebooks (including a sample of activities and table of contents), see <http://www.carla.umn.edu/maxsa/guides.html> (CARLA, 2009b).

professionals, and language instructors make the most of study abroad opportunities through strategies for language and culture learning and use” (CARLA, 2009a, para. 1).

Maximizing Study Abroad: A Student’s Guide to Strategies for Language and Cultural Learning and Use (Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi, & Lassegard, 2006) was written as a “user-friendly guide” to provide study abroad participants with language and culture learning strategies, and help them negotiate the study abroad experience, from pre-departure to post-study (CARLA, 2009b). The units of the guidebook are divided into pre-departure (including strategies for cultural learning, discussion of stereotypes, and self-discovery activities), in-country (including home-stay expectations and dealing with conflict, interacting with hosts, cultural adjustment and understanding the stages of culture shock, coping strategies, strategies for making cultural inferences, keeping a journal, and preparing to return home), and post-study (including dealing with emotional re-entry challenges, life-long learning, and strategies for long-term maintenance of language, and culture learning) (CARLA, 2009b). Besides learning strategies and discussions on the above topics, the guide also includes activities in listening, learning vocabulary, speaking, reading for comprehension, and writing and translation strategies (CARLA, 2009b).

Another recently updated guidebook from CARLA was *Maximizing Study Abroad: An Instructional Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use* (Kappler-Mikk, Cohen, & Paige, 2009). The website for the series describes this particular guidebook:

Created as a companion to *Maximizing Study Abroad: A Students’ Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use*, this guide provides language teachers and study abroad professionals with both a solid understanding of language and culture learning theory [. . .]. This instructional guide is written with the busy professional in mind and features a “tool kit” of more than 100 hands-on activities that are ready for use in pre-departure, in-country, and re-entry initiatives for study abroad programs, as well as in language classroom at home and abroad. (CARLA, 2009b)

More important to this review of literature, however, is the research on the effectiveness of the guidebook that CARLA has conducted. In 2005, CARLA released a comprehensive report (Cohen, Paige, Shively, Emert, & Hoff, 2005) which investigated the guidebooks' effect on the study abroad experience for three separate groups of users: 1) study abroad students; 2) language instructors; and 3) study abroad advisors. For the student group, Cohen et al. (2005) found that the qualitative research on the curricular "intervention" (p. 205) of the guidebook had a "very positive effect on students' study abroad experience, both language- and culture-wise" (p. 205).

The language instructor group (4 participants) was involved in an in-depth case study in which CARLA sought feedback on the *Language Instructors' Guide*. The feedback was positive:

Overall, language instructor participants felt that the [guide] was a cache of useful theoretical and practical information and that it enabled them to gain greater understanding of culture and language learning concepts, especially with regard to strategies-based learning. The [guide] also provided them with numerous activities to integrate language and culture for students in the classroom. (Cohen et al., 2005, p. 303)

The language instructors suggested that more training be offered on the appropriate implementation and use of the guidebook.

Finally, the program professional group was studied for the guide's influence on program activities and for the guide's implementation during pre-departure and in-country study abroad programming (Cohen et al., 2005). The results showed that the study abroad advisors "were able to improve the culture and language learning segments of their orientation programming because [the guidebook] offered theory and activities that addressed specific needs" (Cohen et al., 2005, p. 238). However, several concerns were reported on the issues of time constraints and the inability to differentiate instruction to the diverse abilities of students (Cohen et al., 2005). Further questions remained about the possibilities of making the student guidebook more self-

guided (due to a lack of time that program professionals reported for the implementation of most of the learning strategies in program meetings and courses) (Cohen et al., 2005).

Study Abroad “Training”

The review of the CARLA guidebooks highlights the growing emergence of research in the issues of preparation (e.g., intercultural, personal, or linguistic) for study abroad. Most research has shown that rigorous pre-departure “training” minimized student anxiety and subsequent shock abroad (Burn, 1991; Carlson et al., 1990; Citron & Kline, 2001; de Nooy & Hanna, 2003; Furnham, 1993; Jurasek, 1991; Kitao, 1993; Levy, 2000; Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002; Miller, 1993; Weinmann & Bragg, 1993). Similarly, research has shown that re-entry programs were beneficial to many study abroad participants who experienced “reverse” culture shock, or who had problems readjusting to their own culture (Burn, 1991; Carlson et al., 1990; de Nooy & Hanna, 2003; Hockman, 1989; Jurasek, 1991; Lerstrom, 1995; Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002; Raschio, 1987). These studies suggested models for re-entry workshops and activities, including topics for reflective papers, guided journals and roundtables, and project presentations. Many of the above studies included procedures of study abroad programs at individual colleges and universities, particularly Carlson et al. (1990), who highlighted the orientation and training practices at eight institutions of higher learning.

As a result of the scholarly research conducted in the area of pre-departure, in-country, re-entry, or post-study training, several guidebooks or workbooks for students and program directors have been published (in addition to those from CARLA) (Dowell & Mirsky, 2003; Fantini, McCoy, Soquet, Tannenbaum, & Wright, 1984a, 1984b). Fantini et al. (1984a, 1984b) were the first to develop for students and faculty a widely-published guidebook with the stages of pre-departure, in-country, and re-entry (often called “post-study”). Subsequent guides

followed suit. In reviewing the guidebooks or training guides for study abroad, it also became apparent that researchers have followed the trends of study abroad with the incorporation of out-of-classroom experiences and learning. In both the guidebooks and the actual program, the participants are being asked to step out of the classroom and interact with the host culture. Many researchers have studied students' contact with the host culture and have designed specific activities or projects to assist them: student interviews with host nationals (Archangeli, 1999; Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002); service learning (Berry, 2002; Engle & Engle, 1999; Porter & Monard, 2001; Steinberg, 2002; Vahlbusch, 2003; Welch, 1999; White, 2000); case studies or participant observation studies in the field (Hopkins, 1999; Langley & Breese, 2005; Laubscher, 1994; Roberts, 1993); field research reports (Brandt & Hadley, 2002); and internships (Rai, 2004; Steinberg, 2002; Vahlbusch, 2003); and journaling (Katula & Threnhauser, 1999).

This area of research is indebted to Dewey (1938), Kolb (1984), and others, for their work on the experiential learning theory, which affirms that humans learn best from what they encounter and experience firsthand. Learners reflect on and analyze their concrete experiences, and take their new perspectives out to the world in order to have new experiences, which keep the cycle of learning in motion (Kolb 1984). Kolb (1984) designed a 4-stage model for the experiential learning cycle (see Figures 2.3 and 2.4). In this cycle, the learner first has a concrete (real-life) experience and then makes observations and reflects on this experience (reviews). Third, the learner draws conclusions and applies new learning from present and previous experiences (formulates more abstract concepts and begins to make generalizations about the

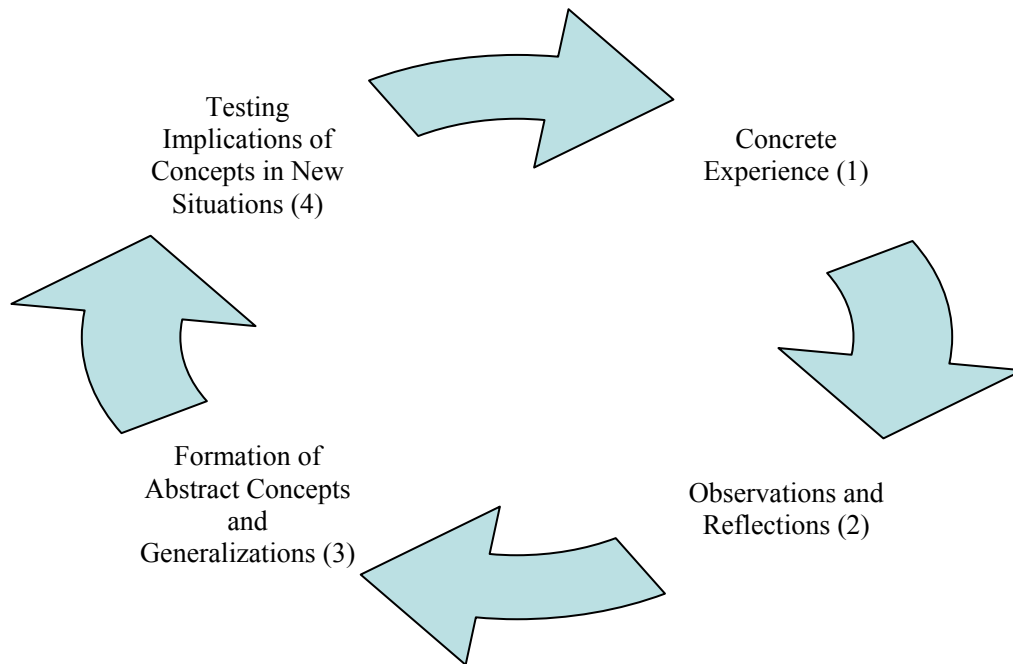


Figure 2.3 Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle⁷⁰

behavior or skill). Finally, the learner tests the concepts in new situations (applies new learning and continues to experiment). After completion(s) in this learning cycle, there is a transfer of learning, as the learner has internalized the experience.

In this type of learning, the individual is actively involved in the learning process. The learner participates in a concrete experience and then must actively seek, in order to learn, to process his or her observations about the experience. The learner then reflects on the experience and then can move on to (actively) drawing conclusions and applying the new learning to past knowledge. He or she then must formulate his or her own concepts about these conclusions and then continue to test his or her generalizations. For this to happen and for the transfer of learning to occur, the quintessential concept of “active learning” is certainly present.

⁷⁰ This diagram is adapted from Kolb (1984, p. 21). For more information, visit Kolb's on-line library of research on experiential learning theory at: <http://www.learningfromexperience.com/research-library/>.

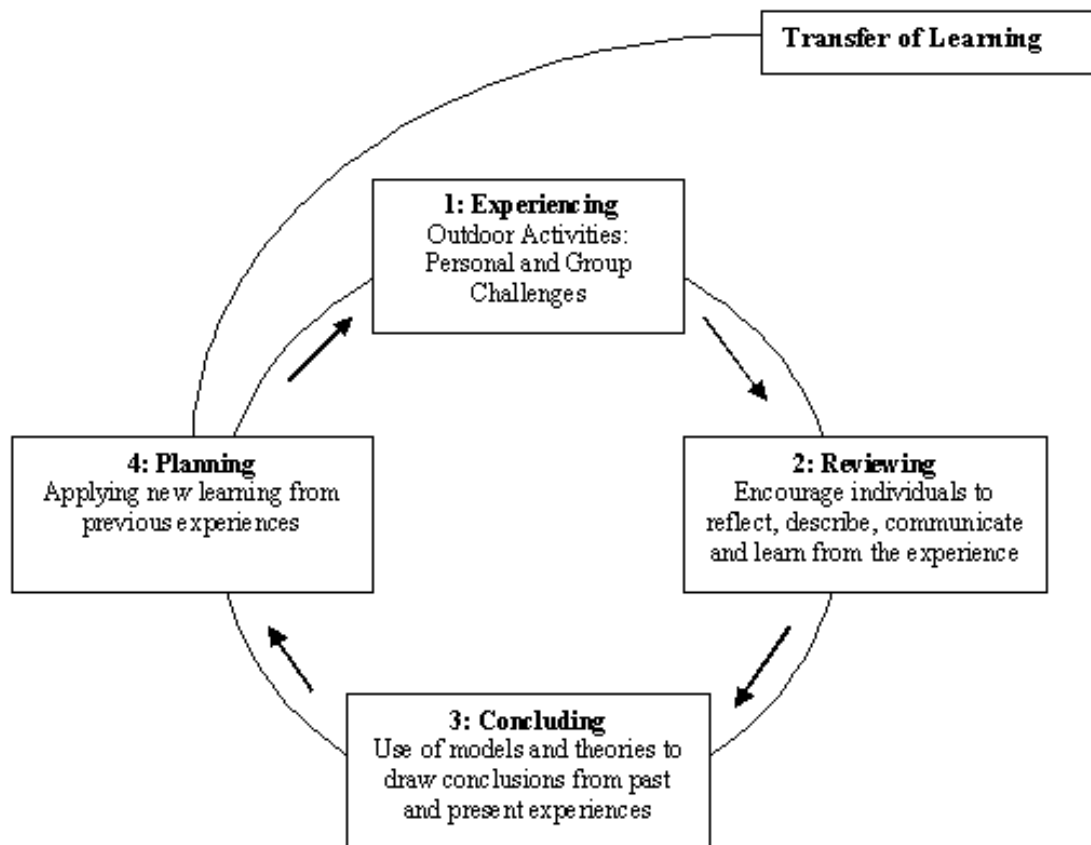


Figure 2.4 The Experiential Learning Cycle⁷¹

In the active learning experience in experiential learning, the learner is in a sense doing his or her own data collection and analysis. Kolb (1984) discussed this collection and analysis in detail:

[. . .] learning, change, and growth are seen to be facilitated best by an integrated process that begins with here-and-now experience followed by collection of data and observations about that experience. The data are then analyzed and the conclusions of this analysis are fed back to the actors in the experience for their use in the modification of their behavior and choice of new experiences. (p. 21)

⁷¹ This table was accessed at <http://wilderdom.com/experiential/elc/ExperientialLearningCycle.htm> (Neill, 2004, “4-stage model”). It is an adaptation of Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle.

In fact, the collected and analyzed data are tested and retested as part of the student's learning and path to the formation of knowledge. Kolb (1984) indicated, "[k]nowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experiences of the learner" (p. 27).

Study abroad itself has many intrinsic elements of experiential education; however, after reviewing prior research, certain programs have included the specific and deliberate methods necessary for experiential learning to occur. For example, a program which sends students abroad to complete outside-the-classroom service learning projects, fieldwork and research, internships, or ethnographies on or interviews with host nationals, is far more "experiential" than a traditional program in which students spend many hours in a college classroom abroad.

Each of the aforementioned researchers discussed the learners' contact with host nationals, as well as the outside-the-classroom learning that make many non-traditional study abroad programs experiential. Several researchers have examined the issue of community-based or service learning for American college students who traveled to these Spanish-speaking countries: Mexico (Hartman & Rola, 2000), rural Guatemala (Sanders, 2005), Nicaragua (White, 2000), and Bolivia (Porter & Monard, 2001). In each of these studies, the researchers concluded that their participants, because of their outside-the-classroom experiences, were able to expand their worldview and think more critically. Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich (2002) and Berry (2002) added the notion of global citizenry, when they found that, after working through their experiences and negotiating the host culture during service learning, their participants felt more comfortable with diversity and expanded their global-minded views.

Furthermore, Archangeli (1999) discussed the experiential learning present on a 10-week program in Salzburg, Austria. In the study, the participants conducted two well-designed interviews with host nationals. Archangeli reported that the participants increased their self-

confidence and willingness to use German, and they were more apt to take risks in speaking. It was found that, while the students were afraid or nervous at first in their field research, after several mini interviews and practice experiences, they became more positive and confident. Archangeli suggested that, due to the experiential nature of the learning and the concrete, real-life experiences, the participants took ownership in their learning (1999).

In all the studies reviewed here, students were usually able to design their own research projects or choose topics of personal interest to them. In the student “fieldbook,” or portfolio project, designed by Brandt and Manley (2002), students were able to improve their writing skills in the target language, in addition to bringing their outside-the-classroom contact with host nationals into their in-class learning. The project was tailored to learner interests and included focus questions (student field observations and interviews with host nationals), creative story writing, and student-designed sections of their fieldbook.

Jurasek, Lamson and O’Maley (1996) discussed the concept of the “student as ethnographer,” in which the learners got actively involved with the surroundings of the host country and culture while they conducted ethnographic research amongst host nationals. In their own reports, students revealed that they thought they had learned more about the host culture through their research projects than any other element of study abroad (or in coursework at their home university). Instead of learning solely about the surface of the culture, the participants focused on their interests and, through interviews with and observations of host nationals, they connected with the culture and had meaningful learning experiences (Jurasek et al., 1996).

All studies reviewed here indicated that methods of experiential learning have been very successful in numerous programs abroad. However, unfamiliarity with the learning environment, host culture, or coursework expectations could lead to a high level of student

anxiety, unless the participants were thoroughly prepared prior to departure and guided through the in-country experience. In many of the studies reviewed, in order to provide the appropriate guidance and training for experiential learning, formal, in-class instruction was combined with outside-the-classroom learning. Engle and Engle (1999) designed a French practicum for an experiential learning component to a traditional study abroad program. In six hours per week of mandatory contact with host nationals, students earned course credit for a number of interview projects and activities while interacting with the host culture. Students' outside-the-classroom interactions were discussed in a classroom setting with the program's faculty, in which students reflected on their experiences. Engle and Engle found that after students got over their fear of speaking the language with host nationals, they experienced growth in confidence and independence in their language skills. Students also reported an increased awareness of the host culture.

Citron and Kline (2001) stated specifically that adequate reflection was vital for success in overseas programs which incorporated experiential education. They suggested students set goals to begin to frame the experience, and once abroad, they should reflect on their experience through journaling to allow time for personal "debriefing" (Citron & Kline, 2001, p. 24). This process allowed learners to make the necessary connections between the experience, their past knowledge, and their subsequent learning, which was a necessary process in the experiential learning theory.

Numerous researchers (e.g., Jurasek, Lamson, & O'Maley, 1996; Archangeli, 1999; Engle & Engle, 1999; Brandt & Manley, 2002; and Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002) have emphasized that students need to receive proper training about the experiential aspects of their respective projects or study abroad programs. Also, they proposed that this training take place

prior to departure, during the in-country experience, and possibly upon return. Specific training tools included proper interview techniques (Archangeli, 1999) and ethnographic fieldwork methods (Brandt & Manley, 2002). Furthermore, many researchers (e.g., Brecht & Robinson, 1995; Pellegrino, 1998) stressed the need for institutions to balance in-class learning with out-of-class learning, and to provide students with intense training in experiential learning and the specific area of each respective program (e.g., ethnographic theory of learning, service learning) before sending them out for fieldwork. Questions surrounding the role of formal instruction and the organization of study abroad programs with elements of experiential learning still remain largely unanswered and are deserving of research. Researchers specified an additional need for future study in the assessment of experiential learning abroad and in the development of the structure (pre-departure through post-study) in non-traditional programs (in which experiential learning is most present).

Culture Shock

The next significant body of literature reviewed concerns culture shock during study abroad. The term “culture shock” was first introduced by Oberg in 1960. It refers to the anxiety that results from losing one’s familiar norms of social interaction. In short, culture shock in study abroad occurs when “sojourners,” or individuals who travel from one culture to another (Oberg, 1960), encounter stressful situations or experience differences in the host culture, to which they are unable to adapt (Chen, 1992).

Much debate surrounds the existence of culture shock in study abroad participants because many researchers disagree on the duration and order of each phase of shock. Each researcher, in fact, has his or her own model for the specific phases of cultural adjustment and for the amount of time of each respective phase. The stages of culture shock are essential for

understanding what may happen to students abroad. Pedersen (1995) divided the experience abroad into five stages of culture shock: 1) the honeymoon phase; 2) disintegration; 3) reintegration; 4) autonomy; and 5) interdependence. Montabaur (2002) followed similarly, but defined the five stages in terms of cross-cultural *adjustment* as opposed to *shock*: 1) honeymoon (first month abroad); 2) culture shock (6-8 weeks); 3) initial adjustment; 4) mental isolation; and 5) acceptance and integration.

The debate on the existence of culture shock has been heightened in the discussion of short-term study abroad programs, as participants are exposed to the target culture for a shorter duration than long-term programs. According to Montabaur's (2002) model, the participants of programs of one month's time or less (e.g., "LSU in the French Alps") would not encounter the "culture shock" phase of cross-cultural adjustment. In fact, according to Montabaur's (2002) phases of cross-cultural adjustment, the four participants in this study would have remained in the "honeymoon" phase for the duration of their program (first month abroad). In Montabaur's phases, participants experience the second phase of "culture shock" after six to eight weeks in the host culture and then enter into the third phase, "initial adjustment."

Some researchers, including Tange (2005) and Kohls (2001), saw the stages of culture shock on a much longer-term scale. For Tange (2005), the second stage of culture shock was known as "The Two Year Crisis." She found that an individual may truly need two years or more to adequately adjust to a new culture before the shock lessens and one moves into a culturally-adjusted phase. Kohls (2001) affirmed that the final stage of the process of culture shock and cultural adjustment ended with "adaptation or biculturalism" (p. 97).⁷²

⁷² I concede the notion of complete biculturalism is certainly something that cannot be achieved from participation on one short-term study abroad program.

On the contrary, Martin and Nakayama (2001) suggested that culture shock could happen whenever an individual was exposed to another environment and culture. They defined culture shock as “a relatively short-term feeling of disorientation, of discomfort due to the unfamiliarity of surroundings and the lack of familiar cues in the environment” (p. 89). Clearly, one does not have to be in a foreign country for an extended period of time to feel disorientation, discomfort or unfamiliarity. Therefore, their definition lends itself to culture shock being a definite possibility for short-term study abroad participants. One can see that much debate exists surrounding the stages and timeframe of sojourner culture shock. In fact, the debate is becoming more and more prevalent with the increase in short-term study abroad programs. With these developments and with little existing research uniquely dedicated to the study of culture shock and cultural adjustment in participants of short-term programs, more research needs to be completed.

Most important to the study at hand is the previous research on culture shock in non-traditional study abroad programs (many of which are also short-term programs). As mentioned earlier, several researchers (e.g., Jurasek, Lamson, & O'Maley, 1996; Archangeli, 1999; Engle & Engle, 1999; Brandt & Manley, 2002; and Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002) have called for more training for participants in non-traditional study abroad programs (experiential learning programs in many instances), in order to help them avoid feelings of anxiety or culture shock. If participants do not receive the appropriate pre-departure training for their abroad experience and have trouble coping with the host culture, several researchers have found that they seek out a “stranger group” (De Ley, 1975; Herman & Schild, 1961; Nash & Tarr, 1976; and Wilkinson, 1998a, 1998b).

The stranger group, seen as a natural coping mechanism to culture shock by De Ley (1975) and Wilkinson (1998a; 1998b), forms when students studying abroad seek out members of their own culture or language. De Ley (1975) explained this phenomenon of relying on one's home culture or the program group as "stranger theory." In the above studies, it was found that students who experienced culture shock did seek out and cling to people of their culture and/or language, which may or may not have lasted for the duration of their stay. Several studies, including Herman and Schild (1961) and Nash and Tarr (1976) cautioned readers about the power of the stranger group, which they claimed could negatively influence the attitudes of each individual member of the group. If the general attitude of the stranger group became negative toward the host culture, they found that all members of the group followed with negativity (Nash & Tarr, 1976; Herman & Schild, 1961). Although much research has been conducted on the general topic of culture shock, few in-depth studies examined the possibility of culture shock on short-term, non-traditional study abroad programs. Furthermore, very few studies on the "stranger group" were found, and many of those were conducted more than 30 years ago.

Issues of Program Duration

When discussing the effects of the study abroad experience on participants, the question of program duration is important and has become a more researched topic in recent years due to the considerable increase in short-term study abroad programs. As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this dissertation (see Table 1.2), participation in short-term (fewer than 8 weeks) study abroad programs has increased 325% in a time period of less than ten years (1993 to 2002) (Lincoln Commission, 2004). Furthermore, the majority of U.S. students (56%) is choosing programs which last less than one semester (IIE, 2005b). In their discussion of a large study for the IES, Dwyer and Peters (2004) mentioned the trend toward shorter study abroad programs:

Consistent with national study abroad statistics, the survey found that students are generally studying abroad for a shorter duration, with the number of full-year students declining dramatically. In the 1950s and 1960s, 72 percent of respondents studied for a full year, but only 20 percent of respondents did so in the 1990s. The number of students studying for less than 10 weeks tripled from the 1950s and 1960s to the 1990s.⁷³

Since the increase in short-term study abroad participation is a recent phenomenon (mid-1990s to present), research about its influence on participants is still emerging.

Several studies have examined the potential benefits of short-term study abroad. In Gorka and Niesenbaum (2001), participants reported that their experience on a short-term study abroad program had provided them with exposure to foreign culture, a different perspective in their discipline, sparked their interest in language study, and the desire for participation in another study abroad program. These findings were supported in additional studies which examined the potential benefits of short-term internships, service learning, or other short-term study abroad programs (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2003; 2004; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; and Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005). Furthermore, to this date, research has shown that study abroad of any program structure or duration has an unequivocally positive influence on most participants' career paths, global awareness, openmindedness, tolerance, appreciation of diversity, and self confidence (Akande & Slawson, 2000; Dwyer, 2004a, 2004b; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Ruhter McMillian & Opem, 2004).

Specifically, in a study of a conservation-based abroad program in Costa Rica, the participants indicated that their world view had become much more sensitive to other cultures' values (Myers, Hill, & Harwood, 2005). In Black and Duhon (2006), the participants in a short-term study abroad in London, England, were found (pre-study and post-study data collection) to have enhanced their cultural awareness. Furthermore, that study's findings showed positive effects on the participants' personal development, independence, maturity, and self-confidence.

⁷³ See the "Longer Stays Mean Greater Benefits" section of Dwyer and Peters (2004).

Similarly, Younes and Asay (2003) reported that study abroad participants show growth in personal development and an increased self-esteem and independence. In Pennington and Wildermuth (2005), nineteen participants in a short-term abroad program in Ireland or China reported growth in intercultural knowledge, as well as improvements in self-awareness.

Many researchers have questioned the importance of each program's duration in relation to the opportunities for student learning. Spencer and Hoffa (2002) have claimed that, while the common belief of "longer is better" holds true, "something is better than nothing" (p. 1). Dwyer and Peters (2004) agreed:

Results of the study also suggest that programs of at least six weeks in duration can also be enormously successful in producing important academic, inter- and intra-personal, career, and intercultural development outcomes. These findings are significant considering the current national increase in students attending shorter programs. ("Longer Stays Mean Greater Benefits" section)

Thus far, researchers have agreed that the longer a participant studies in the host country, the more intense the benefits; however, the positive effects of short-term study abroad has been found to be noteworthy (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2003, 2004; Dessoff, 2006; Dwyer, 2004a, 2004b; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; and Spencer & Hoffa, 2002). Barnhart and Groth (1987) affirmed that even three-week programs could be "eye-opening" and "life-changing" (p. 84). Dwyer (2004b) suggested that "programs of at least 6 weeks duration [could] be enormously successful in achieving important academic, personal, career and intercultural development outcomes" (p. 162).

Generally one of the program types of shortest duration, "study tours" have recently become the subject of research inquiry. In these programs, a professor or study abroad director usually accompanies or leads a group of U.S. students abroad for educational purposes. The objective of such programs can be in general studies and/or interdisciplinary, or it can be

extremely specific and related to advanced studies in the student's major. Study-tour participants often get a sneak peak of the host country or countries, as their time there is usually very limited. Certainly, long-term study abroad programs give the participants more time to interact with the host culture, and thus may offer greater benefits. However, that is not to say that "study tours" do not contribute to students' learning. Researchers have found that participation in such programs could positively affect the participants' overall academic college experiences and could positively influence personal, social and professional growth (Gray, Murdock, & Stebbins, 2002; Mapp, McFarland, & Newell, 2007; Pennington & Wildermuth, 2005).

Several studies mentioned above agreed that short-term study abroad had several advantages in today's education, including increased accessibility to students due to lower program costs and time commitment. In instances where students were forced to deal with inflexible curriculum requirements at their home institutions, family obligations, or the need for full- or part-time employment, shorter programs offered a taste of the abroad experience. All studies reviewed here indicated participant gains in the areas of personal, academic, linguistic, and career development. The *Open Doors* reports have indicated that participants continue to choose short-term programs more frequently because of the less expensive program costs, greater flexibility in schedule, and convenience.

These reasons were confirmed by Sánchez, Fornerino and Zhang (2006). In their study of American, French, and Chinese students, they uncovered several participant motivations for studying abroad. The American students appeared more motivated than their foreign counterparts to view study abroad as an opportunity to learn a foreign language, seek personal change and improve their future careers. Although informative, this study did not fully investigate the specific motivations for the choice of program type or duration. Overall, a shortage of research

exists in the area of an individual's motivation for the choice of program (structure and duration). Researchers have agreed that, since so many students are choosing short-term study abroad programs and because new program types are rapidly surfacing at most institutions, more research is needed on program effectiveness and assessment. Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) stressed the urgent need for more research in the area of short-term study abroad, by indicating that "nearly half of the students earning credit overseas are doing so for a period of fewer than eight weeks, leaving educators to explain or defend with only spotty evidence what the benefits of these shorter-term sojourns might be" (p.166).

The Lincoln Commission (2004) mentioned the importance of differentiating between short-term and long-term programs:

These short-term programs have a different focus from the traditional semester and academic year programs, with the latter more focused on language acquisition and deeper cultural immersion. Many shorter-term programs are designed to provide a relevant study abroad experience for tightly constrained majors (e.g., sciences), a learning situation that links the professional degree program to a different cultural milieu, and an opportunity for students otherwise not able to live and learn abroad due to cost, time, or other constraints to do so.

The shorter-term approach to study abroad has had the effect of accommodating greater numbers and categories of students (especially nontraditional students) and serving as an introduction to study abroad for students who may otherwise never have even considered doing so. (p. E-6)

Since short-term study abroad programs have goals independent from longer programs, they (and their participants) deserve research which is not lumped in with the general title "study abroad," but which is dedicated to the issues specific to short-term programs. The effects of program duration on student achievement continue to be debated and more research is needed (particularly on short-term, non-traditional programs) to achieve more definitive results.

The Effects of Study Abroad: In Search of Student Perspectives

In a review of the literature of the past few decades (especially the past decade), a large body of research has analyzed the effect(s) that study abroad has on its participants. Almost all studies have concluded that study abroad did have a positive influence on students, albeit, to a varying degree. In terms of language development and acquisition, there has been little denial about the positive gains that participants make while studying abroad. In terms of the development of the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) while abroad, listening and speaking skills have been shown to improve at a much higher rate than reading and writing. Specific studies by Davie (1996) and Meara (1994) showed unimpressive improvement of reading and writing of semester and year-long study abroad students. Both researchers called for more research on reading and writing strategies, and suggested several implications for course design during the abroad experience.

In terms of speaking skills, several studies have challenged the common assumption that “fluency,” or even significant language gains, are a guaranteed part of the study abroad experience. Wilkinson (1998a; 1998b) stands out as the lead studies that questioned the guarantee of “fluency” as a product of study abroad. Her study’s results indicated that students entered a study abroad experience with the goal of “fluency,” and were usually disappointed when they realized that it was a long process requiring substantial effort on their part, rather than a guaranteed product of a designated trip abroad. Mendelson (2004) echoed these findings that many students were under this misconception, and that a trip abroad of any duration did not simply produce fluency. Freed (1998) concurred, as she found that fluency was a common goal of most study abroad participants. However, she suggested that a participant’s prior language experience and individual personality (such as extroversion) may have affected language gain. A

student's ability to take risks in the host language and interact freely with host nationals was found to affect language acquisition abroad (Freed, 1998). The above researchers, as well as Bacon (2002), agreed that linguistic and cultural development were interconnected, but further research was needed to prepare students with tools and strategies to negotiate the "rules" of the host language in various contexts.

Most studies have concluded that the students' willingness to seek out host nationals or their commitment to speaking the target language has a great influence on their language development. Specifically, Medina-López-Portillo (2004) found that a lack of proficiency in the host language could possibly contribute to the use of avoidance techniques of host nationals, which was shown to lead to a reinforcement of preconceived stereotypes. Mendelson (2004) agreed that the participants in study abroad would need to make efforts to interact with host nationals and the host culture, since language was not learned through osmosis.

In addition to research on the development of language skills in study abroad programs, many studies have focused on the improvement of the participants' development and growth in many areas. The positive effects of study abroad on participants has been revealed in numerous areas of (inter)cultural development, including, but not limited to: an increased interest in international affairs and cross-cultural empathy (Kauffmann, Martin, & Weaver, 1992); a newly acquired desire to learn the host language and other languages (Masgoret, Bernaus, & Gardner, 2000); and further development of cross-cultural skills and global understanding (Kitsantas, 2004; Rundstrom Williams, 2005). Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) found that study abroad participants from the University of Delaware reported more confidence in their intercultural awareness and functional knowledge compared with their peers who remained in home-campus courses. Study abroad students reported that participation in their programs had a positive effect

in their personal, academic and social growth, whereas students who remained on the University of Delaware campus during that time only reported growth in academic areas (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2003, 2004).

Another area under investigation is the participants' possible increase in academic, personal, professional and social development. Many researchers have reported that participants saw (self-reported) study abroad as a catalyst for maturity, improved self-esteem, and autonomy (Barnhart & Groth, 1987; Cash, 1993; Ruhter McMillian & Opem, 2004). Due to the growing popularity of internships abroad, a number of studies have questioned the effects of such programs on the participants' career development. Dwyer and Peters (2004), Ruhter McMillian and Opem (2004), and Orahood, Kruze, and Pearson (2004) have all published findings showing that internships abroad have had a significant positive influence on career goals, problem-solving and communication skills, and have often given the participants an increased desire to consider work in an internationally-oriented company.

Perhaps the most influential research thus far in study abroad, however, was an extensive case study by the IES (International Education of Students). In 1999, the organization conducted a case study of 50 years of study abroad, which represented the "first large-scale survey to explore the long-term impact of study abroad on a student's personal, professional, and academic life" (Dwyer and Peters, 2004, para. 2). In 50 years, the IES had offered 25 different study abroad programs (of multiple structures and duration) in 14 countries (Dwyer, 2004b). Thus, it had access to an extensive participant pool (45,000 alumni in 1999), and it had readily available the contact information for over 17,000 of these past participants in IES programs (Dwyer, 2004b). The pilot study, reported by Akande and Slawson (2000), included over 700 study abroad alumni respondents. The principal IES study had over 3,400 alumni respond to its

questionnaires. Both studies generated numerous findings on the positive, long-lasting effects of study abroad:

[. . .] study abroad positively and unequivocally influences the career path, world-view, and self-confidence of students.

[. . .] Regardless of where students studied and for how long, the data from the more than 3,400 respondents (a 23 percent response rate) shows that studying abroad is usually a defining moment in a young person's life and continues to impact the participant's life for years after the experience. (Dwyer & Peters, 2004, para. 2-3)

Table 2.2 Participants' Reported Development ⁷⁴

Survey Item	% Full Year	% Fall Semester	% Spring Semester	% Summer	% Total
Personal Development					
Increased self-confidence	98%	95%	96%	97%	96%
Served as a catalyst for increased maturity	98%	97%	97%	95%	97%
Has had a lasting effect on world view	97%	95%	94%	92%	95%
Academic Commitment					
Enhanced interest in academic study	81%	80%	79%	84%	80%
Influenced subsequent educational experiences	91%	85%	86%	84%	87%
Reinforced commitment to foreign language study	88%	83%	85%	90%	86%

The findings of the IES study are summarized in Tables 2.2 and 2.3. Results of the study were self-reported by individual alumni of study abroad, thus adding to the literature on student perspectives. For personal development, a very high percentage of respondents (from long-term and short-term programs) reported positive effects from study abroad. In fact, personal

⁷⁴ This chart was adapted from Dwyer & Peters (2004).

development was the area of growth to receive the highest self-reported percentages. Academic commitment and intercultural development also received high marks across program durations. Career development was reported with the least frequency, though all areas received an over 57% rate of occurrence.

Table 2.3 Participants' Reported Development (Continued)

Survey Item	% Full Year	% Fall Semester	% Spring Semester	% Summer	% Total
Intercultural Development					
Helped me better understand my own cultural values and biases	99%	97%	97%	95%	98%
Influenced me to seek out a greater diversity of friends	94%	88%	89%	86%	90%
Continues to influence interactions with people from different cultures	97%	93%	92%	92%	94%
Career development					
Acquired skill sets that influenced career path	82%	73%	74%	71%	76%
Ignited an interest in a career direction pursued after the experience	70%	57%	59%	59%	62%

Only a few researchers have reported any neutral or negative effects of study abroad on participants' development. Nash (1976), in a study comparing on-campus students with study abroad students, reported that while the initial effect of study abroad was extremely positive, later assessment showed that the level of effect may not have remained as strong after the memory of the experience faded. In the same study, study abroad participants did report increased autonomy, but an increase in tolerance could not be confirmed. In Marion (1980), the participants who interacted frequently with host nationals tended to have a positive attitude

toward their hosts; however, if students avoided interaction with host nationals or held negative attitudes of host nationals or the host country prior to going abroad, their attitudes remained negative or stereotypical.

Research Implications of the “LSU in the French Alps” Program

It is clear from reviewing the literature that the interest in study abroad research is growing. Numerous issues pertinent to the future of study abroad programs (and education in general) continue to emerge, particularly since the early 1990s. Concerns about program duration, emergent program types (i.e., service learning or internships), the possible effects of study abroad on the participants, cross-cultural training and its pedagogical implications, and numerous other issues, continue to emerge to the forefront of study abroad research. Chieffo and Griffiths (2003) remained firm that more reliable data about the effect of study abroad and international education was needed: “[o]utcomes from rigorous assessment projects can be used to change existing programs and shape new ones to maximize the benefits to the participants” (p. 27). The goal of examining a study abroad program to reveal its influence on participants (as well as the students’ perspectives on their experiences), along with the desire to maximize the benefits of future participants, corresponds well with the main objectives of this study.

Although there has been an increase in the number of studies dedicated to research in study abroad, and recent initiatives have added legitimacy and professionalism to the field, this review of literature has revealed several serious gaps in the research: 1) a lack of studies about foreign language majors who participate in non-traditional study abroad programs; 2) little to no research on *participant perspectives* of the effects of specific program *types* (particularly non-traditional); 3) little to no research on cultural or linguistic internships for foreign language majors or minors (non-business based); 4) a lack of research on the effects of training programs

for study abroad (particularly in non-traditional programs abroad in which experiential learning is most present); and 5) little or no research on the presence of culture shock in programs of non-traditional structure.

The vast majority of research discussed in this exhaustive review of the literature did not capture the participants' "whole" experience in context, but rather examined one aspect of the study abroad experience, such as the results of a project abroad (e.g., ethnographic interviewing techniques, student "fieldwork", or outside-the-classroom contact with host nationals) or the effects of study abroad. Furthermore, several studies used a large number of participants from a variety of study abroad locations (a variety of American universities and/or study abroad destinations) whose programs varied in duration and structure. For instance, while many studies (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2003; Dwyer, 2004a; Dwyer, 2004b; Dwyer & Peters, 2004) offered new findings⁷⁵ which allowed us to learn more about students' experiences, they were based on a large number of participants and often employed quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. Therefore, they lacked an in-depth, rich description of the individual participants' experiences. Understanding study abroad from the participants' perspective can provide insight into areas not frequently explored in the literature. Many of the researchers in this review of literature had never met their participants, and if they did, most had only had a brief interview or two, and/or collected responses to a questionnaire.

In the study discussed in this dissertation, I have spent extensive time with each participant, both individually and in the LSU group, with and without host nationals. In fact, this study focuses on several of the research areas that were lacking in the review of the literature: 1) student perspectives; 2) short-term, non-traditional study abroad programs; 3) cultural, linguistic

⁷⁵ It should be noted that short-term study abroad programs were traditionally neglected and excluded from research until about the mid 1990s, when the popularity of such programs began to rise.

internships; 4) outside-the-classroom contact with host nationals; and 5) pre-departure, in-country, re-entry, and post-study data collection from a variety of instruments (multiple questionnaires, formal and informal interviews, observations and artifact collection). The “LSU in the French Alps” program embraces several emergent elements of new twenty-first century programs. Since this LSU program is a short-term study abroad, which uses a non-traditional method of cultural internships as an approach to second-language and culture learning, it is a good candidate for investigation.⁷⁶

Furthermore, the program in Ubaye has the unique aspect of bringing together the history between Louisiana and the Ubaye Valley, as well as organized outside-the-classroom activities with host nationals. In this study, I am able to develop an in-depth, rich study of students’ perspectives and get the view about such a study abroad experience through the participants’ eyes. Given the small number of participants, the program under study will begin to fill research gaps with a close analysis of the experiences of individual participants (French majors or minors). The next chapter of this dissertation discusses the research methodology for this study and specifically reveals how this study will begin to address these research gaps.

⁷⁶ It should be noted that this LSU program is one of the only programs abroad in which the participants complete cultural internships, as opposed to internships for business, education or nursing majors.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An Introduction to the Research Methodology

This chapter discusses the research methodology. It includes a detailed explanation of the research tradition of inquiry, a rationale for the choice of participants and site, and this study's specific methods of data collection, analysis and report. I used an ethnographically-researched case study design in order to achieve an in-depth view with an insider perspective of the program and of the participants' perceptions of their learning experiences abroad and their influence on certain aspects of their lives. I describe several salient characteristics of this qualitative model and briefly review some criticisms of this research paradigm.

Due to the lack of previous research on programs of both this duration (short-term) and type (cultural and linguistic internship programs), as well as the understudy of student perspectives and perceptions of the abroad experience's possible effects, this study is exploratory in nature. I offer a detailed rationale for why an exploratory case study approach is most appropriate for my research questions and for a study of this kind. While I start with a solid framework of research questions, instruments of data collection and particular goals for the study, I am, in fact, exploring the program, its participants and their perspectives, in hopes of creating a detailed account of what the data reveals in order to further research on this topic. Therefore, the research design must remain flexible to allow for the exploration of emergent themes during data collection. Because of the exploratory nature of this in-depth study and the factor that solely the "LSU in the French Alps" program and a small number of participants are being studied, I shall use qualitative approaches in the research methodology.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ The specific topics of research design and flexible framework will be discussed at length in the "Data Collection" section of this chapter of the dissertation.

Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative research methodology applies best to this study, as it allows me to “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 3). In addition, in the qualitative approach, the context and setting of the study is given much attention; this study’s setting, the Ubaye Valley in France and the “LSU French in the French Alps” program, is equally essential. According to Patton (2002), an advantage of qualitative research is that “greater attention can be given to nuance, setting, interdependencies, complexities, idiosyncrasies, and context” (p. 60). Since the goal of this study is to shed light on a unique abroad program in its natural setting as well as to attempt to make sense of students’ perspectives toward the program and the influence they perceive the program has had on their lives, the qualitative tradition is a clear choice.

Qualitative researchers have many choices when it comes to selecting a research design for a study. Before attempting to conduct a study, Marshall and Rossman (2006) discuss three main challenges qualitative researchers face in the beginning stages of research design:

- (a) developing a conceptual framework for the study that is thorough, concise, and elegant; (b) planning a design that is systematic and manageable, yet flexible; and (c) integrating these into a coherent document that convinces the proposal readers [. . .] that the study should be done, can be done and will be done. (pp. 10-11)

Furthermore, they break down these challenges by listing the “abilities” (Chapter 1) each framework should have to be considered good qualitative research. It should have a “Should-Do-Ability,” in which the study furthers research and continues the ongoing dialogue in a discipline on a topic. The “Do-Ability” shows that the research is “do-able” and feasible. Finally, the “Want-to Do-Ability” shows the researcher’s engagement in the subject matter and the importance of the work to the researcher.

It is essential to understand the main characteristics of qualitative research.⁷⁸ In their book *Designing Qualitative Research*, Marshall and Rossman (2006) start by describing the basic, essential characteristics of qualitative research. They suggest that qualitative research is “a broad approach to the study of a social phenomenon” and “its various genres are naturalistic, interpretive, and increasingly critical, and they draw on multiple methods of inquiry” (p. 2). Marshall and Rossman (2006), as well as Creswell (1998), affirm that qualitative research studies a naturally-occurring phenomenon in a non-manipulated context and is emergent and evolving (rather than tightly prefigured as in experimental research). From the beginning of the study, the researcher must be familiar with the nature of qualitative inquiry, since it is “uniquely suited to uncovering the unexpected and exploring new avenues [. . .] (which) demands flexibility in the proposal so that data gathering can respond to increasingly refined research questions” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 38). Finally, according to the several types of qualitative studies as discussed by Marshall and Rossman (2006, p. 34), this study is *exploratory* (identifies or discovers important categories of meaning or seeks to generate hypotheses of further research) and *descriptive* (documents and describes a phenomenon). In short, this research *explores* and *describes* the program under study, as well as its structure and the historical details which surround it.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) develop three purposes for the “how” of the study, or its design: 1) presents a plan for the conduct of the study; 2) demonstrates to the reader that the researcher is capable of conducting the study; and 3) preserves the design flexibility (p. 51). The researcher must have a clear and thorough understanding of the qualitative strategy or approach

⁷⁸ In my prior research of educational research methodology, several works and researchers played an important role in influencing my beliefs and philosophy of research. My decisions for the framework of this study have thus been influenced by these researchers. In addition to the numerous authors listed in this dissertation, I have also relied on these works and authors: Creswell (2005); Fraenkel & Wallen (1990); Gall, Borg, & Gall (1996); and Patton (2002).

with which he or she is working. Similarly, Hatch (2002) concludes that, due to the emergent design of many qualitative studies, the building of sound research design is a delicate task, requiring patience and know-how on the part of the researcher:

It is a characteristic of qualitative research that studies change as they are being implemented. Because the goal is to get inside a social phenomenon in a special social setting, it is impossible to construct a design *a priori* that takes into account what the researcher finds out upon actually entering the social setting to be studied. (p. 10)

In short, I believe Bogdan and Biklin (1992) describe this research quite appropriately: “[y]ou are not putting together a puzzle, whose picture you already know. You are constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts” (as cited in Hatch, 2002, p. 10).

However, specific questions, methods, and other elements of design should be well founded and introduced in the proposal phase of the study and subsequently tailored to the study as its intricacies emerge.

Research Design

Rationale for the Case Study Approach

A case study method best fits the frame of this study, since it is most appropriate when “the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 1). To reiterate the point about gaining an understanding of the whole context, he states, “[case study research] allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 2003, p. 2). Clearly, the research of participant perspectives and their perceived learning during this overseas program focused on a phenomenon of a real-life situation, and in this study, I had little control over the events of the program. Therefore, the choice of case study research, with the implementation of numerous data collection techniques over a several-month period, was a clear decision for an in-depth study with a small number of participants.

The case study approach offers a unique way to gain an in-depth view of a setting, the participants and/or a phenomenon. The choice of a case study approach gives the reader a much-needed detailed description of the program and of the participants' perspectives, which is essential to the understanding of a single abroad program with four participants. Jarrett (1992) asserts that case studies are "desirable when researchers seek firsthand knowledge of real-life situations and processes within naturalistic settings and an understanding of the subjective meanings that actors give to the behaviors and events being observed and discussed" (p. 176). Shulman (1986) affirms that most readers find individual cases more powerful and memorable than impersonal empirical findings. Indeed, case study research is a powerful tool to promote understanding of the complex inner workings and setting of an abroad program (as well as its pre-departure program and reentry for the participants) and its participants' perspectives. Kenny and Grotelueschen (1980) agree with the case study design in such instances when one desires a "better understanding of the dynamics of the program. When it is important to be responsive, to convey a holistic and dynamically rich account of a program, a case study is a tailor made approach" (p. 5). By breaking down the procedures of the case study research design and the major developers of the approach, it becomes clear why it is most appropriate for this study.

One of the most recognized books on case study research is Yin's *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*.⁷⁹ Yin⁸⁰ (2003) finds that the components of the research design are instrumental to the study's success, since they are the base of the entire study, making or breaking its soundness. Yin's (2003) design components include, but are not limited to, a

⁷⁹ This work is listed in the majority of research textbooks and in literally almost all the articles reviewed about case study methodology.

⁸⁰ Yin's work in case study research has influenced countless researchers, including Winston Tellis. Two articles by Tellis, "Introduction to Case Study" (July, 1997) and "Application of Case Study Methodology" (September, 1997), influenced my understanding of case study research and thus this study's methodology. Other research on case study methodology that influenced my views of case study research (and thus this study) include: Brecht & Robinson (1993); Feagin, Orum, & Sjober (1991); Huebner (1998); Meyer (2001); and Yin (1994a).

study's research questions (clarifying precisely the nature of the study), its propositions (scope of the study; purpose of the study) and its unit(s) of analysis within the case(s).⁸¹

The researcher needs to make critical decisions about the study, which will last the duration of the project and will greatly influence its methodology. For instance, I needed to decide between a single-case study or multiple-case study as well as a holistic (one unit of analysis) structure or an embedded (several units of analyses) structure. For the current study, these questions are not easily answered. I spent many hours reflecting upon the different research scenarios and how they would affect the look of the study and what would be studied. Even the choice of the “case” for this case study was challenging because there is the overarching “case” of the “LSU in the French Alps program” with its four participants who help inform us about the case; however, as the participants’ stories unfold, they, too, seem to develop into “cases” in their own right.

In his work “The Art of Case Study Research” (1995), Stake infers that the end result of a case study is useful in several ways, including learning about the nature of the case itself, the historical background of the case, the physical setting in which the case is bound, and about the participants⁸² through whom the case can be studied. Indeed, the study at hand examines the nature of the case or context (the “LSU in the French Alps” program), its historical background (the connections between southern Louisiana and the Ubaye Valley, France) and the physical setting in which it occurs. Finally, the case becomes known through the eyes of its participants or informants and each participant has his or her own story which can be analyzed independently

⁸¹ For this study, the participants or informants are the unit(s) of analysis within the case of the LSU in the French Alps program. Instead of doing a cross-case comparison, I will be able to compare and contrast among the units of analysis in the single case of the program.

⁸² Stake (1995) refers to the informants/participants of a case study as the “actors” (p. 1) through which the case study can be known.

in this study. In a study of this nature (participant perspectives), it is essential to give the participants' words ample analysis and discussion.

Since the goal of this study is to reach a deep understanding into both the program and the participants' perspectives, a single case study approach to research is a viable choice for a research design and overall methodology. Stake (1995) discusses the essentials of single case study research:

A case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case. [. . .] We study a case when it itself is of very special interest. We look for the detail of interaction with its contexts. Case study is the study of particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances. (p. xi)

The "LSU in the French Alps" program can be described as a "bounded system," as it is a finite system enclosed by time and by place (Stake, 1995, p. 2). Furthering Stake's logic, the program lends itself well to the case study approach because it is a single unit, or what he refers to as a "specific, unique bounded system" (Stake, 2005, p. 445). For a month, the participants experience an immersion program in which they are housed in close quarters and have hours of daily exposure to the French culture and French businesses.

A single case study design provides the profundity necessary to begin to understand the multiple factors at play in an intense short-term program of this type. Some experts in case study research design, such as Stake (2005) and Wolcott (1999, 2001), support a single-case design, which they claim leads to sufficient penetration and understanding into the case. On the other hand, Yin (2003) supports the research value of a multiple-case study design that may employ cross-case comparisons. The specific focus on a single case facilitates a better exploration into the research questions about the program and the participants' perspectives and their individual experiences.

The specific purposes of case study research depend on the kind of case study that is employed. This study can be categorized as a *descriptive, exploratory* case study. It seeks to explore and uncover a detailed description of a phenomenon in its context (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2003). This study also lends itself to Stake's "intrinsic" case study, as it is a case of intrinsic interest since it fits into the understudied, emergent area of short-term (duration), non-traditional (program type) international programs. Because of these particular characteristics and the reality that thousands of students choose these short-term, non-traditional programs in lieu of the more historically popular semester programs, this case stands out as adequately distinctive to warrant this investigation. Finally, this study will further the foundation of research for the newly developed and emergent short-term and/or non-traditional programs and will continue the working dialogue and discussion about the ever-changing scene of study abroad.

Aspects of Ethnography

Because of the social constructs of the setting and its participants, this study employs aspects of ethnography in this research. Case study research and ethnography share many of the same characteristics in their approaches to qualitative research. In both instances, the researcher's job is to gain considerable, in-depth knowledge about the setting or context, culture and/or the participants at hand, which is often referred to as "thick description" (Merriam, 1998, p. 12). Researchers of a specific case or cases are not interested in painting a simple picture or giving an overview of the case, but rather seek to give a thorough, even saturated story. Woods (1986) summarizes this very idea as to what an ethnographic study tries to bring to the reader: "[Ethnography is] no ordinary picture. A snapshot gives merely surface detail. The ethnographer is interested in what lies beneath" (p. 5). A statement made by Wolcott (1990) is particularly suitable to single case studies: "[i]n a day when large sample sizes remain the vogue and

computer capabilities entice us to substitute breadth for depth, ethnography offers an authoritative mandate to study in units of one, the single case studied holistically” (p. 87). The goal of this study is not to gather information from a large sample of participants, but rather to draw a very detailed picture of the program and thick description of what four participants experienced.

To recapitulate, this study is not an “ethnography” (the study of a culture or a large population, Hatch, 2002), but rather a case study with certain elements of the ethnographic method. Hatch (2002) brings up that many researchers have a tendency to mislabel their work under the generic term of “ethnography,” when perhaps it is a case study of a participant observation:

Fieldwork methods that include interviewing, artifact collection, and especially direct observation recorded in field notes are the data collection tools in this type of study [participant observation studies]. Such studies are not ethnographies because they are much narrower in scope and usually involve less time in the field. (p. 22)

In addition, Marshall and Rossman (2006) describe a case study as “the most complex strategy, [that] may entail multiple methods—interviews, observations, document analysis, even surveys [. . .] [and] interview strategies require close, personal interactions between researcher and participants, often over long periods of time” (p. 56). Therefore, the choice of ethnographic and case study methods, with the implementation of multiple data collection techniques over a several-month period, was a clear decision for an in-depth study with four participants.

In the write up of this study, one of the clear goals was to use the language and perspectives of the participants. In order to gain the most insight into their lived experiences, their exact words and perspectives were used to inform the reader, which is vital to the techniques of ethnographic research, since it is *their* meanings and interpretations that truly matter the most (Woods, 1986). Throughout the report of this study, the foundations of

ethnography were employed to represent the perspectives of the participants since the language and direct quotations of the study participants⁸³ were intentionally included.

Challenges to Case Study Research

Yin (2003) narrows down the challenges of qualitative research by focusing on the issues of conducting case study research. He discusses the various traditional prejudices against the case study strategy: 1) lack of rigor; 2) little basis for generalization; 3) too time-consuming and bulky with massive amounts of data. Yin (2003) gives the case study researcher ways to overcome these prejudices and bring more legitimacy to case study methodology. The lack of rigor is a great concern in case study research because there is no specific manual, method, or guidebook to the strategy. In the past, “the case study investigator has been sloppy, has not followed systematic procedures, or has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions” (Yin, 2003, p. 10). To remedy this problem, Yin suggests a more systemic approach to research, in which the researcher follows a well-researched case study design, uses triangulation in data collection and analysis, and is more accountable for the findings, thus implementing an audit trail, for instance.

As for the lack of basis for scientific generalization, Yin (2003) affirms that the same can be true for single scientific experiments, since one single experiment is not generalizable. To remedy this issue, Yin (2003) recommends that the case study researcher discover the goal of “analytical generalization,” where the research findings are expanded to theory and to theoretical propositions, rather than “statistical generalization” (p. 10). Furthermore, he proposes that the

⁸³ Van Maanen’s book *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography* (1988) was consulted to inform the report of this study. This study’s report distinctly uses the “realist tale” approach in several ways, as it is a realistic account of the inner workings of a “small group with common interests” and works toward the “authenticity of the participants’ perspectives” (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 45).

case study researcher use previously developed theories as templates with which to compare and contrast the findings from his or her study.⁸⁴

As stated earlier, to add to the rigor and analytical generalizability of the strategy, Yin (2003) prefers multiple-case studies over a single-case study. However, Stake (2005) and Wolcott (1990; 2001) support a single-case design, which they affirm leads to a deeper understanding of the case, setting or phenomenon. Laws and McLeod (2004) affirm that a single case study may not be generalizable, but they claim that generalizability is not the goal of such research, for it does not attempt to arrive at a universal conclusion but rather give an in-depth account or description of a phenomenon in its naturally occurring environment. They state, “It was hoped that the (case) study provided a clearer picture and thus assisted the direction of future research” (p. 16).

Certain critics (among them Roman & Apple, 1990) argue that studies with an ethnographic approach cannot provide an exact view of what is happening in the setting that is studied. They assert that a researcher, as a participant observer, enters the field for the study and simply attempts to describe the setting, participants, culture and/or phenomenon at hand to his or her audience. To counter this critique, the researcher can attempt to make the report of the study as realistic as possible and show that he or she gained an *emic*, or insider’s perspective, of the setting. For example, as a researcher, I became an active participant observer in almost every activity of every phase of this LSU abroad program, included various types of data collection instruments, and based my report on the participants’ perspectives (usually direct quotes) in addition to my observations, field notes and analysis of the data. These techniques are meant to provide a more informed, less-biased study, one that represents the participants’ perspectives as closely as possible. Finally, the process for coding the data during data analysis was not only

⁸⁴ The discussion of the learning theories present in this study will be included in the Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

done by hand, but also through a computer program (XSight 2 by QRS International) for reliable sorting and coding, which provided an objective check for emergent or common themes and categories among the participants.

Development of the Prospective Questions

From the beginning of the study, the researcher must be familiar with the nature of qualitative inquiry, since it is “uniquely suited to uncovering the unexpected and exploring new avenues [. . .] [which] demands flexibility in the proposal so that data gathering can respond to increasingly refined research questions” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 38). Therefore, the development of research questions takes careful consideration by the researcher—one has to be clear about the focus of the study, yet reserve enough flexibility to permit exploration of emerging data. Hatch (2002) corroborates this belief in flexibility, but confirms the necessity of well thought out research questions: “research questions are often refined and sometimes changed during the course of qualitative studies, but without them, studies can lack direction, focus, or the means to evaluate their effectiveness” (p. 42).

From my initial inquiries into this study, I began to develop a better understanding of the program. The development of the research questions followed. Stake (1995) suggests that one’s research questions should not be pre-set inquiries, but rather they should evolve:

Some of us find it useful to write out a set of 10 or 20 prospective questions, substantive questions posed in negotiating the study, in early contacts with the case, or from experience or relevant literatures as indications of what in other cases has been found deeply puzzling or problematic. (p. 20)

Once the researcher is engaged in fieldwork and data collection, Stake (1995) emphasizes that this is the time to allow the study to emerge: “*emic issues* emerge [. . .] [and] [t]hese are the issues of the actors, the people who belong to the case. These are issues from the inside” (p. 20).

As stated in Marshall and Rossman (2006), prospective research questions are simply preliminary inquiries that should be flexible enough to allow for exploration when themes develop during data collection: “the research questions should be general enough to permit exploration but focused enough to delimit the study” (p. 39). Furthermore, they reiterate the need to propose these general, initial questions in order to allow for more concepts to emerge during the research as the study unfolds:

Focusing the study and posing general research questions are best addressed in a developmental manner, relying on discussions of related literature to help frame and refine the specific topic. Often, the primary research goal is to discover those very questions that are most probing and insightful. Most likely, the relevant concepts will develop during the research process, but the research proposal must suggest themes based on one’s knowledge of the literature. (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 39)

In fact, as a result of my initial research inquiries about the program, the study began to slowly hone in on more specific questions and topics. In this study, it was important to situate the “LSU in the French Alps” program in the context of U.S. study abroad, as well as describe the intricate workings of this abroad program, from its inception to its current structure.⁸⁵ In addition, I needed to uncover the historical background of immigration linking the Ubaye Valley to Louisiana, as it was the foundation of the LSU program abroad. However, the emergent research questions began to focus more on the participants and their perspectives of the program and their learning. Creswell’s (2005) view furthers the discussion of the role of research questions in qualitative research: “the purpose is much more open ended than in quantitative research. You ask general, broad questions so that you can best learn from participants” (p. 47). To review, the prospective questions for this study include:

⁸⁵ To better organize the study, much of the inquiry and data collection (including instruments) were broken down into the stages of the program: pre-departure orientation, in-country experience, re-entry into the U.S. and post study (months after return home).

1. **Participants' Perspectives on Pre-departure Orientation:** How do the participants react to the pre-departure orientation week and do they feel that it significantly prepared them for this immersion experience?
2. **Participants motivations and goals:** Why do the participants choose this program (motivation) and what do they hope to accomplish as a result of participation in the program (goals)?
3. **Culture shock:** Do students foresee experiencing any culture shock and once in the Ubaye Valley, how do the participants believe they experience culture shock, if at all?
4. **The Effects of Study Abroad:**
 - a. How do the participants view their learning on this program, particularly in regard to learning the French language and culture? What do participants perceive they learn on this type of short-term abroad program in which instruction is non-classroom based with internships and excursions?
 - b. How, if at all, do the participants believe the experience on this program has influenced their lives and their knowledge and goals (academic, personal, linguistic, cultural or professional)?

Finally, Yin's approach (2003) was used in the construction of the research questions for this case study. He emphasizes that the case study approach is "the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p. 1). This study and its research questions match well with these criteria, again illustrating the appropriateness of the case study approach.

Choice of Site

The choice of the site is of great importance in case study research. In this study, this decision was more of a choice of program or case than a choice of site, since the site of the program was fixed. Marshall and Rossman (2006) discuss the importance of the site:

A realistic site is where (a) entry is possible; (b) there is a high probability that a rich mix of processes, people, programs, interactions, and structures of interest are present; (c) the researcher is likely to be able to build trusting relations with the participants of the study; and (d) data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured. (p. 61)

As I accessed the sites of the Alps program, which included the campus of LSU and numerous locations in France (Paris, train travel, Barcelonnette and the surrounding areas in the French Alps, participant internship sites, various activities with host nationals, program lodging, etc.), many of the above criteria were present. Entry into the program was negotiated with faculty members in the French department at LSU. Given the intense interaction between host nationals and program participants and amongst the participants themselves as a small social group, the cultural nature of the program and my role as a participant observer, (b) and (c) from above (Marshall & Rossman), were addressed. As for Marshall and Rossman's (2006) suggestions about a realistic site (d), steps were taken to maintain the collection of credible data of sufficient quality and these issues were continually and appropriately addressed in the construction of the research design, data collection and analysis, as well as in the writing of the report.⁸⁶

Procedures for Student Participation

After meeting with the lead faculty members of the "LSU in the French Alps" program and department administrators, I received the names of the program's participants for that summer's upcoming program. Faculty members were very enthusiastic and supportive of my inquiries and anticipated learning more about how the program's participants reacted to the

⁸⁶ Also see the "Criteria of Soundness" section of this chapter for more information on credibility and reliability of this study's design.

program and how they believed the experience influenced their lives. I sent all participants an email informing them about this proposed study and awaited the first meeting for the program.

During their first meeting with the program director, I was introduced to the participants and I told them about this study and the overall research goals. Even before I asked them whether they had any questions or perhaps had an interest in participating, they had all eagerly said they wanted to participate and began asking how they could help me. To ensure that participants were informed, I further explained the “participant-observer” role as a researcher and provided them with more detailed information about their participation in interviews and questionnaires. All four participants were excited about the trip and about the study; they were ready to talk about their experiences from that very first evening meeting.

Another essential part of the research design, especially in the proposal phase, is to receive Institutional Review Board (IRB) clearance from one’s institution in order to begin the study. If the researcher is using human subjects or participants in the study, the IRB is used as a way to protect them from harm (Hatch, 2002). This study was subject to “expedited review procedures,” for it was judged to have little to no risk to participants. Submitted to the IRB were the project objectives, a description of the researcher participants, the research methods and procedures, data protection plan, participant benefits and methods of informed consent. Before any data collection occurred, LSU IRB approval was granted and informed consent was obtained by each participant.⁸⁷

How the researcher chooses the participants for a study is another crucial issue in case study methodology. Hatch (2002) discusses different types of sampling methods which were evaluated for use in this study. He affirms that “purposeful sampling” occurs when the researcher has specific reasons for selecting participants; “homogeneous sampling” occurs when

⁸⁷ Refer to “Appendix A” at the end of this dissertation for a copy of the IRB consent form for this study.

participants share common characteristics; and “convenience sampling,” occurs when the participants are accessible and willing (p. 51). The participants of this study can be considered “convenient” samples, as they were already participants in the program that was chosen to be the “case” in this case study. However, since all participants met the prerequisites, criteria and requirements for entrance into the “LSU in the French Alps” program, they are a criterion sample also. The requirements for admission into the program included: the desire to speak French in an immersion setting and live in a remote area of rural France, an intermediate to advanced level of French (judged by LSU faculty members in a proficiency interview in French), and a declared French minor or major with a minimum 2.5 GPA. Furthermore, participants were part of a purposeful sample as they were all part of the LSU program in the French Alps, which was purposefully selected for this study. The aforementioned requirements and common interests of participants also made them a less-than-random group in terms of homogeneousness (typical cases and participants in the unique case of this LSU program), although each participant was certain to possess individual preferences, experiences, and personalities.

The participants for this study were four undergraduate students who participated in the “LSU in the French Alps” summer program during the mid to late 2000s.⁸⁸ Three females and one male, all four participants identified themselves as “Caucasian” and “American,” with their home state being Louisiana. All participants marked “English” as their maternal language and all indicated that their exposure to the French language while growing up was minimal. Furthermore, all participants reported a grade point average of 3.6 or above, and that they had received scholarships from the Friends of French Studies organization toward their tuition for the French Alps program. Some variety existed in their previous travel experiences abroad and their

⁸⁸ These four participants were the only students in the program that summer. As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, the exact year of the program is being withheld in order to protect the anonymity of the study participants.

age range was substantial, from just over 19 to over 70 years old. The participants' responses varied as to motivation for travel or study abroad, choice of program, financial status, career goals, expectations for the results of the program and several other topics. These issues, among others, are examined in the introductions of the individual participants below and in the findings of this study.

Prior to data collection, each participant was given a random four-number code as a tool to uphold confidential identification. In other words, instead of writing down their real names or pseudonyms on their questionnaires, students wrote their individual codes known only to the researcher and each respective participant. These four-number codes were also used on all researcher field notes, during the interview process and with the labeling of other artifacts dealing with the participants' identities. For the purposes of protecting the participants' identity, I attributed a pseudonym to each of them.

From the data collected in the pre-departure questionnaire, I was able to compile information about each participant, including his or her age, major in college, hometown, travel experience and exposure to diversity (domestic and international). Furthermore, participants gave me details about their prior exposure to French (during their youth and previous French courses at LSU). These details are found below in the introductions of the participants.

Catherine

Catherine was a 21-year-old third-year English major and French minor. She grew up in a medium-sized city in southern Louisiana. She reported that she had never traveled abroad and that her only direct contact with people from foreign nations was when two French students stayed at her family's home for a few weeks when she was 6 years old. Her out-of-class exposure to French was minimal, and she stated that she "heard Cajun phrases from [her]

grandparents;” but she did not learn to speak French from them. At the beginning of this study, Catherine had completed 6 semesters and 5 French courses at LSU, ranging from introductory to intermediate French language to an introduction to readings in French literature.

Dorothy

At over 70 years old, Dorothy is the oldest of the participants. Dorothy’s story is unique, as she is a retired teacher, who returned to college to get her degree in French. She stated that one of her dreams was to learn French and to possibly return to the workforce to teach it. Her current major in college was French, but her original college degree was in elementary education. In her lifetime, Dorothy had traveled extensively, including trips to France, Germany, Israel, Switzerland, Austria and Italy. Most of these trips were for short vacations; however, she had participated in two separate study abroad programs and thus, was the only participant in this study who had prior experience with study abroad programs. In 1969, she studied German for two months in Austria and the summer before her participation in the French Alps program, she took French courses for five weeks with the “LSU in Paris” program. Dorothy’s exposure to French during her childhood was great, since she stated that her “father’s family spoke Cajun French.” She heard many conversations in Cajun French through interaction with her Cajun-speaking family members, but she did not learn to speak the language beyond small phrases. She regretted it and remarked that her “father’s family spoke Cajun French before attending school in Louisiana. However, upon entering school, they were forced to speak English, so my family lost a lot of its French.” Prior to this study, Dorothy had been a student for more than 6 semesters at LSU and had taken nine French courses, including intermediate language and oral expression, an introduction to French literature, French culture and civilization and an advanced French phonetics course.

Eric

Eric, age 20, was the youngest participant in this study. An international studies and French major and dance and Italian minor, Eric wrote that he was fascinated with languages and cultures. He indicated that his only international travel experience had been on a Caribbean cruise when he was 12 years old. Growing up, he was not exposed to the French language and he began his study of French in the 9th grade. He did reveal that in his student job before and after the program, he had been exposed to French on a daily basis. At the beginning of the program, Eric had completed his first year at LSU, one intermediate-level French language course and one course of oral expression with a concentration in business French.

Miranda

Miranda was a 28-year-old double major in French cultural studies and rural sociology. She had spent most of her life in Louisiana, living just outside Baton Rouge. Miranda's only previous international travel experience was a two-week vacation to Quebec in her early 20s. She had traveled domestically to several regions of the country. She reported that she heard some Cajun or Creole French while growing up, but none of her family members spoke the languages and she did not learn French until high school and college. Before her experience in this program, Miranda had completed 6 semesters as a student at LSU and four introductory to intermediate French language courses, intermediate oral expression in French and an introductory French literature course.

Data Collection

Timeline

The timeline for data collection in this study was largely based on the stages⁸⁹ of this program abroad. These stages included: 1) the pre-departure orientation; 2) the in-country or “on-site” experience in France; 3) “re-entry” into the United States; and 4) the “post-study” experience. The longitudinal approach to data collection allowed for the participants’ viewpoints to develop. Therefore, it was interesting if not essential to study perspectives before (their anticipated feelings), during (their developing perspectives) and after (their hindsight) their actual time abroad.

This study and its data collection techniques were proposed and approved several months before research was conducted on the “LSU in the French Alps” program. As noted earlier, the intensity and depth of fieldwork in an ethnographically-researched study is indispensable (Wolcott, 1990, 2001). For this study, I spent an extensive amount of time doing fieldwork, from pre-departure meetings and a week-long orientation program to the entire in-country program in France. Data collection was maintained throughout this entire experience. After returning to the United States, I kept up with the participants’ perspectives in the re-entry phase and followed up with them approximately six months after their return in the post-study phase of the study. The total number of hours logged for data collection included over 80 hours of interviews with participants and over 200 hours of observations over a 5-week period of time.⁹⁰ For the data analysis procedures, hundreds of hours were necessary to comb through the data

⁸⁹ The stages of this program are labeled with some assistance from Dowell and Mirsky (2003). Much of the foundation for my development for the chronology of this study, as well as several research queries, themes and questions for instrument development evolved from Dowell and Mirsky’s (2003) book *Study Abroad: How to Get the Most out of Your Experience*.

⁹⁰ Please see Table 3.1 for more information on the timeframe for data collection in this study.

collected in interviews, observations and numerous questionnaires (pre-departure, in-country, re-entry and post-study).

Role of the Researcher

According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), the role of the researcher depends greatly on one's choice of paradigm belief. Hatch (2002) affirms that a researcher must have a firm grasp of his or her ontological (nature of reality) and epistemological (relationship of knower and known) beliefs before beginning the planning stages of a study, since one's views of epistemology and ontology will affect most phases of the study, from design, data collection and role of the researcher to data analysis and final report. This study used an ethnographic case study approach, which was listed as a constructivist approach in Hatch (2002), for the researcher sought out the individual reality that existed for each respective participant. My belief system for this study connected very well with the constructivist argument that "multiple realities exist [and are] inherently unique because they are constructed by individuals who experience the world from their own vantage points" (Hatch, p. 15). Yet, a postpositivist view of epistemology was present, where "approximation of reality [is the] researcher as data collection instrument," (Hatch, p. 13); although I was gathering perspectives directly from the participants and used their own words in the report of the study, I was the principal investigator and had final say on what data were collected, analyzed and included in the final report.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) bring much-needed insight into the variation of the researcher's role by discussing the level of researcher *participantness*, *revealedness*, *intensiveness*, and *extensiveness*. First, the researcher must decide among the varying levels of *participantness*, or "the degree of actual participation in daily life" (p. 72). At one extreme, there is the "full participant" and at the other extreme is the "complete observer," with a range of

mixes in between (p. 72). Next, Marshall and Rossman (2006) discuss the researcher's *revealedness*, or "the extent to which the participants know there is a study going on. Full disclosure lies at one end of the continuum [while] complete secrecy [lies] at the other" (p. 73). The researcher's *intensiveness* is described as "the amount of time spent in the setting on a daily basis," (p. 73), while the *extensiveness* is "the duration of the study over time" (p. 73).

In this study, my *participantness* varied throughout the study, but generally arrived at the level of participant observer. I was never a full participant, for my role as researcher was known throughout the study. While I did step back from the group and observe the interactions among the group members, I also observed the exchanges between the group and with host nationals (particularly during their internships, when I took on the role of complete observer), more times than not, I was a participant observer. This role allowed me to immerse myself in the setting of the participants and "hear, see, and begin to experience reality as the participants do" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 100). Spradley (1980) affirms that the participant observer can be both an insider and an outsider at the same time, as well as alternating between both roles. Since the goal of case study research is to gain an emic (insider's or participant's) view of the social setting and to be an impartial outside observer or researcher as much as possible, the participant observer role was an appropriate choice for much of this study. However, Marshall and Rossman (2006) discuss one of the major positive characteristics of observation versus participant observation—from the more distant, on-looker glance of an observer, the researcher is not preoccupied with participation in the activity itself and does not have to juggle the task of simultaneously observing the activity in which he or she is participating; all attention can be given to observing the participants, which at times is very necessary for good qualitative research.

Furthermore, my *revealedness* was great, since the participants were fully aware that a study was taking place and I was the primary investigator. A poor level of *revealedness* would not support a good code of conduct for the researcher. While I did not disclose all my research questions and objectives in order not to influence their behavior during the study, the participants did know about the basis of the study and did sign informed content papers. Good researcher conduct is indispensable in the awareness of reciprocity issues:

Qualitative studies intrude into settings as people adjust to the researcher's presence. People may be giving their time to be interviewed [. . .]; the researcher should plan to reciprocate. When people adjust their priorities and routines to help the researchers, or even just tolerate the researchers' presence, they are giving of themselves. The researcher is indebted and should be sensitive to this. (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 81)

The idea of reciprocity and researcher *indebtedness* is an important consideration in the ethics of research, or a researcher's "exquisite sensitivity" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 81). It is important to be gracious to one's participants and understand that as a researcher, one is a guest in their environment. In the present study, the participants commonly expressed to me that they were happy to participate in the study and gave their effort and time to interviews and questionnaires because they wanted to help, if possible, improve the abroad experiences for future participants.

Likewise, my researcher role required me to be sensitive to the participants' feelings and desires. I needed to recognize by their gestures and language whether they had become uncomfortable. While the researcher may form close bonds with participants, it is crucial to constantly monitor his or her feelings and interactions to ensure that objectivity is maintained. Many researchers have suggested writing in a journal while in the field to express one's feelings of subjectivity; I did this during my fieldwork and also "stepped back" from the research or the

activities for a small amount of time in order to reenlist in a more objective, uninvolved observer role.

Furthermore, my level of *intensiveness* was very high, since I interacted with and observed participants on a daily basis. I observed or participated in most activities, including all three meals of the day and staying at the same lodging (I had my own room). To Marshall and Rossman (2006), this type of *intensiveness* is crucial for case studies and qualitative research in general:

Ideally, the researcher spends a considerable amount of time in the setting, learning about daily life there. This immersion offers the researcher the opportunity to learn directly from his own experience of the setting. These personal reflections are integral to the emerging analysis of the cultural group of interest. (p. 100)

Finally, the *extensiveness* of my role was vast, as I studied the program from start (pre-departure orientation) to finish, after spending a few days in Paris and then almost four weeks with participants in the Ubaye Valley of France. Also, instead of ending the data collection when the program was over, I collected and analyzed their final reflective papers and the group's video project. In order to gain the deepest insight into the participants' overall reaction to the program as well as the program's possible influence on their lives, I conducted follow-up correspondence, including the distribution of the re-entry questionnaire, post-study questionnaire and follow-up emails.

In qualitative research and ethnographic studies, the researcher must reflect on his or her own biases, personal interests, and investments in the research, from the proposal phase to the final report of the results. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) refer to this practice as "reflexivity" (p. 278). In data collection, for example, I used "bracketing" (researcher personal thoughts noted in the side margins of field notes, Hatch, 2002). In keeping with best practice, as lead investigator I

reflected on my personal interest in this research, as my experiences undoubtedly influence me as a researcher.

Before my first study abroad experience in France (a semester-long program in Avignon), the study abroad office at my American college only offered a one-hour pre-departure meeting for the *entire* college (regardless of program, country or language being studied). When my fellow participants and I arrived at our destination, the majority of us felt unprepared and shocked. We had received minimal orientation to our program, the city, the language school and university in which we would be studying. We also had little idea of what to expect from living with a French family, and we were never given a proposed budget or expense list of a semester abroad. No former participants from our program were brought in to talk to us about their experiences or to provide us with their suggestions. We simply chose the program from a brochure or from faculty recommendation and had a brief meeting about passports and visas and the dates of the program.

Some American students from different universities at our abroad location in France had participated in more orientation meetings, while others experienced a similar lack of preparation. The first couple of months abroad were quite trying for me and several fellow participants. After the “honeymoon” phase of study abroad was over, several students, including myself, experienced severe culture shock. We were unaware that our city in the south of France would be so cold in the winter and spring months; thus we had not packed the appropriate clothing. Several students, including myself, had issues with specific details of the program (unavailable classes, problems with their host families, etc.), but no help was provided by the on-site staff in France or our home institution. The rough start to my first experience abroad did significantly harm my overall semester abroad, as well as several other participants’ trips. From this

occurrence, I found myself becoming more and more interested in how to better prepare students for their experiences abroad.

After taking months to adjust to my stay with a host family, to classes at a French university and the French culture, and after recovering from my homesickness, I finally became more positive about my study abroad experience. I started to keep a personal journal and it helped me get through those tough months, but I believed there was a significant need for a book and/or workbook that would accompany and assist study abroad participants through their journeys abroad. In my journal, I wrote about my feelings of culture shock and tried to focus on the positive aspects of what I was learning and how I was growing as a person and citizen of the world. I hoped one day to write a text for participants to work through every stage of their abroad experiences. Topics for journal entries, discussion topics for groups and participants, ideas for coping with culture shock, re-entry into the home country and many others would be included. Through my journaling, I realized how much I had learned about the French culture and how significantly I had improved my French. I also acquired a new appreciation for my travels all over Europe and for all the relationships with international friends that had begun as a result of the semester abroad in France. While I was disappointed with my study abroad program (my undergraduate college canceled the program after all its students gave this program a poor rating), I realized that I had survived the worst and could move on and find other programs in different French-speaking areas, as well as Spanish-speaking areas where I could improve my Spanish.

Being raised in rural Wisconsin, I was not exposed to a lot of cultural diversity, particularly from international cultures. I rarely heard foreign languages being spoken around me, and I had only been out of the Midwest twice (domestic travel) in my life before that entire

semester in France. Traveling to France for that semester was only my second trip on an airplane and was the longest uninterrupted time period in which I had been away from my family. After the semester in France, I did open up to more study abroad experiences, vowing to right the wrongs that I had felt from that first study abroad in France. I flew to Mexico by myself (the first time after completion of only a 3-week summer course in Spanish) and spent two consecutive summers living in Mexico with host families while I attended intense summer school for Spanish language learning.

During my first years as an educator, I was a high school teacher in Wisconsin and saw a great opportunity to take my students abroad. Many of them were relatively sheltered from international experiences just as I had been as a youth. Thus, within the same year of teaching, I was the program director for a group of my French students (14-day trip to Paris and the Loire Valley) as well as the co-director for a large group of Spanish students (22-day trip to various regions of Spain). It was truly an experience of a lifetime. While there was a huge responsibility on my part, I saw how these short-term experiences positively influenced these students. I offered a thorough pre-departure orientation and continued the coursework during the in-country segment of the program. Throughout the trips, I introduced many of the journal entries and discussion topics I had drafted during those first dire months of my semester in France. To this day (10 years since I chaperoned those high school trips abroad), I still receive emails and letters from the former program participants thanking me for taking them to Europe and reminding me of what a huge effect it had on their lives. In fact, several students told me that they decided to major or minor in French or Spanish because of the trip and because I had “given them the bug” for study abroad and excited them about languages and cultures in their courses with me in their high school years.

After my time as a high school teacher in Wisconsin, I returned to France for another summer to live with a host family and take more French courses. As a graduate student in French at Arizona State University (ASU), I was the assistant director of the French department's summer abroad program at *Université Laval* in Quebec City, Canada. In Quebec, I took graduate classes at the superior level, researched my MA thesis⁹¹ and completed all the tasks and duties of the assistant director position, which included transfer of credits, excursions, office hours and tutoring. Before I came to LSU, I decided to study Spanish for three months in Madrid, Spain, where I lived with a host family and got my Spanish language skills up to par for graduate courses in Spanish at LSU. While at LSU, I studied in an intense summer program for graduate students in Spanish at *Universidad de Complutense* in Madrid and, in order to conduct the fieldwork for this study, I returned to France (Ubaye Valley) during two consecutive summers.

Methods of Data Collection

The four methods of data collection detailed by Marshall and Rossman (2006) include: 1) participation in the setting; 2) direct observation; 3) in-depth interviewing; and 4) analyzing documents and material culture. All these data collection methods were employed in this study and are described in this chapter. Overall, it is important to remember the overriding principles of using multiple sources of evidence and various instruments for data collection, which can converge in the study's findings; the main rationale for such deliberate care of multiple-source data collection is triangulation (Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) affirms that "a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence" (p. 97).

⁹¹ It should be noted that my research for my MA thesis involved trends in immigration to Quebec during the mid to late 1900s. My fascination with the stories of emigrants/immigrants has never dwindled; thus, the emigration/immigration stories of the Ubayens to Mexico and Louisiana was another key factor in my choice of this topic for my dissertation research.

Furthermore, he states, “[t]he use of multiple sources of evidence in case studies allows an investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioral issues” (2003, p. 98).

For the interviews and questionnaires used in this study, Dowell and Mirsky (2003) provided several ideas necessary to organize my thoughts for the focus of each data collection instrument and protocol. For example, their questions about student personal and professional development, as well as their discussions of motivation, cultural adjustment, preparedness and anxiety prompted the development of both holistic and focused interview and questionnaire inquiries surrounding student experiences abroad for this study. These keywords led to an in-depth search for studies that had examined such areas, and oftentimes, the authors⁹² had appended their questionnaires or interview protocols to their articles. Many of these authors’ questions matched the themes and questions in Dowell and Mirsky (2003). After examining numerous studies and prior research, I was able to develop my own questions and themes of inquiry that best fit this study, and thus could begin to build separate questionnaires and interview protocols for the pre-departure, in-country, re-entry, and post-study phases. Admittedly, I constructed interview protocols and questionnaires that well surpassed the minimum information sought for this study. While I had specific research goals in mind during the proposal phase of the study, due to the exploratory nature of this qualitative case study, I collected data on topics⁹³ which, based on prior research, were pertinent to ensure the thorough study of the program and its participants.

⁹² Among these studies were: Carlson (1991) Burn (1991), Carlson et al., 1990), and Weinmann and Bragg (1993).

⁹³ One specific topic would include the *actual* linguistic improvement in French from their experience in the program. I conducted pre-departure and end-of-program interviews in French with each participant to get a sense of each individual’s level of French and of his or her comfort level speaking the language. The participants’ perceptions of their language improvements were more of a focus than my ratings. So, while I may not focus on the differences between participants’ pre-departure and end-of-program French interviews, the interviews still informed the study and the researcher.

Table 3.1 Summary of Data Collection Procedures in Each Phase of the Program

Method of Data Collection → Phase of Program ↓	Interviews	Questionnaires	Observations	Artifacts
Pre-departure Orientation: May 23-27	May 25 (in French) (About 20 minutes per participant) -Hours of informal interviews	May 23 (distributed) May 26 (collected)	Daily for 4 to 5 hours	Daily
In-country: May 28-June 25	June 11 (in-country) June 22 (internship) June 23 (in French) (About 45 minutes per participant) -Hours of informal interviews	June 21 (distributed) June 25 (collected)	Daily for 7 to 12 hours	Daily
Re-entry: Return to the U.S. to 10 days afterward	n/a	June 29 (distributed) 10 days after students return to U.S. (deadline to turn in)	n/a	-Participant journals -Reflection papers -Final video project
Post-study: 6 months after program	n/a	January 5 (distributed) January 15 (deadline to turn in)	n/a	n/a
Total Hours of Data Collection by Researcher →	Formal: 8+ hours Informal: 60 hours minimum	n/a	200+ hours	Varied

Observations

During the pre-departure phase of the program, I observed participants in their meetings on the LSU campus, engaged in informal conversations with them and took several pages (over 100) of field notes. During the in-country phase of data collection in France, I observed the participants (over 200 hours) and their interaction with one another and host nationals. My observatory role varied from complete observer (pre-orientation meetings and internship observations, for example) to participant observer, in which I was participating in activities with the students (i.e., mountain hikes and cultural excursions). According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), direct observation “entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artifacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for study” (p. 98). Marshall and Rossman (2006) specifically discuss the important role of participant observation in qualitative research:

Participant observation demands firsthand involvement in the social world chosen for study. Immersion in the setting permits the researcher to hear, to see, and to begin to experience reality as the participants do. Ideally the researcher spends a considerable amount of time in the setting, learning about daily life there. This immersion offers the researcher the opportunity to learn directly from his own experience. (p. 100)

During my participant observation, I reflected constantly on what I was seeing and learning about the participants, their experiences and the program in general. My field notes represented “detailed, nonjudgmental, concrete descriptions of what [had] been observed” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 98). I kept a daily fieldwork journal to mark my observations; this was key as it allowed me to reflect on my daily remarks and probe further into several areas of interest in the days that followed.

The question of the nonjudgmental nature of field notes comes up in most qualitative research guides. While it is possible for researchers to jot down, objectively, their observations from the field, there is a place for their opinions and reactions, which may later help make connections to data revealed in other sources (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Hatch (2002) suggests the term “bracketing,” which he refers to as “a state of mind from which qualitative researchers approach their experiences [. . .] a specific strategy for separating impressions, feelings, and early interpretations from descriptions during qualitative data collection” (p. 86). I found bracketing to be a useful tool while writing my field notes; I recorded my reactions, opinions, and reflections in the margins, keeping my personal thoughts separate from the participants’ perspectives and my overall observations.

What should be included in standard field notes? According to Hatch (2002), it is important to note the settings where social activity occurs, the participants and other people involved, the individual and group activities taking place, the emotions being expressed, the goal of the activities and what the sequence of events is over time. Several more of Hatch’s suggestions were employed in my fieldwork: “start with a broad focus and narrow as you go” (p. 80); “bring questions to each observation” (p. 80); “refer back to research questions to keep observations on track” (p. 81); and “focus on what matters to the participants” (p. 82). When I honed in on what mattered to the participants, themes began to emerge.⁹⁴

Finally, the Ubaye study participants often asked me, “What are you going to do with all those notes and papers?” Good question! Hatch (2002) simplifies the process of developing analyzable data from field notes:

⁹⁴ For example, if participants were upset about a lack of schedule and timetable for activities, then it was likely that they would bring it up in a later interview; it became clear that this was an important reaction to a certain aspect of the program.

Raw field notes are converted into research protocols through a process of “filling in” the original notes. Filling in means going through raw data as soon as possible after leaving the field and making a more complete description based on the raw notes and what is remembered from the setting. Research protocols are filled-in field notes organized in a consistent format [. . .] in preparation for analysis. (p. 77)

I found it difficult to attend to converting raw field notes to research protocols immediately after jotting down the notes; the setting of a study abroad program, in which I was living with and interacting with participants day and night with very few breaks in action, was exhausting. I did try to make the notes as complete as possible and fill in any blanks before ever closing my notebook.

Interviews

One of the main techniques for data collection in this study was in-depth interviewing. Interviews⁹⁵ were conducted four times during the study: pre-departure (in French), two weeks into the experience in France (in English), and twice at the end of the program in France (once in English about the internship experience and once in French). These interviews utilized open-ended, rather than inflexible questions. Since the questionnaires contained a mix of open-ended and structured questions, I chose to build the interviews with more open-ended questions. This strategy did not limit the direction of the interview—participants could elaborate on their thoughts and I could probe more easily into further detail and extend the conversation if needed. Open-ended questions guided the interview and kept me on a guided quest, but also allowed for greater flexibility.

The interviews were structured, with interview protocols developed during the proposal phase of the study, and well prior to the pre-departure orientation for the program. Laws and McLeod (2002) discuss the benefits of structured interviews in a particular case study:

⁹⁵ All interview protocols used in data collection are presented in Appendix B. They are listed in chronological order according to the dates when they were administered to participants during the phases of the program.

The structured in-depth interview capitalized on the richness of qualitative responses. It was not free flowing or determined by respondent's interests; it was focused on a specific issue or set of issues, and the questions guided the course of the interview. [. . .] This type of research instrument was excellent when standard information was needed from all respondents. [. . .] Respondents were therefore free to tell their stories in their own words, unfettered by pre-established categories, but their data were codeable. (p. 13)

Each interview had a precise protocol to ensure that every participant would be asked the same questions which fell in a specific order and/or under a certain theme or topic. This allowed for easier organization of the data, particularly when it came time for coding and data analysis.

However, this is not to say that *every* interview was so structured that there was never any room for probing into participants' answers. Several times during this study's interviews, if a particular topic of interest came up or the participant wanted to discuss something or elaborate, I certainly let the conversation continue. Laws and McLeod (2004) reaffirm certain advantages to the unstructured interview from one case study: "[i]n these interviews the interviewer explored many facets of the interviewee's concerns, treating subjects as they came up in conversation, pursuing interesting leads and allowing imagination and ingenuity full reign" (p. 13). In interviews for the present study, with the structured interview protocol at my fingertips, if a participant took the conversation in a different direction, I could let the topic develop and when appropriate, I could return to the next question and continue the interview as planned. Hatch (2002) suggests that such a technique is essential for good qualitative research, as the researcher is "open to following the leads of informants and probing into areas that arise during interview interactions" (p. 94).

Hatch (2002) reminds the researcher about the necessity of flexibility in qualitative researcher design—even if the interview is labeled "formal," it needs to be structured, yet ironically, flexible, which may be difficult to master for novice researchers. This irony in the

interview process is discussed by Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein (1997), as they address the researcher directly:

You must be both structured and flexible at the same time. While it's critical to prepare for an interview with a list of planned questions to guide your talk, it is equally important to follow your informant's lead. Sometimes the best interviews come from a comment, a story, an artifact, or a phrase you couldn't have anticipated. The energy that drives a good interview—for both you and your informant—comes from expecting the unexpected. (p. 233)

The researcher needs to follow the interview protocol for some direction, without ignoring the important participant perspectives which could arise. In order to balance my interviews with structure and flexibility, I included a variety of question-types, from open-ended, structured, to semi-structured. No matter what type of interview or question, the researcher must adhere to the following rules: the questions should be clear and neutral, use language that is familiar to the informants, respect the informants and presume they have valuable knowledge, and generate answers related to the objectives of the research (Hatch, 2002).

In order to grasp each participant's proficiency in French during pre-departure (May 25), I conducted an open-ended interview (in French) with each participant.⁹⁶ In addition to getting acquainted with each participant's proficiency in spoken French, I also designed the interview to extend upon the pre-departure questionnaire. The French interview revealed certain information about each participant's background, student life, language and French backgrounds, motivations and expectations about the "LSU in the French Alps" program.

At the beginning of the second week (June 11) of the program in Ubaye, I conducted an individual interview, in English, with each participant. The interview protocol contained open-ended questions, including how participants perceived their adjustment to the setting and their feelings about the program and new environment in Ubaye. During the fourth week in the

⁹⁶ See Appendix B for all interview protocols used in this study.

French Alps, I conducted two interviews. The first interview (June 22) inquired about the participants' impressions of the internship experience. The questions were open-ended and inquired about several areas of their perspectives on the internships: their preferences of internship location, the positive and negative aspects of each internship location, how (if at all) the internships helped them learn about the French culture as well as possible benefits they had gained as a result of the internship experiences.

The second end-of-program interview (June 23) was in French, and it asked open-ended questions also. I had drafted several categories⁹⁷ for questioning participants before traveling abroad, and I made adjustments to the interview during field research in France. Adjustments were made to specifically tailor the interview to the program and its participants and to probe further into ideas and questions that developed during the program.

For all scheduled interview situations, I used a device to record the conversations and transcribed them word-for-word afterward. The use of the recorder allowed me to concentrate on the actual interviews with the participants and not the incessant writing of their words. In addition to these audio recordings, I also took researcher notes during each interview, jotting down important or interesting words or phrases and ideas for further inquiry that came to mind. For each interview, I noted many details about the scene of the interview (time and place) and information about the demeanor of the interviewee.

Moreover, during the entire data collection period, I had numerous informal interview situations, or unstructured interviews, with participants and persons involved with the program, including program faculty members, official program helpers in the French Alps, business owners where the program internships took place, Ubaye residents who participated in some of

⁹⁷ Personal experience in Ubaye, self-assessment of learning French through the program, and expectations for future travel and language study were among these categories.

the program excursions and cultural activities, and numerous Ubaye residents who were simply interested in talking with me about this study, the LSU program, Louisiana, or the Ubaye Valley. These unstructured and often impromptu conversations were essential in establishing rapport with the participants and it allowed some room for the interviewee and interviewer to “go with the flow” and discuss whatever came up in those conversations. In our time together during the meals, on hikes, or at a café, the participants and I were able to have group discussions about their preferences for housing (Jean Chaix lodge versus a host family situation), French meals, interactions with host nationals or their future in French studies, for instance. These situations were informal, but related to the study in more ways than I had realized at the time. Their comments and our discussions were in fact directly related to what they wrote on their questionnaires, what they were experiencing through the program and their internships, and what surfaced during interviews.

Furthermore, these experiences showed me how much more vivid, personal, and rigorous the study had become since I had spent a great deal of time in the field with the participants. I never could have formed the rapport with the participants or learned as much about their experiences and perspectives if I had simply met them during pre-departure and sent them off with questionnaires to fill out while they were in France. I will forever treasure the opportunity to study four students, three of whom had never traveled abroad. I can still vividly see Dorothy, the seventy year-old participant, hiking up the mountain with me and members of the French army, en route to *faire de la parapente* (to paraglide) off the highest mountain in the Valley. Also, I will never forget the participants’ reactions to seeing dogs allowed in French cafés or to their first taste of *real* French cheese.

Questionnaires

Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggest that questionnaires are great ways to “learn about the distribution of characteristics, attitudes, or beliefs” (p. 125). Self-report questions can be structured in response categories or more open-ended. I used questionnaires as a form of data collection in every phase of the study, from pre-departure to post-study, and each questionnaire had a specific goal in mind and was divided into themes (motivation, linguistic level and improvement, academic, personal or professional growth, frustrations, cultural adjustment level and strategies, and so on).

Several questionnaires were administered in the course of this study. First, during the pre-departure orientation (distributed May 23 and collected by May 26), each student filled out the formal pre-departure questionnaire⁹⁸ with both closed and open-ended questions. This questionnaire gathered a wide variety of information, including: pertinent demographic information, past exposure to French and educational background, past travel experience, self-ratings of their interest in and level of French, their world view, cultural perceptions, motivation to study abroad and choice of this program in particular, opinions and possible projections of culture shock through the program, their goals, their anticipations and so on.

Next, during the fourth and final week of the program in France, participants filled out the in-country questionnaire (distributed June 21 and collected by June 25). Inquiries of specific interest in this questionnaire included the participants’ perceptions of their cultural adjustment in France, their opinions of the pre-departure orientation, perceptions of program activities and development (including linguistic, personal and academic) while abroad. This questionnaire

⁹⁸ All questionnaires used in data collection are presented in Appendix C. Questionnaires are listed in chronological order according to the dates when they were administered to participants during the phases of the program.

contained mostly open-ended questions and a few questions in which each participant rated his or her perceived awareness of French culture.

Furthermore, students were emailed a re-entry questionnaire to be completed and emailed back to me within 10 days of their return to the U.S.⁹⁹ This questionnaire included both open-ended questions and participant self-ratings. The open-ended questions focused on the participants' possible readjustment to the U.S., discoveries they may have made about themselves as a result of the participation in the French Alps program (participant growth), as well as their overall reaction to the program (length, quality, price, lodging, structure, and so on). The participant self-ratings were based on specific "re-entry challenges," as outlined by LaBrack (2004). These challenges included, but were not limited to: feeling boredom, no one wanting to hear about their trip, reverse "home" sickness for France, and the inability to apply new knowledge or skill (inability to speak French with anyone after the program). On a Likert-type scale from zero (not a factor) to five (strong challenge), participants rated to what degree they felt each re-entry challenge.

The post-study questionnaire (completed by participants six months after their return¹⁰⁰ to the U.S. following the French Alps program), focused on the idea of the participants' perceptions of how the program influenced various aspects of their lives and how they thought they might have changed as a result of the program. Participants first checked off possible changes¹⁰¹ they felt they had undergone since participating in the program; they were also given the opportunity to choose the top two or three changes most significant to them. As you will see

⁹⁹ This questionnaire was distributed via email to the participants on June 29. They were asked to email it back to me within 10 days of their return to the U.S. I received all the completed questionnaires by July 16.

¹⁰⁰ This questionnaire was distributed to the participants approximately 6 months after their return to the United States. I emailed this questionnaire to them on January 5 and all participants had sent it back by January 13.

¹⁰¹ Possible changes included a better ability to perform tasks to which one is unaccustomed, more flexibility to adjust to change, a newfound desire to seek out diversity, travel, continue to learn French or possibly to start learning a new language, and many others. See the post-study questionnaire in "Appendix C" for a complete list of these potential changes.

later on in the dissertation when the results of this study are discussed, instead of depending solely on my (the researcher's) analysis of data and how I concluded the program contributed to each participant's life, this particular questionnaire truly focused on how the participants *themselves* perceived the changes they experienced as a result of this program and how this short-term international program affected their lives. Finally, participants were asked to rate (scale 0-5) the perceived development (career, cultural, personal, linguistic and academic) that participation in the French Alps program had on their development, growth and lives in general.

Documents and Other Artifacts

During the data collection procedures, I also collected artifacts, such as newspaper articles in France about the Ubaye program and the participants in the study, brochures from areas of interest we visited, books on historical information the participants were learning, and more materials to develop the historical aspect of my dissertation. Such artifacts helped put into perspective the Ubaye-Louisiana connection and the subsequent basis for the LSU program. Furthermore, as part of their final project for their coursework for the program, each participant wrote an individual reflective paper on his or her experience. Each participant gave me a copy of his or her paper, which was later analyzed as data.

Finally, as part of the culminating project for their coursework during the program, participants were asked to create a video. They began filming on LSU's campus, continued to film almost every day in France, and put everything together after re-entry back into the U.S. According to Hatch (2002), "video recording can provide a powerful means for capturing data that can improve the quality of the studies" (p. 126). The video from Ubaye was a very powerful way to capture the participants' experience with the presence of the vast mountains of the Valley, meals with host nationals, participants and the researcher paragliding off the highest mountain in

the Valley, as well as white-water rafting, hiking, mountain biking, historical excursions, and everyday life on the program. Our words (both participants' and researcher's) or photographs could never have expressed what the video presented in live action. The analysis of the video as "data" explored and revealed which activities and memories of the trip were most important to participants, as it was solely their choice for what to include in the video. What did participants choose to focus on in their final, culminating video production? Each participant had a section of the video to edit and background music or photos to select, so their specific choices can help us understand their experiences. Hatch (2002) brings up that ensuring the confidentiality of participants becomes difficult to impossible when dealing with raw video footage; so while I could analyze the video as data, it cannot be shown in its entirety when presenting this study.

Data Analysis

It is essential from the very beginning of a study to anticipate which methods of data analysis may be best suited for that particular study. Marshall and Rossman (2006) describe data analysis as "the process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to the mass of collected data [that] is messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating. It does not proceed in a linear fashion; it is not neat" (p. 154). Patton (2002) reveals that novice researchers are often astounded by the realization of having to make sense of all the data, for there is:

no way of preparing students for the sheer mass of information they will find themselves confronted with when data collection has ended. Sitting down to make sense out of pages of interviews and whole files of field notes can be overwhelming. (p. 440)

In order to avoid being overwhelmed with massive amounts of data, I divided the study and data collection to mirror the phases of study abroad (pre-departure, in-country, re-entry and post-study), as this helped with the organization of the data in both collection and analysis. In each of these phases, concrete themes were built into questionnaires and interviews and some were

allowed to naturally emerge from participants' responses. For example, it was advantageous to ask participants about their motivation for choosing the French Alps program in the pre-departure phase of the program, just as it made sense to ask about their adjustments in France during the in-country phase and about their thoughts of the perceived influence the program had on certain aspects of their lives during the post-study phase.

Hatch (2002) states that pinpointing when to start data analysis depends on the study, but he suggests that starting some level of data analysis during data collection may be advantageous for finding emergent data which can be probed in subsequent data collection. Weiss (1994) also advocates this approach to data collection and analysis in qualitative research:

But more so than is the case in quantitative research, the phases of work in qualitative research overlap and are intermeshed. Analysis of early data contributes to new emphases in interviewing, and the new data collected by the modified interviewing then produces new analyses. The investigator may draft brief reports early in a study, instead of waiting until its report-writing phase, and interviewing can continue even through the report-writing phase. (p. 14)

One does not have to complete a systematic coding event, but rather a brief analysis of, for example, the first interview, before a second is to take place. Hatch's advice helped me a great deal when I was in the field collecting data on the program in France. His technique allowed for flexibility and the addition of questions to the subsequent interviews (perhaps not included on the original questionnaires), thus maximizing opportunities in data collection. Also, it is often suggested (Hatch, 2002; Yin, 2003) to write notes or reflections immediately after taking field and observations notes, and after completing interviews. However, I used caution when completing on-site analysis, for I did not want to draw unfounded conclusions before all the data had been collected and was available for analysis. As with many approaches to qualitative research, the data collection and data analysis processes employed in this study were not easily separated, but were rather an ongoing process. Data was collected and initially analyzed; this

process brought about more questions and issues which allowed me to re-enter the setting and collect more data for even further analysis. In this sense, the process of data collection and analysis was a more continuous and cyclical than a cut-and-dry, linear procedure.

For data analysis, I consulted the analytic procedures of Marshall and Rossman (2006), which they separate into seven phases: 1) organizing the data; 2) immersion in the data; 3) generating categories, themes, and patterns; 4) coding the data;¹⁰² 5) testing the emergent understandings; 6) searching for alternative explanations; and 7) writing the report. Each phase of analysis produces a sort of “data reduction” (p. 156), breaking down massive data amounts into themed, more manageable chunks. Once the researcher is prepared with the tools and knowledge for analysis, he or she can dive into the rich data leading to the thick descriptions which help distinguish qualitative research (Hatch, 2002). I also considered Hatch’s guide (2002) to data analysis, which includes the following elements:

(a) identify topic areas to be analyzed; (b) read the data, marking entries related to topics; (c) read entries by topic, recording main ideas in entries on a summary sheet; (d) read data, coding entries according to patterns identified (keep a record of what entries go with what elements in your patterns); (f) search for nonexamples of your patterns—decide if your patterns are supported by the data; (g) look for relationships among the patterns identified; (h) write your patterns as one-sentence generalizations; and (i) select data excerpts to support your generalizations. (pp. 56-57)

This guide to analysis assumes that the researcher has developed prior topics to identify before proceeding into the reading of the data. In other analyses, the researcher seeks to gain themes directly from the data. In the present study, interview protocols and questionnaires were often divided into categories (i.e., motivation, expectations, perceived effect or student growth) that followed the chronology of the phases of the study abroad experience.

¹⁰² Each research guide gives great advice for coding data, such as the use of different symbols, colored dots, computer software tools, and the use of a coding key.

During data analysis, I first typed up and organized all the participants' responses collected during our interviews and from their questionnaires. I also organized and typed up my field notes and organized the collected artifacts, including the participants' final reflective papers and video project. Next, I employed one of Creswell's (2005) procedures for data analysis, the "bottom-up" approach. Creswell (2005) indicates that this approach for qualitative researchers "initially consists of developing a general sense of the data, and then coding description and themes about the central phenomenon" (p. 231). After I typed up all the data collected from the participants in the study, I read it again to get a general sense of what had been collected, and continued on to the coding procedures.

Next, I followed a series of data analysis procedures to probe into the data to identify emergent themes. Creswell (2005) describes "coding" as "the process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data" (p. 237). I did use many elements of his "coding process," where I tried to "make sense of the text data, divide it into text or image segments, label the segments with codes, examine the codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapse these codes into broad themes" (p. 237). As Creswell suggests, after getting a sense of the whole picture, I selected one document (i.e., one questionnaire in pre-departure) and began to write codes in the margins of the participants' responses. I employed Creswell's notion of "lean coding," in which each manuscript or document's data is assigned 10 to 15 codes (2005, p. 238). After coding the entire document, I made a list of all code words and grouped similar codes. After that, with this list of grouped codes, I went back through the data and sought out emergent themes or categories that revealed themselves from the data. Therefore, in Creswell's (2005) method of data analysis for qualitative researchers, depending on the study, fifty or more codes could surface from the data and in subsequent analyses. It is the researcher's

responsibility to reduce the codes based on the participants' answers and on what they focused and to generate several major themes or categories for the final report. Creswell (2005) also states that several subthemes or minor themes can emerge and be discussed in the final report; in addition, these minor themes can also lead to further inquiry in subsequent studies.

However, since I had divided some of the interviews and questionnaires into sections with pre-determined areas of inquiry (i.e., pre-departure, in-country experience, in-country internships, re-entry and post-study), some data could be easily divided for further coding. For example, "participant motivation" to study abroad and the choice of study abroad program, "re-entry challenges" or "perceived effect" of the program were all topics selected for participant questionnaires and interviews, thus their coding was easier. In addition to Creswell's (2005) "bottom-up" data analysis, for each stage of the study abroad and pre-determined theme of inquiry, I printed important quotes and participant responses and placed them on color-coded 5 x 7 note cards. This practice helped organize, at least initially, the data for the chronology of the study, pre-departure through post-study.

The goal of this type of coding is to begin to organize the collected data into specific categories in which the participants' opinions and ideas can emerge, in turn allowing for the themes of interest in the research to emerge. The initial, broad categories about participants and their perspectives included: 1) motivation; 2) expectations for the in-country experience; 3) anticipated and experienced culture shock in France; 4) retrospective opinions of the pre-departure program; 5) opinions of the internships; 6) perceptions of learning during the program; 7) re-entry challenges and perspectives; and 8) perceived effect and/or growth post study abroad. As Creswell (2005) states, these broad categories can be broken down into subcategories or themes. For instance, motivation (Theme 1) could be divided into such subthemes as choice of

program, reasons for studying abroad, cost, participant finances, language improvement, and participant goals. Expectations (Theme 2) could have such subthemes as linguistic, personal, academic and cultural goals and expectations from pre-departure and the subsequent student perspectives of achievement in these areas during in-country and post-study. Theme 3 entailed a comparison between the participant projections of culture shock and the reality of their actual experiences of culture shock in France. Theme 4 included the participants' retrospective opinions, comments and suggestions for the pre-departure program. Theme 5 (opinions of the internships) was divided into negative and positive reactions as well as the participants' reactions to the structure of the internships. Perceptions of learning (Theme 6) included such subcategories as "how" and "what" the participants thought they learned, respectively, in their internships, during contact with host nationals and on program excursions. Also, I could continue dividing the data into their perspectives of learning in various categories, such as academic, linguistic and cultural acquisition. Theme 7 (re-entry challenges) could be subthemed into the participants' views of their reverse culture shock and readjustment and positive and negative feelings upon re-entry. Theme 8 (post-study growth) could be divided along the lines of the categories of learning and acquisition (academic, personal, career, linguistic) as well as the participants' perspective of their own individual growth (changes) as a result of their experience with the program.

Writing the Report

Good researchers ponder their choices in writing the report before, during, and after data collection, for "[w]riting about qualitative data cannot be separated from the analytic process" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 158). It is crucial, especially for doctoral students, to become familiar with the most appropriate writing approaches for their studies, as well as take a

reflective glance at their own writing style. Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggest that “the researcher consider at the proposal phase what modalities she will use for the final reporting. For dissertations, this is typically done by outlining the chapters to be included in the final document” (p. 162). I took this advice to heart during the proposal phase and did indeed draft a dissertation outline; I also researched the various ways to report the results and findings of a qualitative study such as this.

I found a particular suggestion on the actual act of getting started on the path of writing to be very insightful: “it will never be just right, so just write” (Hatch, 2002, p. 212). Hatch (2002) provides a list of suggestions for researchers on how to succeed during the writing process: accept anxiety, avoid avoiding, create a writing ritual, set production goals, get organized, edit every time you reread, quit at a good place, work through the blockages, and go with the runs, read like a writer, and write like a reader, solicit feedback, expect to revise, and enjoy having written (pp. 212-19). It was vital for me as a researcher to remember that the experience of developing the report should be a positive one—it is the way in which one shows the reader what was discovered in the study.

The organization of the findings of a study is extremely important, for it is what the audience will read to learn about the study’s findings. Various write-up possibilities were considered and employed in this study, including Hatch’s (2002) notions of *chronology* and *thematic organization* (p. 228). The report was organized with attention to the chronology of the stages of the French Alps program. After this step, the report was organized thematically, according to the themes and categories that emerged under each stage of the program.

Perhaps most important to emphasize in the report of this study, is Creswell’s (2005) notion of the “narrative discussion,” which “include[s] dialogue that provides support for

themes,” (p. 249) with *emphasis* on the participant perspectives. This study was in fact a themed dialogue of the participant perspectives about the specific issues and topics that emerged through the analysis of their responses to the researcher inquiry. The participant perspectives were not simply inferred from the researcher’s observations, but rather expressed in the participants’ own words. Creswell (2005) supports this approach, as he states that it is the researcher’s duty to “report quotes from interview data or from observations of individuals. These quotes can capture feelings, emotions, and ways people talk about their experiences” (p. 249). In addition to the inclusion of participant quotes from the collected data, Creswell (2005) believes that the researcher must convey his or her personal reflections in the report of the study:

Because qualitative researchers believe that your personal views can never be kept separate from interpretations, personal reflections about the meaning of the data are included in the research study. [. . .] Because you may have been to the field and visited personally at great length with individuals, you are in a good position to reflect and remark on the larger meaning of the data. (p. 251)

As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, I have discussed my personal reflections and thoughts about this study and its importance and implications to the broader field of study abroad and international programs. In addition, I have included my personal reflections on the participant perspectives and perceptions, particularly in regard to what I observed and noted during my extensive fieldwork for this study.

Criteria of Soundness¹⁰³

In order to limit bias in interpretation, Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggest that the research design and methods should always be explicitly detailed in the report of the study. Furthermore, the research questions and the data’s relevance should be made explicit and rigorously argued, while presented in a readable, accessible form, with supplemental graphs, figures, charts (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Detailed records are to be kept: in-field analysis

¹⁰³ This term is discussed in Marshall and Rossman (2006); many researchers refer to this topic as “trustworthiness.”

should be documented (time, participants, other people, setting, descriptions) and explicit mention of a running record of procedures will add to the trustworthiness of the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Yin's advice to "conduct research as if someone were always looking over your shoulder" (2003, p. 38), served as an important reminder to me throughout the procedures of this study.

The researcher should use caution not only during fieldwork, but also when writing the report, when the study participants can be affected or harmed if their words or thoughts are misrepresented, or if their anonymity is not protected. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants in this study, I have withheld the actual year in which the research was conducted on this summer program. Due to the historical significance of the relation between southern Louisiana and the Ubaye Valley of France, the identity of the program was deemed too central to the research to be withheld. For the duration of the Alps program and this study, I took the necessary steps to protect the anonymity and privacy of my participants, as well as that of others whom I met and interviewed throughout the study.

When discussing the trustworthiness of a study or its soundness, researchers use many different terms. In fact, Lincoln and Guba (1985) reworked typically quantitative terms toward a more naturalistic or qualitative inquiry, thus developing the alternative constructs of *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*. Marshall and Rossman (2006) state that credibility shows that "the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described" (p. 201), highlighting the qualitative approach for the in-depth description and interaction among setting, context, and participants. As mentioned earlier, in the present study, credibility was established since the participants' perspectives and direct quotes were used in the reporting of the findings. Also, the structure of the LSU program

in the French Alps and the historical connections between Louisiana and the Ubaye Valley are accessible in numerous published works.

The idea of *transferability* occurs when “the researcher must argue that his findings will be useful to others in similar situations, with similar research questions or questions of practice” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Marshall & Rossman, p. 201). This concept relates to the well-known terms of *external validity* or *generalizability*. However, Marshall and Rossman (2006) affirm that such a claim of *generalizability*, a term with substantial quantitative connotations, when used in the area of qualitative research, is problematic. This is particularly true in areas like case study research, in which participants and contexts may be too specific to “transfer” to other studies or participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). To counter this challenge, instead of aiming to “transfer” results to another study in order to show its “external validity” or generalizable qualities, many researchers, including Marshall and Rossman (2006), argue that qualitative studies should seek to show the “transferability” to prior theory, which is linked to the results of previous research, thus strengthening the study results.

In the present study, many of the research questions can be asked for a variety of different study abroad programs and their participants. In addition, the findings of this study can be compared and contrasted with the findings of other similar research. One can look at the findings of current and previous studies to gain insight into various themes (i.e., pre-departure programs, motivation, student development or growth, and possible effects of study abroad) and can inquire into the “transferability” to prior learning theory related to abroad programs.

Dependability entails the researcher’s attempt “to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study and changed in the design created by an increasingly refined understanding of the setting” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 203). This reworked idea of the

notion of *reliability* shows the qualitative commitment to the constant change in the social world and thus a need for flexibility in research design. The researcher, however, can show the study's dependability by explaining the changes that one makes to the study after the initial design is created. While quantitative researchers may view changes to the design as a weakness in reliability and subsequent replication, the qualitative researcher sees it as one of the strong points of qualitative work; if the changes are justified, then the study may lead to new, important data. As explained earlier in this dissertation, the research design of this study was well-founded on prior research and was explicitly designed before data collection began; however, the flexibility of this design was preserved in order to let the study and the participant perspectives emerge.

Confirmability follows the lines of the traditional concept of objectivity (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 203). Marshall & Rossman (2006) reiterate the need to determine whether a study's findings could be confirmed by another researcher, thus showing that the data "confirm" the results and not the manipulation of the researcher. In this study, the participants' actual words are used to elaborate their perspectives; therefore another researcher could "confirm" or verify the findings by looking at the actual questionnaires filled out by the participants, by listening to the taped interviews, by reading the participants' reflective papers or by watching their final video project.

Finally, in his article that discusses specifically the research methods for data collection in the study abroad context, Huebner (1998) simplifies some of the aforementioned qualitative research terms by including a few simple questions to ask: "Validity ('Am I measuring what I say I am measuring?'), Reliability ('Are my results replicable?'), Generalizability ('Can the findings be applied to other populations¹⁰⁴?')" (p. 19). In addition, Huebner (1998) stresses that with the wide array of international programs that exist, and all the variations of study abroad

¹⁰⁴ In terms of a case study, Yin (2003) would argue that one should generalize to theory, not populations.

program structures, goals, durations and programs, it has become difficult to generalize or transfer results from one study to another. To Huebner (1998), it seems clear that for study abroad research, the concepts of generalizability and transferability depend heavily on the individual study abroad programs being studied. For example, a study that examines the linguistic improvement on a long-term (semester or yearlong) program for participants who studied at a French university and lived with host families would not match well for generalizability and transferability with this study of the short-term, internship program and its participants' perspectives. In the past, research on study abroad has been lumped together in one large category; however, it is now essential to break down the research into its separate goals and components, as well as the various program types and durations (Huebner, 1998).

Conclusion

The case study methodology used in this research has allowed me to complete a detailed investigation into the "LSU in the French Alps" program. As I assumed the dual role of participant-observer and researcher, I entered the world of the participants and achieved an *emic* view of their experiences. While in search of the most insider view possible, the participants' perspectives were gathered from multiple sources of data collection. In the next chapter, their perspectives are revealed.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Chapter 4 discusses the results of this study. I have organized this chapter according to the phases and chronology (pre-departure, in-country, re-entry, and post-study) of the “LSU in the French Alps” program. My rationale for this decision is to allow for the participants’ perspectives to evolve, from pre-departure to post-study, just as they did during the actual data collection process. Each participant’s story was ever changing, so I wanted the report to reflect this evolution. After I collected each piece of data (i.e., the participants’ responses to the study’s questionnaires or interview questions, the reflective papers, or the final video), before beginning to transcribe their words, I read over the documents for a holistic view of each individual’s experience.¹⁰⁵ Immersing myself in the data, I wrote several researcher comments in the margins of the documents, which listed my original impressions and questions. Next, I transcribed each of the data pieces and began to generate categories, themes, and patterns. After I coded the data and searched for alternative explanations, I also compared and contrasted each individual’s responses with the other participants, and I began to write the report.

The report of the results, as mentioned earlier, is written in a chronological manner, according to many of the themes listed for the prospective questions for this study. However, near the end of the chapter, I will discuss the unexpected follow-up conversations and communication I had with the participants of this study, as well as recent perspectives of the “LSU in the French Alps” program from individuals who are, or who have been, affiliated with the program, but who were not participants in this study. These follow-ups and recent perspectives, while not part of the proposed study, are pertinent to this research and offer valuable insight into the program and its effects on program participants.

¹⁰⁵ For more information on these procedures, see “Data Analysis” in chapter 3.

Participants' Perspectives: Pre-departure Orientation

In the pre-departure segment of the program (May 23-27), I gathered data from the participants during several pre-departure conversations (PDC) and from their responses to the pre-departure questionnaire (PDQ). In the pre-departure questionnaire (collected May 26), I asked several questions which investigated several topics, including participants' motivation for study abroad and choice of the French Alps program, future career goals, personal goals, and expectations for the experience abroad. In the pre-departure questionnaire, when asked about their motivations for studying abroad, most participants mentioned the desire to see France and to improve their linguistic abilities in French. Dorothy's motivation was clear: "[I]inguistic improvement is the primary motivation. I would like to be able to think in French. I want to learn about the people of Southeastern France" (PDQ, May 26). Miranda showed similar views, as she stated that her main motivation was the "[d]esire to visit France and improve language capabilities" (PDQ, May 26). Catherine reported several goals: "I want to become a better French speaker, learn about my heritage in France, get comfortable living away from home, finish my minor, acquire experience dealing with people from other backgrounds" (PDQ, May 26). Eric's overall motivation was not only to learn French, but also for "adventure and escape and for sheer knowledge. I wish to move in the direction of being and feeling as a global citizen vs. a miss-placed [misplaced] one" (PDQ, May 26).

I was intrigued to discover why participants chose specifically the "LSU in the French Alps" program. Participants were very forthcoming with their responses to the pre-departure questionnaire and their motivations varied. For Dorothy, it was the small group atmosphere that attracted her to the program; she saw many opportunities to speak French with the program participants and with French nationals. She had been to the northern part of France and wanted

to see the rural and mountainous regions. Catherine's main motivation for choosing the summer program was related to her academic plan of study, finishing her French minor and learning about the French way of life: "[i]t's the number and type of credits I need to complete my degree; I'll be able to finish my minor and finish it quickly; I wanted to participate in a program that provided for a view of how people really live in other countries rather than a tourist-centered big city" (PDC, May 25). Miranda and Eric provided more details in their reasons for choosing the French Alps program. For Miranda, the activities, the excursions and the uniqueness of the internships, chances to speak French with native speakers and available scholarship money were the most attractive aspects of the program. She also included interesting remarks about how her non-traditional student status motivated her to choose the program:

I am older than many college-age students and thought this program is more intense and for more serious and mature students. [...] I'm also interested in watching the group of participants and how they interact with one another and how stress and conflict management techniques are used amongst the group. I am a sociology major, so this will be very interesting for me to observe the group of students as a social network—it's something I would actually like to study in the future and I think I may get some research ideas from this experience. Also, I am interested in rural sociology and since we are going to what sounds to be a very remote area of France, I think seeing the people's lifestyle in rural France will be fascinating!

I also love to cook and I want to learn about French cuisine. I'm interested in going to the chocolate shop and learning all about it! Also, Barcelonnette is a small village, so it should be a great place to learn French because we can speak to actual people. I hear that in Paris, it's difficult to meet and speak with French people. Barcelonnette is in the Alps, so it's a dream for me to go there—to be in the mountains—it's going to be so picturesque. (PDC, May 25)

In addition, Eric sought to improve his language skills and collect information on a different culture and way of life. He stated that his motivation included learning about

French daily life in a small, rural village where I am isolated in a mountainous valley and have limited access to English, so I'll be surrounded by French. I will be exposed to French every day for several weeks, in its natural environment, not in a classroom. I also like that it's close to Italy because I would like to go to Italy and practice my Italian. (PDC, May 25)

He further stated that his motivations were also career oriented: “[a]s a future student of international law and French, I feel that daily, extended exposure to French and foreign society is essential” (PDQ, May 26).

Next, I explored deeper into which personal and/or linguistic goals the participants were hoping to achieve as a result of the Alps program. In terms of the improvement of their French language skills, all the participants listed listening as the number one skill they hoped to improve with this program, followed by speaking. Interestingly, reading and writing were a distant third and fourth for all the participants. Dorothy’s overall goals remained focused on improving her French: “I hope to be able to understand spoken French better. I would also like to be able to speak more easily in French and not have to think first then speak. I would like to begin speaking automatically in French” (pre-departure questionnaire). Miranda’s personal goals were to visit France (specifically Provence) and to improve her speaking skills in French, while Catherine could not wait to “experience another culture first-hand” (pre-departure questionnaire).

In the pre-departure questionnaire, I asked the participants to share their opinions of their prior college French courses and how they thought the Ubaye experience would compare or differ from their prior French classes in the U.S. All the participants reported positive attitudes toward LSU French courses, though they expected to be tested on the trip and were looking forward to it. They cited the amount of speaking in French and the high level of French as the top two challenges they expected to face in the program. All the participants also mentioned their desire to speak with “real” French people, who were native, fluent speakers of the language, instead of with American college students in a classroom setting in the U.S. I was particularly struck by Miranda’s comment: “[w]ith the exception of a common language, I don’t think the immersion experience will be in any way comparable to the classroom experience. It’s going to

be totally different and I think a lot more exciting and enjoyable” (PDQ, May 26). Catherine mentioned that the French immersion experience would, in fact, “immerse” her in the target language:

I’ll be surrounded by French every hour of the day and it will be in all sorts of contexts. I think I’ll be able to focus on learning the language and not be distracted by other courses, like I am during a semester at school. (PDQ, May 26)

Also in the pre-departure questionnaire, I asked the participants several questions which sought their viewpoints on cultural topics, including their views of the U.S., France, the definition of culture, and potential expectations of “culture shock” while abroad. To summarize briefly, all participants indicated that they had a respect for other cultures and a strong desire to travel abroad and hopes for international peace. It was interesting to learn more about their pre-departure views of the United States. I asked participants to rate their experience with “critical views of their own country” (PDQ, May 26). Dorothy had little to no critical views of the U.S. and “loved her country and nothing would change that” (PDQ, May 26); Catherine had rated her critical views as “fair,”¹⁰⁶ but she said she was “proud to be American” (PDQ, May 26); Eric and Miranda rated their critical views as “great” (the most negative view of the U.S.). In fact, Eric wrote an additional statement to his rating: “[a]ctually, I have always had the least pride in the USA”¹⁰⁷ (PDQ, May 26).

All participants said they were looking forward to learning more French “culture.” Instead of using a researched definition of “culture” to assume what they wanted to learn, I went straight to the participants to get a sense of their personal definition of “culture.” The

¹⁰⁶ For more information, see the pre-departure questionnaire in Appendix C of this dissertation. The participants could rate their views as “non-existent,” “slight,” “fair,” “considerable,” or “great.” These terms for rating are consistent with questionnaires found in previous research (Carlson, 1991; Burn, 1991; Carlson, Burn, Useem, & Yachimowicz, 1990; and Weinmann & Bragg, 1993).

¹⁰⁷ Participants’ re-entry and post-study views will be revealed later in the dissertation. One will thus be able to compare and contrast participants’ pre-departure views to their perceived realities after the trip.

participants had similar definitions of “culture:” “it is the norms, beliefs, artifacts, arts (music, movies architecture, dance), political beliefs, religious denominations and history of a society” (Catherine, PDQ, May 26); “it is made up of the laws, customs, history, heritage and languages of the people in a region with specific boundaries” (Dorothy, PDQ, May 26); “the shared opinions, ideas, objects by people within the ‘society’” (Miranda, PDQ, May 26). Eric was thorough with his definition, as he stated:

Culture is distinct and repetitious events, customs, or ways of being that are particular to a certain area at a certain time. Culture often, though not always, reflects a society’s values, needs, and wants. Culture is biological—stimulated by outside influence and forever changing. As the world grows smaller, an individual “culture” becomes more blurred and mixed with other cultures to form a new, hybrid culture. (PDQ, May 26)

The participants had certain pre-departure expectations of what they would learn or what they wanted to learn about French culture during their abroad experience. When I asked about these expectations for cultural acquisition, they were excited and eager for the experience. Dorothy remarked, “I can’t wait to see what people do for work and how the work schedule is. I want to visit a school and see how it’s different from our schools in America” (PDQ, May 26). Catherine was focused on learning about French people in general, how they interact with one another and how they would respond to her as an American:

I’ve heard so many rumors about how “rude” the French are and how much they “don’t like Americans”—I want to see for myself what they are really like. I also want to learn about the history of Ubaye and Louisiana and the arts (mostly music and painting) interest me a lot, too. (PDQ, May 26)

Eric was open to anything cultural he might come across in his experience abroad:

This is not a traditional course, which is great! We will practice the language in real life and in daily life with French people. I anticipate learning about their habits, gestures, history, food and a lot about the French business world through our internships. (PDQ, May 26)

Several questions in the pre-departure questionnaire sought information from the participants on how they felt (using adjectives) about going abroad just prior to departure. They all stated that they had mixed feelings of excitement and nervousness. They were “ready” for the trip, yet they felt “unsure” because “this is so new to me” (Catherine, PDQ, May 26). Eric felt “bold, curious and adventurous”, yet “unsure of the unknown” (PDQ, May 26). I asked them to anticipate any challenges that could arise for them while abroad, and all participants mentioned effective “communication.” They felt there could be communication barriers, since they knew they would not understand everything that was said to them. Catherine and Dorothy, in particular, were nervous about communicating in French; Catherine was afraid that she would “forget everything about French, panic and look stupid” (PDQ, May 26).

To further the inquiry on their views about feelings and expectations, I asked participants to discuss their definition of “culture shock” and whether they anticipated feeling any culture shock during their time on the program in the French Alps. Their definitions of “culture shock” had common elements. Miranda and Dorothy’s definitions were very similar: “[d]ifficulty adapting to a culture other than one’s own” (Miranda, PDQ, May 26). For Catherine, it was the “[e]xtreme anxiety at being displaced in a culture to which you are unaccustomed” (PDQ, May 26). Eric’s definition was similar, but included an element of anticipation:

It is simply experiencing a surrounding far different from your own to the extent that it was something difficult for which you are prepared. Cultural shock is often equated with discomfort though, I would hope, it can be exciting as well. I am ready! (PDQ, May 26)

Throughout the pre-departure program, Eric remained anticipatory and open to any and all experiences he was about to have on his first international program. In fact, he was the only participant who did not think he would experience much culture shock while in the French Alps: “I don’t expect to have much culture shock at all. In fact, the shock would probably be the

change in mentality, a shock I would like—something different is something I would greatly appreciate” (PDQ, May 26). The female participants all thought they would experience some culture shock, including the language barriers, habits of communication and differences in food. However, it should be noted that no participant expected to have “severe” culture shock to the point of having great difficulty in coping in the French Alps.

Participants’ Perspectives: Experiences in France

In addition to my observations of the participants during their in-country experience, I conducted an in-country interview (ICI) with each participant during their second week (June 11) in the French Alps in order to gain information about their initial perceptions of the program, their experiences and adjustments to France. First, I asked the participants whether they felt they had had a difficult time adjusting to any aspects of the French culture or life in the French Alps. All participants except for Catherine felt that they had experienced a few episodes of cultural “difference,” but nothing that they would label as “shock” (ICI, June 11). Dorothy and Miranda reported having to take a few days to adjust to the small showers and the “variety of bathrooms in France” (Dorothy, ICI, June 11) (i.e., Turkish bathrooms, which they encountered on numerous occasions). Dorothy had some difficulty with the “realm of food” that was served, since she admitted to being a “very picky eater” (ICI, June 11). She resolved this by saying, “I could always get a quick Coke and some ‘French’ fries somewhere if I thought I couldn’t take it anymore!” (ICI, June 11). Miranda said she grew fond of the different foods to which she was exposed after a short period of adjustment. Eric, in the meantime, reported that he experienced no unexpected difficulties to adjusting to France, except for the realization that “[e]verything is closed on Monday, so I just waited until Tuesday. It was great to actually see people relaxing

and having a day off on a weekday—people really enjoy their life here” (ICI, June 11).

Catherine, however, seemed to experience the most difficulty with her adjustment to France:

As soon as I got here it became evident how obviously un-French I look, sound, and act, and I’m not used to standing out that much. People think nothing of it here to just sit next to you and light up a cigarette...smoke right in front of you and blow it right at you. Back home, that would be really rude, but I think it’s normal for them, so that was an adjustment because at first I was offended, but now realize, that’s just the way it is here and it’s not meant to be offensive and shouldn’t be taken personally. (ICI, June 11)

Next, I investigated how participants perceived France and the “French culture,” after having been exposed to each for only a couple of weeks. All four participants indicated that they felt more comfortable and confident, in general, with international travel and being in France. Specifically, Miranda simply stated that she was “far less apprehensive and nervous now” (ICI, June 11). Eric added that he felt he was learning a lot about being “human”:

I feel in general that people here are really very similar to those in the United States. The similarities are human and the differences are both superficial and trivial. It has been confirmed to me that we are all part of the “human race.” There are all types of people in every culture. (ICI, June 11)

It was again Catherine who gave the most extensive report. She used the study questionnaires and interviews to express her feelings, negotiate her experience and sometimes, admittedly, to vent her frustrations or concerns:

I like it a lot more here now...it’s easy to make generalizations about a whole group of people from meeting a few not-so-great people, but as we’ve spent more time here and met more French people, I’ve realized how potentially different they all are, just like Americans. What I’ve seen of the culture is interesting to me, but limited. I think with staying at Jean Chaix and being with the LSU group, we are not “living” French culture we are just seeing the surface of what represents the culture. I’d like to come back and live in France and really “live” here and discover more on my own. (ICI, June 11)

When asked if she thought her perceptions of the French and French culture had changed since her arrival in France, she had quite a lot to report about her experiences:

Yes, I now have actual people to associate with “The French” [Catherine gestured quotation marks] and I know that some ignorant blanket statement about “The French” is

never going to be 100% true because like most places, it varies depending on a lot of factors. Also, the things that I found annoying or weird about the French initially are more quirky and interesting now, like their apparent *obsession* [emphasis on “obsession”] with good bread, coffee, quality wine and cheeses. I understand it now because...it’s just so good and now I am obsessed with it! (ICI, June 11)

In fact, Catherine continued with her in-depth comparisons of the United States and France and how her observations on the trip had affected her viewpoint:

We have so many conveniences at home in the States, which I now appreciate. But, at the same time, most families I know at home have a huge, oversized house, 3 cars, maybe a boat, 300 cable TV channels with 5 different TVs in the house, 2 to 3 bathrooms, an updated kitchen and buy \$200 worth of pre-packaged food from a national chain grocery store, drive *everywhere* [emphasis on “everywhere”] and never take public transportation. This gluttony sort of sickens me now. We are out of control consumers, and I guess I knew it before I left, but I never realized it was at the extent of what it is until I came to France and could compare lifestyles. (ICI, June 11)

It was apparent that Catherine had begun to accept a lifestyle other than being “typically American.” However, she did report several other observations which were somewhat shocking or “annoying” (ICI, June 11) and made her appreciate the United States. She indicated several examples of some not-so-convenient situations she experienced in France:

There weren’t even working escalators at the Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris...we had to carry our luggage down to the train. I found that very annoying—there were people [pause] some with children and some were elderly people...and they had to carry their bags up and down the escalator. I just don’t see this happening at a huge American airport, I mean [pause] we would throw an absolute fit if they had to carry all our luggage up and down stairs at a big-city airport. Plus, in the U.S., we have laws for the handicapped and stuff like that. [pause] I mean, I just don’t think Americans would stand for no elevator or working escalator at a huge airport like that. Oh, and then, when changing trains, I realized, it’s just like this here [France]...there were no escalators or elevators in the subway stations either. [pause] Everyone was carrying their luggage up and down the steps. This definitely made me appreciate home...and I still don’t understand why the French tolerate this.

[Later in the interview] When I got to France, the little showers were *cute* [laugh], but then kind of annoying when you use them every day and the water may not get hot or stay hot. Our cleaned clothes are stiff because I found out, most French people don’t use dryers because the energy is just so expensive here. It’s not really funny, but I guess that explains why things seem a little antiquated here. (ICI, June 11)

Overall, Catherine, who was most characteristic (age, travel experience and viewpoint) as a “typical” or traditional American study abroad student, experienced the greatest shock while in France and took the longest to adjust to the differences in surroundings, language and culture. However, she indicated to me that she was “reflecting” (informal in-country conversation, June 13) about her abroad experience and she perceived significant gains or development in several areas as a result from participation in this international program.

Internships

During the final week (specifically June 22) of their in-country experience in France, I finished with another in-country interview focused on each participant’s views of his or her internship experiences¹⁰⁸ as well as a look back at the overall experience with the program. When the participants were asked to rate the quality of their internship experience, every one of them gave the program internships a positive rating. In fact, all participants gave it a “B” average and stated that the “grade” would have been higher with a few adjustments to scheduling, organization and planning. Dorothy stated that she “learned more here in Ubaye than anywhere else—on any other program. It was very good. I give the program a solid ‘B’ and with better organization, an ‘A’” (ICII, June 22). Dorothy also mentioned that she had a different idea of what the program should be like:

The program was too sports-oriented for my taste [pause] I had little idea it was going to be like this. I would’ve preferred more cultural activities that did not involve sports. I mean, hiking, biking, paragliding and rafting are nice options, but I would’ve preferred to have other more academic or cultural activities where I got to sit and *talk* [emphasis on talk] with the French people. [. . .] It was difficult at times to concentrate on absorbing the French language and try to learn good grammar when I was out of breath from hiking. [. . .] I thought the internships were the focus of the program, but I really think the sporting and outdoor events were the focus. I think the internships should be an equal

¹⁰⁸ This interview will be referred to as the “in-country internship interview”, or the “ICII” (June 22).

focal point, since they are such a unique experience and a great way to learn French! (ICII, June 22)¹⁰⁹

Catherine, Miranda and Eric concurred, with Catherine stating,

The language learning was good...there was lots of French practice. Though, there was a definite lack of pre-departure orientation and vocab training for the “stages” [internships], which I think was needed. [. . .] It was a unique experience and overall, it was awesome. Overall grade—a “B+.” (ICII, June 22)

The participants described their internships and their preferences during the end-of-program interview. All participants remarked how they appreciated learning in a “real-life setting” and how welcomed they were into the small French businesses, which “allowed [them] to learn more about the traditional aspects of French culture and doing business vs. American conglomerates” (Catherine, ICII, June 22). Dorothy reported going to three of the internship locations—most times to the florist and a few of times to the chocolate shop and the clothing store. She admitted that her favorite internship experience was at the florist, which came as no surprise to me as I observed her eyes sparkling with wonder as she admired the fresh flowers and listened to the florist and the customers talk about their days and their lives. For example, at the florist, Dorothy reported learning much about France that she “could have never learned in a classroom”:

From Marie [the lead florist], I learned details about how daycare works in France and about “livraison” [delivery service] for her flower shop. It was interesting because we would get in the *delivery mobile* [Dorothy’s emphasis; reference to the flower shop’s delivery van] and deliver the flowers and arrangements in person and chat with the customers at their special events, much like it was in the U.S. in the 1950s. It’s so much more personable than America now and I miss that quaintness. [pause] I also saw in Barcelonnette and all across the Ubaye Valley that most, if not all of the shops, close for lunch and all day on Mondays. It took a bit to get used to, but once I did, it was great because people actually get out and enjoy their day and take a break. I did not notice this happening as much in Paris, so it was nice to see that some French people are still keeping with tradition. I wish we did this more in the U.S. (ICII, June 22)

¹⁰⁹ In the in-country internship interview (June 22), I asked participants the questions from the interview’s protocol (see Appendix B). However, I allowed participants the opportunity to discuss other areas in their learning experiences in order to uncover their perspectives.

Dorothy's favorite part of the internships was the "wonderful people who are interested in the students and the warm welcome we received" (ICII, June 22). She was also very happy to have the opportunity to spend some time at the local school in Barcelonnette, which was an unexpected surprise for her. Although the school was not an "official" internship location for the program, it certainly turned into a similar experience, where participants interacted with everyday French life. As a retired teacher, she felt "lucky and privileged" (ICII, June 22) to have the opportunity to observe and work with French teachers and their students. She stated that "kids are kids, no matter where you are—that made me feel good!" (ICII, June 22) For Dorothy, going to the French school was another insight into an aspect of French life and since education had played such an important role in her life, the chance to visit the French school on several occasions was "*incroyable*," or "unbelievable" (ICII, June 22).

Miranda also had internships at various locations, including one each, respectively, at the clothing store, the flower shop and the office of tourism, as well as three occasions at the chocolate shop and four visits to the bike shop. She reported that her favorite internship was the chocolate shop because it was so interesting to learn that "uniquely French" (ICII, June 22) trade in such a friendly environment. She also stated that she would have preferred the chance to spend more of her time at the chocolate shop, instead of having to go to different internships that she did not care to do. Miranda found that at the chocolate shop, she learned the most from the owners and workers about the trade and they were able to "speak openly about the U.S. vs. France and habits and customs" (ICII, June 22), which she found very rewarding.

Catherine only talked about her internship experiences at the bike shop. Even in her free time in Barcelonnette, she would go there and visit with the workers and oftentimes, during the

program, I found her talking about her internship experiences there. She felt that she had “made a connection” with the people and the environment:

I felt comfortable with people close to my age. [. . .] I learned a lot about what music young people like in France and what they like to do. I learned some slang and how young people talk, which was different from the older people who helped with our excursions and activities with the program. [hesitation] The younger people listened to me and gave me a chance to talk. I was intimidated by the older people...like on the hikes with large groups, or those big dinners, I didn't want to talk in front of 5 older French people...I was afraid. In the internship at Bouti-cycle, I could just talk and I made mistakes and they thought it was funny, not that I was stupid. We communicated just the same and it made me more confident and helped a lot. (ICII, June 22)

Overall, she perceived the internships to be a very “unique” experience, since participants were able to have real-life interaction with French people in their “natural environment” (ICII, June 22). She specifically mentioned that the internships were “very different from the French classroom experience at LSU,” since she was more on her own and independent in her attempts to learn French, in France, with “real French people” (ICII, June 22). She also added: “[w]e weren't just practicing grammar or situational French in some hypothetical way...we were actually ‘doing’ something and it was ‘real,’ which was really fun and way more meaningful than in the classroom” (ICII, June 22).

Finally, Eric completed numerous internships at all the possible locations. He mentioned that twice he tried to go to the café internship, but was turned away because the schedule was not verified and no manager was at the café to help. He was disappointed that the café internship did not materialize because he thought “it would have been really great to meet all the different people that come through a café in this little Alpine town” (ICII, June 22). Eric also had a chance to spend some time at the local school and interact with the French teachers and students; he included the experiences at the school as one of the “internships.” When I asked him about his preferences in internship experiences, he had a lot to report:

All the internships were good, but I felt a bit bored at “*La Diligence*” [the clothing store], but it was a typical French store, and I learned about the tax system. [pause] The chocolate shop was technical and quick, so that was good for practicing my French. The tourism office had a fun atmosphere and I really felt like I was improving my on-the-spot speaking and communication skills. [hesitation] The flower shop was good to learn about ordering and business vocab. The school was really great and we didn’t even know it was going to be a possibility to visit, so that kind of made up for the café not working out. [. . .] I learned about the French school system, or at least what a middle or high school is like. I went to 2 Italian classes, 1 French civics, 1 English, 1 French, and 1 geography class.

[. . .] I did not like the way the French businesses and the French people tended to stereotype by gender...I was supposed to go to the bike shop because it was mechanical and I’m male, but I didn’t want to go to the bike shop. I’d rather go to the clothing store, but that seemed to be seen by the French as more of a “woman’s job.” That was frustrating, since I had opposite preferences of what was expected.

[. . .] Overall the businesses that were chosen for the internships were good and professional and the people who worked there were all very nice, patient, and welcoming. (ICII, June 22)

He liked the small-town atmosphere and “really getting a sense that [he] was getting to know some of the local customers” (ICII, June 22).

Perceived Language Acquisition

As for their perceived improvement in French, all four participants reported¹¹⁰ the most progress in listening or speaking skills. Prior to departure, Catherine indicated that she was not very confident speaking French, particularly with native speakers (PDQ, May 26). One of the reasons she chose the French Alps program was to improve on these areas: “I have to get over my fear of speaking French for extended periods of time with native speakers. I am afraid of being critiqued and looking stupid. I figured this program will force me to get over my fears” (PDQ, May 26). Also, Catherine was very uncomfortable with the usage of different verb tenses in French. She confirmed that she sometimes she mixed up when to use the *imparfait* (imperfect) and the *passé composé* (preterite), and she often had “no idea” when or how to use

¹¹⁰ Data was gathered from the ICII (June 22) and end-of-program questionnaire (EPQ) (June 25).

the subjective mood (our discussion after the French interview, May 25).¹¹¹ Her self-rating of her French was at a low to intermediate level. She perceived her writing skills in French to be her strongest, followed by her speaking and listening skills. She rated her reading in French as her weakest skill.

After her in-country internship interview (June 22), Catherine and I discussed her language acquisition during the program. She thought her listening comprehension was still her strongest French skill (same indication as in pre-departure), and she also believed her speaking was still the weakest, though it had “drastically improved” during the program (post-ICII conversation, June 22).¹¹² Catherine thought the internships were the best manner in which to learn French, followed by “talking to French people at dinners, though I preferred one-on-one conversations than those big dinners with fifty French people [...] I felt intimidated there” (ICII, June 22). She stated that she improved her speaking the most, particularly lessening her apprehension to speak in French in front of native speakers. However, she was still intimidated to speak with native speakers who were strangers: “if someone questions me or corrects me or if they don’t understand me, I sort of panic and have a hard time explaining myself” (EPQ, June 25). Overall, she thought she had greatly improved her French vocabulary, and she felt much more at ease with just speaking and letting it “come out” (ICII, June 22) and trying circumlocutions when she did not know a particular term. Her end-of-program self-rating of her French had changed from the pre-departure rating (PDQ, May 26) of a low to intermediate level to an intermediate to high-intermediate one (post-ICII conversation, June 22). As a result of

¹¹¹ She had several problems with the imperfect and conditional tenses in the “si” clauses, and, for two questions, she switched to English during our interview in French (May 25).

¹¹² My pre-departure French interview (May 25) and my end-of-program French interview (June 23) with Catherine were very different. On June 23, she showed far less fear speaking French and was much more confident in her skills. During our final French interview, I noticed that she incorporated the vocabulary she had learned in the Ubaye Valley, and she had improved her overall use of French. However, she did ignore the conditional and future tenses while simply answering the questions in the present tense, and she had a few issues with the plural of nouns.

participation in the program, Catherine believed she had improved her listening in French over any other skill (EPQ, June 25).

Prior to departure, Dorothy experienced a great deal of difficulty understanding questions in French and that she had issues with the usage of different verb tenses (French interview, May 25). She expressed that she thought she could communicate, but only after the French speaker with whom she spoke repeated and rephrased most of the questions; her spoken French was extremely choppy and she hesitated a lot in her responses (French interview and informal conversation afterward, May 25). Before departure to France, Dorothy gave her French an intermediate rating. As for her skills in French, she rated her writing as her top skill, followed by reading and speaking. She rated listening as her lowest skill: “I listen 100% but hearing is another matter” (PDQ, May 26).¹¹³ Her main linguistic goal in France was to improve her speaking skills in French.

During the beginning of the in-country segment of the program (my observations, beginning of June), she could communicate in French, but only after the person with whom she was speaking, repeated and rephrased his or her questions. Her answers were then extremely choppy and she hesitated a lot in her responses. Near the end of the program, however, she reported that she felt more comfortable speaking the language (ICII, June 22). Although she still had some difficulty using correct tenses in French, she understood most questions and was able to communicate better than when she had arrived in Ubaye (French ICI, June 23). Another noticeable change in Dorothy was her demeanor and confidence in French—the “deer in headlights” look she had often displayed when rapid French was spoken to her during pre-departure and during the first weeks of the program in France, had greatly diminished (in-

¹¹³ During my observations from pre-departure through the end-of-program, I did notice that Dorothy had some issues with hearing all that was said to her in French, particularly when she was among several French speakers where a lot of background noise existed (e.g., large dinners with host nationals).

country observations). Instead of being completely afraid and overwhelmed, she was able to laugh at the situation and use gestures and ask for repetitions (in-country observations). She seemed calmer and just listened to the questions, absorbed the meaning as best she could and improved in the quickness of her answers and her overall comprehension in French (in-country observations). As a result of participation in the program, Dorothy believed her listening skills improved the most due to the “constant interaction with and observation of the French,” followed by her speaking skills, with “great conversations with proprietors and other French people” (EPQ, June 25). She had positive opinions about the language experience in the internships, which “helped the most because I was able to hear the people speak to one another in a natural way. This was the best way to pick up the acceptable grammar of the locality” (ICII, June 22). At the end of the program, she rated her French at the high-intermediate level (post-ICII conversation, June 22).

In the pre-departure segment of the program, Eric had no problem understanding questions in French and answered quickly and effectively (observations and French interview, May 25).¹¹⁴ He rated his French as “strong,” except for his listening skills, which he rated as “*faibles*,” or “weak.” During the program, he hoped to work on all areas of his French, but in particular listening and speaking. He rated his overall French at a high-intermediate level.

Throughout the program in France, Eric was the participant who made the most effort to speak French at all times. He sought out opportunities to speak French with any French person and he was not shy or intimidated when speaking French with the host nationals. Eric exhibited a very quick usage of new vocabulary and Ubaye expressions, and he showed great ease in switching tenses (French interview, June 23). He was confident before the program, but as a

¹¹⁴ He did struggle with French “si” clauses and the imperfect and conditional tenses in the French interview (May 25).

result of the program, he exuded even more confidence in his skills. When I asked him about his self assessment of his learning, particularly in regard to French, he had several opinions:

I especially understand more spoken French, even very quick spoken language. I think I speak better and write a bit better, but I am disappointed that the daily journals weren't graded weekly. [. . .] I thought my French was good before I left Louisiana, but now I know I can handle being in France, surrounded by native speakers and I think I do quite well. [. . .] I would've preferred to stay with a host family to improve my language skills and to learn about the culture. [. . .] [M]aybe we could've had lunch together at Jean Chaix...that would've given us time to talk about our days and the internships, but would've given us some separation. [. . .] I also would've liked some separation from the LSU group [hesitation] and I think it would've given us more chances to learn the culture, and we'd have spoken more French. [pause] I was disappointed that the girls [the female participants] spoke so much English. (Conversation in English with Eric after the end-of-program French interview, June 23)

Finally, Eric agreed that he felt his listening skills had improved the most since he listened to native speakers in a “real-life” setting for hours each day. He noted:

We were in an everyday professional setting in which we were the minority as non-native speakers, so very few customers or in-coming French people would slow down and talk to us differently or more slowly or simply than the other French people, so it was great practice. (ICII, June 22)

He also noticed a self-improvement in asking questions and with “technical terms,” like answering phones and proper business greetings (ICII, June 22). He felt he learned the most French during the internships, particularly at the school, and speaking one-on-one with native speakers helping with the program. At the end of the program, he felt his level of French had “gone up from high-intermediate to low-advanced” (post-ICII conversation, June 22).

Prior to departure (and in the first couple of weeks of the in-country segment), Miranda seemed fairly comfortable speaking French, though she appeared somewhat nervous or anxious when she did not understand what a French speaker was saying.¹¹⁵ She maintained that she was comfortable with French “most of the time” (PDQ, May 26), and she gave her French a rating of

¹¹⁵ She exhibited some difficulty with the French conditional mode (“si” clauses in particular) (French interview, May 25). She knew she was not using the verbs correctly and she began to panic (informal conversation post French interview, May 25).

high-intermediate to low-advanced. She found her reading and writing skills to be the strongest in French. Furthermore, Miranda reported that she found listening to, and comprehending spoken French to be the most difficult for her, so she thought the program in the French Alps would be great because she would “get a trained ear and lots of practice with native speakers” (PDQ, May 26).

Near the end of the program, Miranda seemed much more comfortable speaking French and was more at ease with switching verb tenses.¹¹⁶ She incorporated newly learned vocabulary in her French, and her comprehension and listening skills had improved (which she also reported in her self-perceived improvements) (observations and French interview, June 23). Miranda did report some frustration a French person did not understand her French, or if she was misunderstood (observations and ICII, June 22). Miranda reported listening, then speaking, as her most improved skills in French. She said that she learned French most through “the program internships and time spent in conversation with the French such as at the big dinners when one person came to sit with us” (EPQ, June 25).

It was interesting to note that none of the participants indicated a great perceived improvement in their reading or writing skills. In fact, they all stated some disappointment in a lack of improvement in these skills, and they suggested that more scholarly readings and discussions on the readings be incorporated into the program in a more formal manner. When I asked for their suggestions on how to improve the reading and writing portion of the program, they felt a more class-like setting, or “reading and writing seminar” (Eric, EPQ, June 25), would have been appropriate for some of the afternoons, in which participants could have read newspaper articles, stories, literature or poetry about the Ubaye Valley or Ubaye-Louisiana

¹¹⁶ Her use of the future and conditional tenses (including the “si” clauses), was nearly perfect and was completed without hesitation (French interview, June 23).

history and have discussions and reports. Eric suggested, “more could have been done for reading in French, even if reading the French national newspaper or articles about the valley or museum brochures and talking about them on the patio after lunch or something” (personal conversation, June 24).

Furthermore, even though they wrote daily journals, all participants thought this type of writing was too informal and “not really graded” (Eric, EPQ, June 25), so they felt it did not help them improve their French writing skills as much as they would have hoped. When I probed further into this issue, participants stated that while they liked the non-traditional format of the program and all the speaking and listening they were doing, they thought some “traditional classroom” aspects could be incorporated into the in-country portion of the program to make it more successful and rigorous. Miranda stated:

We all liked the internships and the activities and excursions, but in the afternoons after lunch, we all said we thought we could’ve had a class about history or grammar or something. Our director could have held a class or a lecture, or we could’ve had some of the French people come in and talk to us more formally about their jobs, the history of Ubaye. (ICII, June 22)

Therefore, although the participants liked the unique experience of learning through internships, they craved more structure and aspects of classroom instruction to which they were accustomed.

Perceived Cultural Acquisition

When it came to the participants’ perception of cultural acquisition from the French Alps program, all of them reported in the end-of program questionnaire (June 25) that they improved their knowledge of the French culture. Prior to departure to France (PDQ, May 26), I asked them to rate their level of knowledge of the French culture. Dorothy and Miranda gave a self-rating of “good” while Eric rated his knowledge at “fair.” Catherine rated hers between “poor” and “fair.” When I asked this question at the end of the program (EPQ, June 25), all the participants

reported a higher level of knowledge of the French culture. Dorothy rated her cultural knowledge as “good to excellent,” while Miranda and Eric rated theirs as “good,” followed by Catherine as “fair to good.”

I explored the participants’ opinions as to the specific aspects of the program they felt had helped them improve their knowledge of French culture. Dorothy considered her personal experiences with the culture and language to be very informative. She suggested that various aspects of the program were “useful real-life experiences with the language and culture”:

I liked going to the same commerce several times. I liked one day when I took a ride with Marie as she delivered the bouquets to her clients. She helped me with new vocabulary words and the intonation and inflection of French sounds. The French people were always so gracious when they made corrections to my mistakes. [. . .] I felt comfortable with these people, especially the older French people who helped with the program. There’s an established tradition here already with this program [. . .] it’s very special. The connection between LSU and Ubaye...we are treated as friends, and we are welcomed into their homes and their hearts.¹¹⁷

In the in-country internship interview (ICII), Miranda and Catherine gave similar examples of how their knowledge of the French culture improved—program internships, interacting with “real” French people, conversational opportunities with native speakers in which “cultural differences between the U.S. and France could be discussed at length” (Miranda, June 22) and “going to people’s houses” (Catherine, June 22). Eric specifically mentioned the program internships and how he learned French culture and tradition through “business relations, taxes, and customs with client-proprietor interaction” (ICII, June 22).

However, it was Eric who brought up the interesting concept of “access” to French culture. Even though he told me how he appreciated the warm and genuine welcome that the LSU group had received in the Ubaye Valley, he wondered how he would be received if he were “just an American” traveling in France:

¹¹⁷ These statements were recorded (in English) just after the end-of-study French interview (June 23).

Everyone in Ubaye was very curious about the LSU group, so it felt nice and welcoming here, but really, I think we had a special inside look at French people. [. . .] I kept thinking, “If I was just here by myself, not affiliated with LSU and no one knew I was coming, would these people be this nice or welcoming to me?” [pause] I think on the surface, yes, they would be nice, but would’ve I been so openly invited to have snacks and a drink at their house like we were on this trip? I highly doubt it. The structure of the program and the close connection between the program and the Ubaye residents is great, but I think we have to realize that French people—or any people—don’t usually welcome foreigners so openly. I think we, as a group, possibly took this access to French people and their culture for granted.

[. . .] We were able to just go into French businesses and work with their clients and their staff; we were taken on tours and to museums and got to go to people’s houses right away, which I don’t think will happen so easily on a trip in the future. How close can I get to this experience and really getting to know French people again in France, if not on an organized program? I think it would take a long time—certainly longer than the few weeks we’ve been here. [hesitation] This makes me appreciate what I’ve learned here even more because I think it was such a rare opportunity and look into the lifestyle and culture of the French. (ICII, June 22)

Dorothy had also mentioned similar sentiments and observations, as she said she appreciated the opportunity to be introduced to French people and be invited into their homes, since this did not happen on her previous study abroad in Paris. All the participants felt “lucky” to have such immediate access to “real French people” (Catherine, ICII, June 22), but they all did ponder how they would be received and whether they would “fit in or make connections with the French” (Catherine, EPQ, June 25) if they simply arrived in France, unaffiliated with a program with connections to the host nationals.

Perceived Academic and Professional Development

In the end-of-program questionnaire (June 25), the participants were also forthcoming about their perceived academic and professional development as a result of their activities in the French Alps program. For Dorothy, the experience seemed to build her confidence for future academic endeavors in French studies: “I think in my future French classes at LSU, I will be able to understand more of what is going on in the class. I think I might have a little more confidence to express my thoughts in class, too” (EPQ, June 25). However, Miranda, Catherine

and Eric reported that while they did improve their French and reaffirmed their interest in possibly incorporating French in a future career, they all stated that the internships could have been geared more toward each individual's professional goals. Miranda mentioned that she would have liked to complete some ethnographic interviews of the older French people or perhaps do an internship at the local museum in order to gain some insight into aspects of rural sociology in the Ubaye Valley. Catherine summed up her opinions on the professional aspect of the internships:

I liked the bike shop for my “internship” and I think I learned a lot of French and about the culture, but realistically, is it an “internship”? I don't want to work in a bike shop for my career, so maybe more effort could be made to tailor internships more to our major. There really weren't any efforts to lead us to internships in which we could develop our professional skills IN our majors. I'd have rather at least had a chance at a cultural, somewhat more professional internship related to my interests or studies. (EPQ, June 25)

Overall, all the participants reported that they would have preferred the internships to be more attuned to their academic and career goals.

General Reactions to Returning Home

In the end-of-program questionnaire taken before leaving the Ubaye Valley (June 25), I asked the participants how they felt about ending the program, leaving France and returning to the United States. They had mixed reactions. All the participants said they were “sad” to leave the Valley, yet reported mixed feelings of nostalgia, relief and determination. Dorothy was “sad because I am leaving such friendly people whom I am just getting to know” (EPQ, June 25).

Miranda had sorrowful feelings for the end of the trip, but also felt some relief:

I am sad to leave because I had been looking forward to this for so long and it just went so fast. However, the dynamics of our group were sort of odd and I think that has been more of a shock than the French culture. The “culture” of our group—we were together ALL THE TIME—it started to drive me (and others) nuts. I thought we'd have more independent time. I'm used to being on my own a lot and we had to do everything together and we are living in close quarters here at Jean Chaix. As soon as I met the group, I was interested in it because I'm in sociology, so I thought observing the small-

group dynamic would be interesting, but I had no idea how fast being together in this group would wear on me. I think each student is nice, but being together like this all the time needs to end soon. (EPQ, June 25)

During my observations of participants during the in-country portion of this study, as well as in questionnaires and interviews, all participants mentioned to me at one time or another that they needed a break or separation from the group. Miranda and Catherine suggested that participants should be better prepared during pre-departure since the group is together numerous hours for the duration of the program. In fact, Eric and Miranda suggested that more ice-breaker and team-building exercises be completed during pre-departure to build more camaraderie among the participants before their departure for France.

Furthermore, Catherine expressed her sadness at the end of the program, but also had feelings of determination to return to France. In a conversation with me after the in-country internship interview (June 22), she took a nostalgic look back on her experience with the program and shared her thoughts with me:

I can't decide if this trip is too short or just right. On one hand, I'm ready to go home, prepare my own meals, see my friends and family, have summer break, but at the same time, I'd like to stay longer or maybe travel in France more, or, like we've talked about, maybe have an optional extension of the program to go to a French language school or a university program in Nice or something for 3 to 4 weeks of French classes...I'd totally do that. [. . .] It's so remote here that I think maybe if we had the chance to spend a length of time in a more normal-sized French city, like maybe Nice or Aix, it would just top off the program. [. . .]

Personally, I could probably handle it financially, if receiving French credits, because, well, I'm already over here. I spent all that money on the flight, and I'm here, and I don't have to adjust again to the country and hearing French all the time, so I'd kind of like to stay a few more weeks, but not here in Ubaye, but somewhere else, in a medium-sized city. I also would like being more on my own or with other students, but just having more time on my own to explore a city and not having to be together with this group of people constantly. We are all ready to separate, I think.

Furthermore, all participants stated that they did not feel they were gone long enough from the U.S. to truly miss their home state or country to a significant degree. Miranda and Catherine

stated specifically that the experience would have been much more difficult for them if they had been abroad for an entire semester. When I asked them how they thought they would react to being abroad for a semester-long program, both projected that they would have been very homesick for their family and friends. In addition, both said they preferred this short-term program, particularly for a first-time abroad, as opposed to going on a more long-term program. The short duration was one of the reasons they chose to participate in this program.

Finally, in the end-of-program questionnaire (June 25), the participants expressed their apprehension about returning home to the United States and what they felt could be the biggest challenge for them upon return. Dorothy was not looking forward to “getting back to a schedule I make for myself and following it—it was so easy to let someone else plan my exciting days here—now it’s back to the same old routine and no one will be cooking my meals” (EPQ, June 25). Catherine projected that she would be “homesick for France” and “its incredible goat cheese”; she was not happy with having to return to “100-degree weather in Louisiana” (EPQ, June 25). Eric did not necessarily foresee any challenges in returning home, but he was not looking forward to the long trip back home, after it seemed to him that they had just arrived. For Miranda, the differences in climate and scenery would prove to be her biggest challenges in returning home:

Going back to Louisiana after a month in paradise is going to be dreadful. This trip wasn’t long enough for me to really ever get truly homesick for the U.S. Ubaye is so welcoming and beautiful that if I had any thoughts of homesickness, it would only last for a few minutes and would quickly pass. If I got a little down, I could say, “I’m only here for a few weeks and enjoy the cool, summer weather,” because I know Louisiana is hot and sticky, so I don’t miss that AT ALL! (EPQ, June 25)

In general, none of the participants believed that they would have a difficult time with their return to the United States and reentering into American culture. They claimed that, while they

seemed acclimated to their location in France and the surrounding areas, they had not been away from the U.S. quite long enough to experience a huge challenge or shock upon their return.

Participants' Perspectives: Re-entry into the United States

When asked in the re-entry questionnaire (REQ) (July 10) about their initial reaction to returning to the United States, all participants were happy to see their family and friends and remarked that it “felt good” (Dorothy) to return to the conveniences and comforts of home; however, all participants (some more than others) indicated a reverse homesickness for France. Dorothy had many of these feelings but, in fact, noticed how odd she felt not being with the other participants:

It was good to be back home and sleeping in my own bed, but I kept looking for the people I had been with almost nonstop for a month. I wondered what I was going to eat for meals. Then remembered I had to fix my own. I listened to what people were saying and understood right away—that was a relief because I found myself not thinking about translating what I was hearing. (REQ, July 10)

Meanwhile, Miranda simply stated she missed France, and Eric was relieved to be home after a long, tiring trip back to Louisiana. It was, however, Catherine who experienced the most severe reactions upon returning to the U.S.:

I am annoyed and bored. I thought that it would be really nice to get back to the States, but it's not. The idea has set in that I have a month and a half with only the film project and essay and preparation for next semester to distract me. I also had to talk a whole lot about the trip as soon as I got back and when people aren't that interested, I find it annoying. I'm actually kind of relieved to write my thoughts for this questionnaire because at least I feel you are interested in my experience and maybe someone else will read it. Also, the U.S. looked really, really, really ugly after Ubaye. Driving across Texas was the worst possible thing to do after coming back from Paris. It's hot and just not the same scenery as the French Alps. (REQ, July 10)

Reverse Culture Shock

Next, in the re-entry questionnaire (July 10),¹¹⁸ I wanted to investigate whether the participants thought they had experienced “reverse culture shock” upon return to the U.S. However, before asking them to answer this, I asked them how they would define the term(s)—I found their answers to be very intriguing. The “definitions” were, in fact, directly related to how participants felt during their own re-entry experiences. For Dorothy, “reverse culture shock” was

The feeling a person has when he returns to his own culture and world of comfort after he has been out of his comfort zone for a period of time. He leaves the new ‘life style’ and embraces his old. Then, he questions that maybe the new lifestyle might have some merits that he had not thought of before. (REQ, July 10)

Numerous times during the study, Dorothy had reported that she was out of her comfort zone in certain situations in France, particularly when several French nationals were speaking to the participants. For Miranda, “re-entry shock” meant “returning home to discover that all the things that irritated you about your country before you left now irritate you ten times more” (REQ, July 10). In fact, Miranda communicated that she felt irritated by the U.S. before she left and upon re-entry, she felt much more irritated by the American culture and politics. Catherine described it as “having an episode where you can't believe you actually live here and have to stay here for a fairly long period of time and you preferred being in the foreign country” (REQ, July 10).

In a similar fashion, Catherine defined “reverse culture shock” in part with her own experience as a background—she did report having trouble coming to the realization that she was back in the U.S. and her abroad experience was over. Finally, Eric expressed that “it is ‘shock’ that one experiences about one’s former surroundings after returning to them and having seen a totally different lifestyle and having an altered perspective” (REQ, July 10). Eric perceived that

¹¹⁸ See the re-entry questionnaire in Appendix C of this dissertation.

he did return home with an “altered perspective” of the world and humanity in general (REQ, July 10).

The participants had mixed reactions when asked whether they actually thought they were experiencing reverse culture shock upon re-entry to the U.S. In particular, Catherine answered affirmatively, stating that she was upset that the trip went so quickly, and she had anticipated the experience for months before:

I waited so long for this trip and once I got back home, I realized that I would be doing absolutely nothing for the rest of the summer. I was annoyed at most everything in the U.S., not necessarily because something was legitimately annoying, but because I didn't want to be here. I got upset and a little depressed. (REQ, July 10)

Miranda reported that she did not perceive any “shock” per se, but she “sincerely missed France” (REQ, July 10). Dorothy and Eric stated that they did not perceive any reverse culture shock in their experiences, but rather observed themselves making comparisons between the U.S. and France.

When I asked participants whether they found themselves making comparisons between the French culture and their own, they all answered with a resounding “yes.” Most commented on their first re-entry impressions of American stores and how food is not as fresh, of lesser quality, pre-packaged, and in larger quantities. In particular, Miranda found herself comparing life in Louisiana with life in France:

I miss the wide variety of cheeses and refrigerated desserts in the grocery stores, “healthy” breakfast cereals with chocolate in them, alpine cherries for two Euros per kilo, the widespread knowledge of and concern for our environment, and the lack of gross obesity in the general populace. (REQ, July 10)

Miranda wrote that she had confirmed her preference in lifestyle: “yes, I really miss France. I've never had a great love for American culture, always preferring what I've read of France instead.

This trip confirmed the suspicions I already held” (REQ, July 10). Catherine continued the notion of comparison between French and American habits:

Yes, I’m comparing them a lot. Going back to the grocery store was difficult because I really wanted some fresh farm-made *chèvre* [goat cheese] and a good, cheap bottle of wine but it was not to be found here. Also, the placard in front of McDonald’s was almost a shock when it said “42 ounce Coke = 78 cents”. [. . .] Also, everyone looked soooo stereotypically American, and I know I’m not one to talk, but everyone is so underdressed here. And, I saw a girl walking down a busy street today and I realized that I would’ve considered that really weird before, but this time I wondered why more people don’t walk (of course, this observation was made while I was driving my car, so I guess I have no room to talk). (REQ, July 10)

Most participants remarked that they found Americans to be sloppily dressed and shockingly overweight, even after they had been gone only for a month.

Re-entry Challenges

In the re-entry questionnaire, I also asked study participants to rate how they felt about several “re-entry challenges.”¹¹⁹ In a Likert-scale format, participants were asked to rate to what extent they thought they had experienced these challenges, from a “0” (not a factor) to a “5” (a strong challenge). When faced with the challenge of feeling “boredom” in the U.S. after the re-entry, Miranda and Catherine reported this to be a “strong” challenge. Miranda stated, “there’s nothing to do here when it’s this hot! I’m bored out of my mind” (REQ, July 10). Catherine wrote:

The first few days were different because I was going to visit other family and keeping busy, but once I got back to my house, it was like falling into a black hole of boredom, I have nothing to do that I want to do, and I don’t want to think about France because it’ll just make me think of what I was doing when I was there, and I’ll miss it. (REQ, July 10)

Both participants mentioned that it was particularly difficult to return home during the hot summer months when there was no busy college semester in session. Eric and Dorothy did not find “boredom” to be a significant challenge in their re-entry experiences.

¹¹⁹ See LaBrack (2004) for more information.

Furthermore, Miranda and Catherine also expressed that they believed they felt “strong” reverse “home” sickness after re-entry. Miranda brought forth that she really missed just about everything about France and could not wait to go back. Catherine missed the people she had met at her internships and on excursions and some of the other group participants. She missed the French country lifestyle and yearned to return:

I also miss walking into town and riding my bike around and walking to the little villages and just going to the little French grocery store to explore. I really, really miss the weather and the mountains. For the most part, I felt healthier and more active and engaged in my activities when I was there. [. . .] I'm determined to go back! (REQ, July 10)

Dorothy reported a “fair” amount of reverse “home” sickness and wrote that she missed the unstressed lifestyle that she experienced in Barcelonnette. Eric did not report feeling this challenge in re-entry.

The re-entry challenge of feelings of alienation provided some interesting feedback from the participants. When asked whether they felt some alienation from their home culture, family and friends or daily life or whether they began to see faults in their home society that they never noticed before, the participants’ responses were mixed. Dorothy, who reported having a very strong sense of American pride before the program in the French Alps, rated this “challenge” at a “0,” or not a factor, and she commented, “[d]aily life is not less enjoyable for me since I lived in France for one month. I knew there were ‘faults’ in my home country, but I’m from a generation that is proud to be American” (REQ, July 10).

Miranda and Eric had reported negative opinions toward American politics and culture prior to departure; upon re-entry, they stated that while these feelings existed before departure, their views were reaffirmed after the experience. Eric rated the significance of their challenge at “fair” and he included, “I have become much more conscious of differences and similarities

since my time abroad, only as a result of having something beyond the media or imagination to compare it to. These comparisons have not been negative, just observant” (REQ, July 10).

Miranda, however, was more critical with a rating of a “strong” challenge: “The rampant obesity and lack of respect for our environment are really getting to me. I also cannot tolerate our country’s foreign policy and our current administration [George W. Bush]” (REQ, July 10).

Similarly, Catherine was critical of her surroundings upon re-entry; however, her negativity was more directed to her boredom and “craving to experience something else” outside of Louisiana: “a lot of things seem worse than before I had left, it just reinforces my need to find a way to get a one-way ticket out of Louisiana after graduation. My list of ‘faults’ would be too long to list” (REQ, July 10).

Dorothy and Catherine expressed a fair degree of challenge in applying their new knowledge and skills in French. They both stated that it was difficult to go from an intense French immersion situation to little or no contact with French back in the U.S. Catherine brought up that since LSU was not in session for the semester, she was not exposed to French: “I feel like I’m losing the French I learned and I want to speak to someone in French but it’s the summer and we’re not at school” (REQ, July 10). Dorothy did not know how to remedy being away from French; she felt that her language skills were dwindling after “such a great immersion experience” (REQ, July 10). She had made plans to read French newspapers or news from France online, as well as do some observations and work in a French immersion program in a Baton Rouge elementary school. Miranda felt that she would really have to make an effort to expose herself to French during the summer to keep her skills fresh, while Eric was exposed to French on a daily basis at his summer job. When asked whether they felt they had experienced any challenges with changes in their relationships at home with friends or family, none of the

participants reported any such challenges. Three of the four participants remarked that the program was too short of a time abroad to have significantly changed any of their relationships.

Perceived Effects on the Participants' Lives

After just under a month abroad, how much change in their lives did the participants think had occurred? All participants reported that they felt encouraged to do more international travel and all but Dorothy said they felt more self-confidence in general. For Dorothy, a seasoned traveler and a retired adult, this trip was special in her heart, but it was not her first or only trip abroad, so she reported:

The changes in my life are not significant to me--I have traveled abroad before and knew the differences. My thoughts and memories have changed because I visited a different part of France I had not seen in my other visits. In quiet times, I like to revisit, in my mind, those experiences to enjoy them once again. (REQ, July 10)

She also mentioned that she felt more confident in her abilities in French as a result of the trip to the Ubaye Valley. However, what is perhaps the most interesting aspect of her account is how the trip strongly influenced her outlook toward aging and the treatment of people:

I was impressed with the vitality of the older French people and especially the French women. I feel that the people I met there were truly aging gracefully while leading a more active lifestyle than Americans half their age. This has made me resolve to try to be as active as they are in my aging years. Since I did not view much TV for that month, I found out that I can live without checking the news all day long on the TV. One of the most important things I discovered during the trip was how to get along with people from other backgrounds—it's important to let them do the talking, be polite and listen first. [. . .] I remind myself that they have ideas and principles, lifestyles that are valuable to them, and I shouldn't judge them because I would hope for the same courtesy. (REQ, July 10)

According to Dorothy, her biggest adjustment upon re-entry to the U.S. was simply “being by [her]self again”:

Each day in Barcelonnette, we checked in to see what the other person was doing. There were activities, thoroughly enjoyable, that one just went along without thinking much about it. It was very odd to leave the group and travel by myself and it seemed strange to be home without the group. (REQ, July 10)

Similarly, Miranda and Eric reported minimal to small changes to their lives at the re-entry phase of the study. Miranda stated, “I plan to eat more desserts, fewer snacks, and walk more frequently. I’ve also become enraptured by accessories [she later mentions French women’s ‘obsession’ with wearing scarves], things that were totally foreign to me before the trip” (REQ, July 10). Miranda described no major readjustments for her re-entry back to the U.S. Eric believed his viewpoint was not “changed,” but rather certain areas were “reaffirmed”:

My sentiments that humans everywhere are “just humans” were reaffirmed. But concerning raw changes, I suppose I was able to better understand human behavior. [. . .] From the French, I learned a little about being observant—before commenting on any truths I saw, I observed. Now, I feel I point the finger less and am less quick to jump to conclusions or judge.

[. . .] I feel more comfortable in my frame and with myself as a person. [. . .] I’ve realized my ability to easily adapt, my integrity to remain headstrong for what I believe and value. I have a new-found openmindedness to new people, ways of life and situations. (REQ, July 10)

However, it was again Catherine who perceived the greatest change and strongest effect on her life:

It made me really want to go back and learn French better (gasp). I would really like to find a job that would afford me with the opportunity to travel to other countries or at least have enough money to do so. My parents commented that I look different also, and they said I matured a bit, but I’m not so sure. (REQ, July 10)

When asked whether she could pinpoint a personal attitude or characteristic that had changed as a result of the abroad experience, she wrote:

Before I left I was concerned that I wouldn’t be able to move away from my friends and family and be happy and for some of the time in France, I felt really overwhelmed by being there and thought that maybe I was right that I was destined to remain in Louisiana. But as I look back over my experiences in France, I remember most of it with a lot of happiness and now that I’m back in Louisiana, I can’t imagine staying here for the rest of my life. (REQ, July 10)

Furthermore, she described how her perspective on the U.S. had changed and how she viewed certain behaviors by Americans:

I'm more defensive about France and other people who would not be considered part of the majority. When Americans are talking negatively about the French or other foreigners or minorities, it annoys me more than it has previously and the person who said it seems very ignorant to me. (REQ, July 10)

This is a very different viewpoint from the one she held prior to departure (pre-departure questionnaire), in which she did not have a “pro-French” perspective (PDQ, May 26). Catherine also stated that the process of filling out the actual re-entry questionnaire was an outlet for her to share her experience with someone:

Funny as it may sound, it is good to share my experience in this questionnaire...I got back and my life has changed so much...these changes are so evident to me, but my friends and family think it's “just me” and they don't seem to notice what a big deal that trip was for me. (REQ, July 10)

Participants' Suggestions for the Re-entry Phase

After they gave their accounts of their re-entry phase, I asked the participants for their suggestions on what, if anything, LSU could do in the future to help returnees readjust to being back in the U.S. They had varying views on this topic. Eric did not have any suggestions for the re-entry phase, but Dorothy thought there may be a need for an informal meeting after the return trip: “[w]hen the students return, perhaps we could have a reunion of travelers to discuss the joys and hardships for the trip, share pictures and reminisce” (REQ, July 10). Miranda stated that she was “not sure that there is anything LSU could do to help since readjustment is a very personal process that will be different for each returnee” (REQ, July 10). In her statements, she emphasized that the program was short, so she did not feel that she needed a “workshop” upon return, but did mention that if the program had been of longer duration, then it may have been more necessary. I found it interesting that Miranda pointed out that there may have been a difference between re-entry from a summer program and a program which took place during the academic year: “[t]his was a summer program and I don't think people would be interested

necessarily in coming to campus for meetings or any sort of post-France program—if it was part of the academic year and everyone was around campus, then maybe” (REQ, July 10) Miranda, Dorothy and Catherine specifically mentioned the “study abroad book”¹²⁰ that I had shown them during the pre-departure program and suggested that the book or something similar be incorporated into the program, as it could help individual participants work through the entire experience, and it could be “used as a type of reading material for topics of discussion for the group” (Miranda, REQ, July 10) at group dinners or after lunch or dinner.

Participants’ Reflections and Overall Reactions

Finally, participants were asked specific questions during re-entry about their reaction to several areas of the program. When asked about the duration of the program, all four participants stated that it “went too fast” (Miranda, REQ, July 10) and was a bit “too short” (Catherine, REQ, July 10). Dorothy wrote that “nothing less than 5 weeks should be considered...by the time you get settled in and used to the schedule and feel comfortable in the environment, it’s time to go home” (REQ, July 10). Miranda and Catherine both mentioned that the first few days in Barcelonnette were “unorganized” with a lot of “downtime” (REQ, July 10). They expressed discontent that “days were wasted” (REQ, July 10), as the program internships did not start until the end of the first week of arrival in the Alps. All participants remarked that they felt time in Ubaye, particularly during the first week of the trip, should have been used more wisely and have been better organized and scheduled prior to departure from the U.S.

When I asked participants to look back on the entire experience, consider the price of the program, and rate it “about right,” “too expensive” or “too inexpensive,” all four participants said the overall price seemed “about right” to them because of all the activities, food and lodging included. Equally noteworthy was that every participant mentioned that it would have been “too

¹²⁰ See *Study Abroad: How to Get the Most Out of Your Experience* by Dowell and Mirsky (2003).

expensive” for them if not for the “generous scholarships”¹²¹ that were given to them (Eric, REQ, July 10). Several participants mentioned their favorable opinions of the value and quality of the program’s lodging at the Jean Chaix mountain lodge. They all felt that the lodge was comfortable and provided nice rooms, facilities and meals. The participants thought that it added to the value of the program, particularly for the cost to them. When I questioned their preferences between a lodge such as Jean Chaix and a host family stay, the participants’ opinions were quite similar. Dorothy reported:

The lodging was very comfortable. It was the best arrangement I have had in doing studies abroad. I would not like to live with a host family the whole time, but if weekend arrangements can be made, fine. Though, I would not do the program if there was a long time stay with families. (REQ, July 10)

Catherine had similar views:

I liked Jean Chaix just fine...it was better than staying at a hotel, especially since we had the 3rd floor to ourselves. But, I think I would’ve learned more about French people and the culture had I stayed in a host family for some amount of time, maybe if we switched between families for a night or two, like once a week, everyone would spend the night at a different French house. However, I could easily see how I would much rather live with certain families than other ones so that might be difficult. (REQ, July 10)

Similarly, Miranda preferred some sort of “combination of the two” (host family and Jean Chaix):

I think Jean Chaix was adequate shelter but isolated us culturally from the world around us. Some days this was nice because it was comforting but overall, it hindered our ability to adjust and learn. We really weren’t around French people that much while at Jean Chaix because many of the guests weren’t French. (REQ, July 10)

Eric, too, reported that he preferred a combination of Jean Chaix and a family stay:

I would have liked to have experienced French home life and the opportunity to get to know a family better. Combining both would give strength to the program by introducing the French home life, while maintaining cohesiveness among the students as they stay for some period together. It would also relieve the tension of the group dynamic, give us some time apart and create the opportunity for new experiences. (REQ, July 10)

¹²¹ The Friends of French Studies organization provided all participants with at least \$1,000 in scholarship money.

Perhaps these desires for a family stay stemmed from the fact that, during their stay in Ubaye, the participants were informed that previous LSU groups from this program had stayed for several nights with French host families. I observed the participants' immediate reactions to hearing this news with the knowledge that they were not going to be given the option to stay at a French family's home—they were visibly disappointed. In later observations and discussions with them, they felt somewhat slighted by not having been given this option on their trip.

When I asked them how their study abroad experience could have been enhanced or if they had any recommendations for the format or the content of the program, they had several suggestions. All participants mentioned the need for improvement in having a more formal schedule prior to departing the U.S., particularly with the program internships. Catherine wrote:

I really don't think giving the participants a schedule of events before leaving for Ubaye would be very difficult. I know the whole trip is not completely planned out, but even a list of events that have taken place in the past would be helpful. Also, in terms of the sporting activities, I don't see that we were adequately prepared through the program for the level of difficulty for all the events. I'm sure the French people wouldn't mind giving us a list of things to be prepared for certain events, like gloves for the "descente à vélo" [biking down the mountain]¹²² or how long a hike was going to be—we had NO preparation before leaving for the excursion. Once in Ubaye, we never knew what was happening from one day to the next. (REQ, July 10)

Miranda had similar remarks about the program and its organization and scheduling:

We rarely knew what we were doing from one day to the next. There was little delineation between "program time" and "personal time," which I found very frustrating. Often we would be told nothing was planned for a certain day only to be told later (i.e., the morning of the day in question) that plans had been made after all, and we had to be ready to leave in 10 minutes. That was really frustrating. (REQ, July 10)

Eric's suggestions were focused on scheduling, but specifically on the program's internship schedule. He wrote:

¹²² Even in the summer months during the program, there was snow in the mountains. Students who participated in biking down the mountain felt very unprepared for the experience—they did not have appropriate clothing and were not aware of the long distance of the bike trip.

There needs to be larger rotation within the “stages” [internships] as well as a longer stay at them and better communication with the owners before the program begins. Our “stages” should also be placed more evenly throughout the week and not at its end. There should be a schedule, which would benefit students with stability, exposure and dependability. (REQ, July 10)

Finally, Dorothy had five specific points of improvement:

(1) Make Jean Chaix the focal place for meetings with locals to practice speaking French together with the students from LSU. Invite French people over to Jean Chaix for lunches and dinners with us—it would be much more fun and cultural and we’d improve our French. (2) Have students make presentations in French to the locals and vice versa. We could have made presentations about our home towns or heritage or something from French Louisiana and they could’ve presented aspects of the Valley to us. (3) Have a meeting of the business owners before going to the shops. Perhaps invite the owners and main employees for lunch or snacks at Jean Chaix and we can get to know them before meeting them. This would’ve put me at ease for the start of the internships. (4) Invite the business owners to Jean Chaix throughout for discussions and presentations. (5) Lighten up on the outdoors activities or organize them in a manner in which participants can pick and choose what they participate in—it was too much for me personally, and I think most of the other participants. We had to go on most every excursion, even if we had no interest in going. Also, have the French leaders of the particular excursion give us an introduction to the excursion before we leave—if it is a hike, give us a map or a description of what we’ll be doing. (REQ, July 10)

To recap, the perceived lack of a concrete schedule during the program was a main area of concern for all participants. They suggested the need for at least an outline for the program and a suggested timetable for a “typical” day on the program once in Barcelonnette. All the participants would have preferred to have a syllabus given to them during pre-departure that outlined the program expectations. In addition, they emphasized the need for more orientation and preparation for the internships, particularly in the area of vocabulary. The participants reported that they were very “anxious” about going to the internships for the first week because they had “little idea of what to expect—we had little idea what we were actually supposed to do at each internship, so we just went and tried to figure it out” (Miranda, REQ, July 10).¹²³

¹²³ However, Miranda also mentioned in her re-entry questionnaire that this unknown element of what to expect in the internships may have prepared her better to enter into future jobs, since “that’s what it will be like for a real job” (July 10).

Despite their critiques of certain aspects of their experiences on the “LSU in the French Alps” program, all four participants reported that they would recommend the program to another student. Dorothy was very positive, stating, “[y]es, I surely would recommend the program. The premise for the program is great. People should know more about France than the life in Paris. It is a very unique program!” (REQ, July 10). Along the same lines, Eric wrote: “[o]f course I’d recommend the program! For anyone who is adventurous and wishes to study abroad in France to learn ‘real’ French in ‘real’ France; it is not for someone seeking a vacation or a shopping extravaganza” (REQ, July 10). Miranda and Catherine also recommended the program, especially if a more formal schedule was available to participants. Miranda wrote, “I loved the Valley and everyone I met and if a better schedule of activities was provided, I would absolutely recommend it” (REQ, July 10). Catherine reported:

I would say that I had a great experience but at times it was stressful due to the sense of anxiety over not knowing any type of plan for the day’s or week’s activities. Otherwise, I would totally recommend the program to another student. (REQ, July 10)

Upon re-entry, all four participants reiterated their suggestions for a more intense and organized pre-departure program. They believed the most essential part of preparing students for an abroad program was an informative pre-departure phase. Dorothy emphasized the need for assistance for the participants in the pre-departure phase: “I think the best way to help returnees is to help them *before* they go. I think more emphasis should be placed on the differences they will encounter when in a foreign country” (REQ, July 10). Eric also had specific comments for the program prior to departure: “[a] stronger, more organized and rigorous pre-departure orientation would be more beneficial for this program” (REQ, July 10). Miranda felt that she and the other participants in the group were “not prepared” for the historical connection between Ubaye Valley and southern Louisiana before they departed for the trip:

We needed to learn more about the history of Ubaye and Louisiana before we left. The pre-departure was very informal and was only a couple of hours/day [. . .] I would've preferred it be more formal in instruction, like an actual class, where we had lectures about the history, the immigration stories and the geography. We had no idea there were novels, poetry, history books and magazines about Ubaye...when we got to there, we saw all that stuff in the *librairies* [bookstores] in Barcelonnette. We should've read more of that before going, during orientation. (REQ, July 10)

Catherine suggested, prior to leaving France, the participants be given some literature on the phases of the study abroad experience, and also engage in a discussion as a group about the feelings that one may feel during different times of the study abroad experience: “[i]n Ubaye, we were always together and it created an intense, sometimes overwhelming, group dynamic. I wish we'd have been better prepared for that” (REQ, July 10). As noted during the discussion of the participants' answers to the internship questionnaire, *all* of them noted that there was a lack of training and preparation for the internships in France. In the re-entry questionnaire, they again mentioned that and suggested the need for more preparation in all facets of the internships, including vocabulary preparation, information about the locations, businesses, schedule, rotation, expected duties, and so on.

A Look Back at Pre-departure Orientation

From pre-departure through post-study, the participants were perhaps most adamant in their suggestions for the improvement of the pre-departure orientation for the “LSU in the French Alps” program. It became apparent to me as a researcher that participants continually focused on, and revisited, the discussion of the pre-departure orientation. Because *all four participants* put so much emphasis on the pre-departure orientation and their perceived lack of preparation, and because they chose to revisit the topic throughout the duration of the program, I found it important to incorporate the issue as a section of this chapter.

During the first weeks in France, when I asked the participants to look back at their experiences during the pre-departure orientation (ICI, June 11), they had firm opinions and several suggestions. All participants felt the pre-departure segment of the program was important to the overall abroad experience, and they believed it should have been more informative, organized and intense. The participants were unhappy that they “did not meet for more than a few hours each day [for 4 days with the program director]” (Dorothy, ICI, June 11) and they “were not prepared at all for the internships during pre-departure” (Catherine’s quote, ICI, June 11, but a shared opinion by *all* the participants). Two participants (Dorothy and Miranda) specifically mentioned that they were given printed materials and articles in French about the history of the Ubaye Valley during pre-departure. Both wrote that the articles were very difficult and long and were “never discussed or gone over in our pre-departure meetings” (Dorothy, ICI, June 11). All participants were surprised and disappointed that the group did not travel to Arnaudville, Louisiana,¹²⁴ during pre-departure to learn firsthand about the connection between southern Louisiana and the Ubaye Valley, and have a “more complete experience of the two regions” (Eric, ICI, June 11). Eric also noted his discontent with the lack of French spoken during pre-departure:

I really thought the pre-departure should have been conducted mostly, if not entirely, in French. We chose this program to speak French, and I think that speaking English got students into the habit of not speaking French with each other, which carried over into our time in France. (ICI, June 11)

The participants had many ideas on how they would change the pre-departure program.

Dorothy indicated that she felt a little “anxious” and “confused” after the pre-departure meetings:

Meetings should be for a set time—they started and ended sporadically and I didn’t really know what to expect. I was really nervous for the internships because I thought we’d be

¹²⁴ To my knowledge, every year prior and after the summer of this data collection, the “LSU in the French Alps” program did travel to Arnaudville, Louisiana as part of the pre-departure program. No explanation was given to me or the participants as to why the visit to Arnaudville was not made during this group’s pre-departure.

given phrases during pre-departure to use in the “commerces” [businesses], but we were not. An introduction to the social greetings in business of the French people would be helpful.

In pre-departure, we were not prepared for the physical activities or strenuous activities that we would be doing. I wanted to participate, but I didn’t know all that was “mandatory.” We really should’ve had hiking shoes for some of those more strenuous hikes. (ICI, June 11)

Miranda reported very similar sentiments:

A better explanation of what is expected of us during the program, more explanation about things we would encounter in France and more discussion about the internships and our roles at each internship is needed, at minimum, for pre-departure. We also were never given even an outline about all the activities, cultural or sporting, that have taken place in the past and what was planned for our trip. We literally had no idea before we left and we had little idea what was going to happen day-to-day once we got here. This is a university program for a quality French program at a large university—I would expect a detailed syllabus and a more detailed itinerary, to say the least. (ICI, June 11)

Likewise, Catherine felt that the pre-departure program did not help prepare her for the international experience. In fact, she admitted that her perception of a lack of preparation would have perhaps had dire consequences if the program had been longer.

I was scared (and excited) before leaving for France and I don’t feel like the pre-departure program helped me prepare. We didn’t have a schedule and we didn’t feel like we knew what to expect from the program, excursions/activities or the internships. I feel like if this program would have been longer, I would have become very depressed and more anxious because I just wasn’t prepared. I found comfort in saying to myself, “it’s only a few weeks, so I can do it.” While our small group sort of drove me insane some days because we were together all the time, I’m glad we had each other because we could talk to each other. Being in a foreign country can be isolating and I did get homesick and I really wasn’t prepared for that—we didn’t discuss this sort of thing AT ALL in pre-departure. If I was here by myself for like a semester or something, I don’t know if I’d make it. (ICI, June 11)

Catherine’s words struck me in particular, since, as I mentioned earlier in this dissertation, I had experienced eerily similar feelings as an undergraduate on a study abroad program in France.

Much like myself, she depended on other American participants for support and admitted to growing immensely from getting through the feelings of unpreparedness. Finally, on a more positive note, participants were pleased with the informal setting of the pre-departure meetings.

They felt at ease to ask questions and were happy to get to know the other participants prior to departure (Catherine, ICI, June 11).

Participants' Perspectives: Reflective Papers

This section will provide an in-depth view of how participants felt about their overall experience abroad from their final reflective papers (FRP, July 11) for course credit, which was written about the program and their trip abroad. While the participants were forthcoming in their interviews and questionnaires as part of this study's data collection, in their final papers, the topic was broad and students were encouraged to free-write and focus on their topic of choice. Therefore, much about the participants' feelings and perspectives is revealed, since they could focus on what most touched them and what had left the biggest impression on them from the experience. Furthermore, the timeframe of when the paper was written is of importance, as participants wrote their reflections upon re-entry into the United States and were able to take an immediate look back on their experiences.

Catherine

In her final paper, Catherine wrote in detail about her personal journey through her international experience and how she viewed the French culture. In fact, in the very beginning of her paper, she stated that:

My trip to France changed me forever. It was different from what I had heard, but it was truly an experience of a lifetime. Although the trip was not without its hard times, in general, it quickly became my most favorite thing in my years at LSU. (FRP, July 11)¹²⁵

She also stated that the most important aspect of the trip was the group of French residents from Ubaye Valley who assisted with the program: "from the beginning of the program to the end, all

¹²⁵ For this section of the dissertation, I have translated the participants' words used in their reflective papers from French to English.

these wonderful people from the Valley who helped us and opened up their homes and their hearts were truly amazing and I will never forget them or this experience” (FRP, July 11).

Catherine also wrote about her views on the cultural aspects of the trip and what she thought she had learned. She found that “the differences between cultures and life in general in France and the United States are enormous” (FRP, July 11). She mentioned *la sieste*, the hour or two of lunch, rest or leisure in the early afternoon that is practiced religiously in France. She avowed:

In the United States, there is a sense of urgency for all the activities of the day. At college, at work and also at home, it is important to ‘achieve your maximum potential’ and work all the time. But the French still understand the importance of rest and stress relief. (FRP, July 11)

Another topic of choice for Catherine was the French culture’s affinity for good food and an active, healthy lifestyle. She declared that she much preferred the eating habits of the French and the “culture of food” more than that of the American culture:

In France, food is truly important. Food is something for pleasure. The French have a relationship with cheese that most Americans could never come to understand. For example, cheese at the market in Barcelonnette was produced by the sheep, goats and cows from the Valley. The cheese was not in some sealed plastic packaging like the cheese at the big supermarkets in the United States. I can say that the French cheeses were the best that I had ever eaten—and I LOVE cheese! I also loved the different courses to a typical French meal. It is easy to appreciate the different foods when one takes the time to enjoy them and does not eat everything all at the same time. (FRP, July 11)

Catherine also asserted how much she enjoyed the active lifestyle of the French. She mentioned that she did not see a lot of obese people in France and justified this observation by simply stating that the French eat healthier and are more active. She wrote specifically that:

In the United States, there are more artificial ingredients in food. Americans eat a lot of sugar, simple carbohydrates and not a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables. Also, exercise is a normal part of French life. They walk more often than Americans and drive much less. (FRP, July 11)

However, her self-proclaimed most important reported observation was the difference between her expectations of France and the French (before the trip) and the reality of what she actually experienced. She pondered:

Before I left the United States, I was a little nervous that all the French would dislike me. Because of the political atmosphere in the United States, I thought that the French would dislike everything associated with the U.S. But, most of the French people whom I met were very friendly, welcoming and funny. One day when I was at the internship at the “Bouti Cycle,” I met a man who was in the French army. He had gone to the United States for military training and was very excited to talk to Miranda and me because he liked the U.S. and Americans. Meeting people like this changed my mind about how the French view us. (FRP, July 11)

However, Catherine did include a few things that she did not particularly like about the French culture. While she found doing the French *bises* (kisses on the cheek) “unique,” Catherine said she “missed getting hugs” (FRP, July 11). She hypothesized that the French had a different definition of intimacy and understood that, for the French, hugs were very intimate. She stated that to her, the French seemed to think “hugging” was more intimate than the *bises*; however, Catherine found that for her, as an American, the opposite was true: “Getting so close to someone’s face and actually kissing, even on the cheek, seemed awkward to me. Even after giving the ‘bises’ like 200 times on the trip, I’m still a little freaked out by it” (EPQ, June 25).

Furthermore, Catherine did not like it when French people spoke to her in English just because “they knew [she] was American” (ICI, June 11). She stated that even though she always tried to speak French, many times, they reverted back to English, which she took as a sign of kindness and accommodation to her. However, she did remark that, on a few occasions, she was quite put off by how some French people switched so quickly to English and a few would almost refuse to speak in French only, even after she said she was in France to learn French. Catherine found that on some occasions:

It seemed that they [the French] were trying to prove that they were more intelligent than me and I was a “stupid American.” It was truly frustrating in the beginning. But, as I got more accustomed to being in France, I realized that if I met some French people right now in the U.S., I would want to speak French with them. (EPQ, June 25)

Dorothy

Dorothy divided her reflective paper into several sections: Jean Chaix (the lodging), the internship experience, the sport activities, and the people. She described her first and lasting impressions of Barcelonnette:

The mountains were everywhere. The old buildings with window boxes and shutters looked out into the tiny streets. Naturally, there was a church and a fountain next to each other in the center square of the town. Chocolates, flowers, hiking, markets, traveling, site-seeing, and becoming more at ease using French were all themes of being in the alpine village of Barcelonnette, France. (FRP, July 11)

Dorothy was impressed with the accommodations at Jean Chaix. She described it with fond memories:

It was a clean, peaceful lodging that was close to town. [. . .] Also, the short walk into town raised my spirits. It was invigorating. Tranquility, cleanliness and close location to town—what else could I ask for in lodging? I would choose Jean Chaix for lodging over and over again. (FRP, July 11)

She appreciated the convenience of having meals prepared for the group and the quality of the food; being able to share stories and talk with the other program participants was one of Dorothy’s favorite memories of the experience.

Dorothy reported that she was very impressed with the program’s internships and she said they were truly the “heart of the immersion experience” (FRP, July 11). It was no secret during my fieldwork that her favorite was the florist. She reported this as well in her reflective paper. Dorothy was enamored with the flower shop and all the beautiful floral arrangements. She wrote about the daily routine of a small French business in an old world town—arranging the flowers outside the flower shop each morning and talking with the owner and the French

interns. She learned about the practice of closing the shop for the lunch hours and how most of the shops in Barcelonnette followed a tradition of staying closed all day on Mondays. Marie, the owner of the shop, talked with Dorothy at length about flowers, Barcelonnette, French customs and life in general. Dorothy described her observations of the preparations for baptisms, weddings and funerals, and she made comparisons with the American traditions. On occasion, Dorothy went with the flower shop workers to make deliveries to other businesses and private homes. These activities made a great impression on Dorothy, and she realized that the French were very nice people, and there were certainly commonalities between the French and the Americans. She appreciated the camaraderie among the workers, talking with the town's people, and the feel of the tradition involved in the daily routine of opening and closing the shop.

At the clothing store and the chocolate shop, Dorothy reported learning much more about French daily habits and the traditions of the culture. She continually learned about the routine of opening a family business in such a small village in France—the early-morning risings, the cleaning of the sidewalk, the preparation of products and the storefronts, and the pride which people took in their businesses. Furthermore, in each internship, she learned many words and expressions, including salutations and greetings, used among business people and in French daily life. Much of the French she learned would help her in professional settings. She remarked that this aspect of French had been lacking in her vocabulary before participation in the program's internships.

The outdoor activities left quite an impression on Dorothy. In her paper, she discussed at length the program's excursions and how much she learned about the history of the Valley and about the active French lifestyle. After the trip, while she was writing her paper, she seemed to reminisce fondly on the opportunities she was given on the trip:

[. . .] visits to old forts, hiking up mountains, jumping off a mountain with a parachute, white-water rafting and traveling all around the countryside with my fellow LSU comrades and my new French friends—I just really appreciated this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. (FRP, July 11)

Her description of paragliding off the tallest mountain in the Valley was quite revealing:

The instructions were given to me several times and it was finally time to jump. I cannot say exactly how I felt. When I think of it now, I'm terrified. It was a very impressive moment of my life—it was overwhelming, astonishing, splendid and humbling. There, I sat on a small contraption, grasping very tightly to the handles, suspended underneath the parachute. I felt as though I saw God's creations as he sees them—from above. Everything looked so small down below, but the whole scene was magnificent. For me, this experience was the most significant of the entire trip. It was incredible. (FRP, July 11)

Dorothy stated several times that she has had many adventures in her lifetime, but this program had renewed her belief in living life to the fullest, particularly when she encountered older French residents who were just as active over the age of 60 or 70 as they had been at 40.

Finally, Dorothy recorded her appreciation and admiration for the people she had met in the French Alps. For Dorothy, the wonderful people she met during the experience could not be separated from the program itself: “[i]f the visits to the French businesses and the internships were the heart of the program, then the people from Barcelonnette were the blood” (FRP, July 11). She expressed gratitude for all the residents who took their time to show the group around the Valley and who invited them into their homes with such grace and kindness. She also was thankful for everyone who helped her with her French language skills and showed patience in assisting her with comprehension. She liked the delicate manner in which the French corrected her grammar.

She reported that the program was wonderful and a great experience; in fact, she said that, out of all the immersion programs in which she had participated in her life, the “LSU in the French Alps” program was the best. However, in her paper, Dorothy was the only participant to

give suggestions for future programs. She wished that the participants would have had the opportunity to spend more time with a couple or a family in their homes. She suggested that each participant could have a weekend host family to learn more about French family life. Due to the climate shock from travel from southern Louisiana to the French Alps, Dorothy suggested that long, strenuous hikes be saved until after the participants had acclimated a little. She stated that while she and the participants enjoyed the hikes, the first one just after arrival was very long and demanding, so everyone felt unprepared and exhausted afterward. Finally, she suggested that the “French only” rule among program participants needed to be more seriously enforced by the program leadership.

Eric

Eric wrote about *la majesté* (the majesty) of Barcelonnette and of the beautiful countryside of the French Alps (FRP, July 11). He also mentioned a few of the fun activities of the program and the “wonders” of France, its cuisine and the great hospitality of its people (FRP, July 11). He included a few poems he had written about Ubaye Valley and wrote a very expressive and internally reflective paper. However, Eric took an interesting point of view in the reflection paper, for instead of writing mostly about the cultural activities and internships, he mostly wrote about his innermost feelings on the trip and the “study” he had completed. From a research perspective, Eric revealed much more in his reflective paper than he had in his interviews and questionnaires collected during the study:

When I signed up for the program “LSU in the Ubaye Valley,” I thought it would be an experience to improve my French as well as a chance to see and explore the “true” France, its countryside and its secrets. [. . .] I discovered that the study of France and its language were secondary to the real opportunity to do anthropological research—my first-hand study of human behavior. (FRP, July 11)

He stated that he, in fact, also studied the group and its dynamic during the program. During my conversations with Eric, he did reveal that he felt like an outsider in the group of females. He found them to be negative and wished there had been other participants on the trip (he made no distinction as to his preference of male or female participants); however, I did not realize the extent to which the group dynamic affected his experience until after reading his reflective paper.

In his paper, he discussed the conflicts that came up in the group and how he felt separated and “different” from the other participants. During his “research,” he discovered that the main point of tension in the group was the lack of power or control:

We were isolated in the Alps, in a valley with a couple of small towns [. . .] we were at the mercy of others. In all aspects of life—food, lodging and activities—they were all under the direction of the director and the residents and at times, participants (who are adults) seemed to tire of always having to follow the group and not being able to make choices on their own. They lacked the control over their choices that they usually have in their lives in the U.S. and they felt powerless. (FRP, July 11)

Eric ended by saying, “my trip was an ideal time for me to explore, not just France, but also deep within myself, and a time to study, try new things and reflect on myself, my thoughts and beliefs and the human spirit and life” (FRP, July 11).

Miranda

Miranda took a chronological approach to her final reflective paper as she summarized many of the programs’ activities and her reactions and feedback. She expressed an immediate interest in the village of Faucon, where the group had spent the first couple of nights in the Ubaye Valley. She described quite vividly her first reactions to being in Ubaye:

I could not believe how old everything was [. . .] Not only had I traveled to France, but I had reached *la France profonde* [deep in the heart of France]—the France without all the tourists; the France that seemed to have not changed all that much in decades. (FRP, July 11)

The calm and charm of the little village of Faucon struck her. She discussed a certain serenity that came over her when she settled into Ubaye and appreciated the tranquility of the mountains:

The air was more pure and fresh than in Baton Rouge and in Louisiana. It was so refreshing and peaceful. The people in the villages gave us a true sense of welcome. I am an American girl from the South in the U.S.; I never thought I would feel so at home so quickly in the middle of the Alps in France. (FRP, July 11)

She recalled her very first night in the Valley and an after-dinner walk she took with Eric and how she remembered glancing, almost as if in a dream, at the river, the mountains, the sunset and its reflection in the water. She described her vision as *l'harmonie parfaite*, or “perfect harmony” (FRP, July 11). She admitted to having thought back to this vision several times since the program had ended and found herself sincerely missing the Valley. She continually made references to the village of Faucon and really seemed impressed by its quaintness, naturalness and tranquility. She vowed to return to Faucon in the future.

Miranda continued to mention cultural and historical excursions in which they participated, including the experience that was, in her eyes, the most “authentically Old World France” (FRP, July 11). Before taking a mountain hike with some local Ubaye residents, they stopped by a tiny country church and heard a Mass in French and *provençal*. This experience brought Miranda back to what the Ubaye Valley may have been like in centuries past. She remarked that perhaps, in the vast mountains and in the old, tiny villages, it had not looked much different in the past. She described the mountain hike with several local Ubaye residents in which they stopped for a picnic on top of a mountainside and enjoyed homemade jellies, bread, sausage, cheese, desserts and a few liqueurs that the locals favored. She was taken aback by the generosity of the French, as they had prepared many different dishes for the participants to try *and* they had hiked them all the way up a mountain for the picnic.

Miranda went into great details about her experience in the internships during the program. As in her other statements in previous interviews and questionnaires, because of her love of cooking and cuisine, she was most touched by the internship at the chocolate shop. She reiterated that, in this internship, the workers were always very gracious, and it was there where she improved most her command of the French language—and her knowledge of chocolate! Her internships also allowed her to gain valuable insight into French daily life and renewed her love for open-air markets:

In Barcelonnette and all over in the Ubaye Valley—more than I saw in Paris—all the stores close for lunch and everyone leaves at 11 a.m. to go home for lunch, run errands or relax. After my morning internships, I liked to go to the local market in Barcelonnette, which was every Wednesday and Saturday morning. I would look at the products—fresh, homemade honey, the local vegetables and fruits, and the artisan products from Provence. I love that all the villages in France have their own market. I bought fresh Alpine cherries and I realized they were much fresher than in the U.S. and they were a better quality and cheaper for the quantity. It was a rare pleasure for me to eat these small mountain cherries and stroll around Barcelonnette in all its tranquility. I will remember this afternoon fondly for the rest of my life—I was very happy about having chosen to participate in this program and I was at total peace. (FRP, July 11)

Miranda seemed quite touched by the rural, mountain life of the Ubaye Valley, as she mentioned it consistently in her reflective paper. She stated several times that she liked the tranquility of the small villages and she found much peace in the quiet lifestyle and the vast mountain views and green landscapes. Another topic included in her paper was *La Fête des Moutons*, or “The Sheep Festival,” which was attended by the group, in the neighboring village of Jausiers. Miranda was interested in how the local residents cared for their traditional mountain animals, particularly mountain goats and sheep, and how much they respected the history of the Valley and of their dependence on these creatures. She mentioned that it was not simply a petting zoo or something as in the U.S., but rather a festival of respect for the animals and how important they have been to the survival of Ubaye residents. Miranda said the

experience strongly influenced her view of the overall history of the Valley, and she better understood the residents' relationship to the land and nature after the festival; therefore, she included scenes from this experience in her portion of the group's final video project.

Another important inquiry for Miranda was a question that several French people had asked her during her experience: "Why are Americans so obese?" (FRP, July 11). She reported that she tried to answer the French on this issue, but she really had to think about her response. One day, during her walk into town, it dawned on her, "Bikes!" (FRP, July 11). She went on to describe exactly what she had discovered:

In France, I saw so many bikes—in the Valley, in Barcelonnette, in Paris—they were everywhere. The French are in better shape than most Americans because the French lifestyle is much more active. Everyone in the Valley has a bike and they ride it often. I was so impressed, in particular, by the older adults in the Valley—they were more active than most 20 year olds in the U.S. These older adults would often go on excursions with us—hiking up mountains for hours or biking—and they did not tire as we young Americans did! They were fit, happy and positive. Bike riding in this beautiful natural setting was good for their physical and mental health. It was such an inspiration and really opened my eyes to how we Americans should be living. We could learn a thing or two from the French, quite honestly. I have a bike in the U.S., but before the program, I would only ride it to class, not for a leisure activity or exercise. Now, I will ride like the French, for pleasure and for my health. (FRP, July 11)

Miranda stated that the subject of cycling was a major theme for the trip and for the Ubaye Valley. During her internship at the bike shop, she met a triathlete who worked at the store. In her conversations with him, she realized how important cycling was to the French, and she learned about *Le Tour de France* from the customers and workers at the bike shop. Ever since, she has become more of a fan than before she left for the trip, indicating that she would watch it religiously every year (FRP, July 11). She concluded her writing on the active lifestyle of the French by stating that she much preferred her life as the French live in Ubaye, full of open-air activities and fun adventures.

Miranda closed her paper with her final thoughts of the Ubaye Valley. She remembered a statement from a priest she met at a local convent in the Valley: “the Valley and its mountains and waterfalls are nearly paradise” (FRP, July 11). She completely agreed, stating that it was not simply the surroundings, but also the people:

The Ubaye Valley is unlike any other place in the world. It is the most beautiful place that I have ever seen. I will never forget how I felt here in this amazing landscape. The people whom I met were some of the nicest and most polite ever to encounter in my life. They welcomed me with open arms and generous hearts. The last day in the Valley, I walked around Barcelonnette to say *au revoir* to some of the people whom I had met and every single person with whom I spoke said to me: “we do not say ‘good bye’ here, we say ‘à l’année prochaine’ [‘see you next year’].” I took this to heart and I shall return! (FRP, July 11)

Participants’ Perspectives: The Final Video Project

The final video project revealed a great deal about how the members of the group reflected on their experience in the French Alps. Since it was a culmination of their trip abroad, the project gave me some great insight into which memories and experiences were the most influential and important for the participants. Besides being very entertaining and comical, the final video project was filled with their favorite memories, internship experiences, excursions, foods, scenery and people. Starting with views of the LSU campus and the LSU bell tower, they transitioned into a scenic church bell tower from the main town square in Barcelonnette. The participants focused on the humorous moments of the trip, from finding Turkish bathrooms to some interesting facial expressions when trying new and sometimes “smelly” French cheeses. A large portion of the video included many scenes from the program’s excursions, such as mountainous hikes, white-water rafting, mountain biking, and paragliding. During the program, all the participants communicated to me that they were “awe-struck” (Miranda, ICI, June 11) by the scenery of the French Alps, particularly because they all came from a very different climate and landscape in southern Louisiana. It was clear by the images in their video that they truly

were captivated by the mountainous landscapes. Images of smiling participants in the mountains with host nationals appeared numerous times in the video.

Also, several shots from their program internships were included in the video project. The participants were seen at the chocolate shop working with huge tubs of chocolate—and also appeared sneaking several tastes of the delicacies. There were comical shots of participants trying to work with taffy and spending several moments sampling the chocolate-covered strawberries. Several participants were shown singing with French school children at the school or helping with a flower arrangement at the flower shop.

The participants incorporated a section of the history of the Ubaye Valley-Louisiana connection about which they had learned in the program. They included video clips and images of their visits with host nationals to the local museums, historical sites and regional festivals. They also integrated live video clips of their visit to the Arnaud ancestral home and two of the dinners with presentations of the historical significance between the Ubaye Valley and southern Louisiana. Finally, they filmed their quarters at the Jean Chaix lodge and different views of the mountains as well as streets and houses in Barcelonnette and neighboring villages. With its mix of comedy, nostalgia and historical references, the final video project left the viewer with a positive vision of the participants' experiences abroad and gave him or her a brief look into what the participants encounter during the "LSU in the French Alps" summer program.

However, while all four participants enjoyed making the video of their experience in Ubaye, they all expressed to me that they would have preferred to do more individualized research or a paper for their final project. In an informal conversation during the in-country portion of the study, participants discussed with me the ways to make the final project more oriented toward their interests and field of study. For example, Dorothy, as a lifelong educator,

could have developed research questions and a project to study the French school system in which she would interview local teachers, administrators, students and perhaps parents to gain more insight into the French system. In the end-of-program questionnaire, Miranda expressed interest to me about doing a research project and fieldwork in rural sociology:

I feel that I really could've gotten into a research project over here...I found myself thinking about the rural culture and had some ideas about a study related to rural sociology, but we really didn't have a research project for our majors or minors, but rather the video project and just the reflective journal, which I don't think was very beneficial. The video is a nice keepsake, but we could've made that in addition to an interesting, tailor-made research project. That would have been great for my future research and my grad school applications. Not having a chance to do a more personal project seems a bit like a missed opportunity, especially since we had tons of French people who were willing to talk with us. (June 25)

Miranda and Eric proposed that in the spring semester before departure, participants could meet with the program director to design an individual research project. Dorothy and Catherine agreed that this would have been a nice addition to their experience in the program.

Participants' Perspectives: The Post-Study Phase

During the post-study phase of data collection, the participants completed and returned a questionnaire 5 or 6 months after returning to the U.S. from the French Alps. The post-study questionnaire¹²⁶ focused on the participants' hindsight and their retrospective view of their experience abroad after several months of time to reflect. Post-study data collection uncovered ways in which the participants believed the abroad experience had changed them or had influenced their lives. In the post-study questionnaire (PSQ, January 15), participants were first asked to think about how they had grown (or had not) from participation in this international program. A list of possible changes was given and participants were to check off which statements affected them. Afterward, they were to go back through the list and put an additional mark next to the changes they felt were most significant to them. For data analysis, I divided

¹²⁶ See Appendix C in this dissertation for the post-study questionnaire.

the questionnaire statements into the specific areas of perceived growth, acquisition or development: cultural, personal, linguistic, academic or career.

Perceived Influence on Cultural Acquisition

As a result of participation in the French Alps program, all participants reported that they felt more knowledgeable about another culture and lifestyle and had more curiosity about, and respect, for new ideas and other people and their cultures. In addition, the participants informed me that they had gained a deeper understanding of the values and lifestyle of their native (American) culture. It is interesting to note that only Dorothy felt she had a greater respect and appreciation for her native country (U.S.) than before she had left for the trip abroad. Furthermore, Dorothy was the only participant to indicate that she believed the lifestyle of the U.S. was better than that of the target culture.¹²⁷

When asked a more open-ended question as to their beliefs about whether their attitudes toward the U.S. or being “American” had changed since their abroad experience, Dorothy’s and Eric’s opinions had remained steady while Miranda’s and Catherine’s had changed. Dorothy stated that she was still as proud as ever to be an American: “I am proud that the U.S. has a government structure that allows such freedoms to its citizens. I am proud of the accomplishments of the people of this country for the last 200+ years” (PSQ, January 15). Eric’s opinion of the U.S. remained the same as in pre-departure—negative:

I feel the same as I felt before—critical—of my country. And no, it has not changed, it has just been reaffirmed. However, I feel that people of different countries are just as critical as I am about their own nations. (PSQ, January 15)

Just as he had mentioned in data collected in France, Eric realized that people of other cultures may be critical of their own governments, just as many Americans are critical of our

¹²⁷ It should be noted that in other responses during data collection, Dorothy stated that she loved her country and appreciated the U.S. because of the liberties and freedoms she has because she is an American citizen, but did not think any one country or culture was superior to the other.

government. I observed Eric discussing politics and government structures with several Ubaye Valley residents during his time in the program. He did get feedback from host nationals on how critical the French could be of their government and its leaders.

As for Miranda and Catherine, they stated that they became more negative about the American way of life after their time in France. Miranda mentioned specifically that she became more disgusted with her country's political views and foreign affairs:

I dislike the U.S. much more after my abroad experience and feel more ashamed of our current presidential administration [George W. Bush] than before. I don't know why the U.S. has to be so imperialistic [...] I wish we could just mind our own business and stay out of everyone else's. (PSQ, January 15)

It was perhaps Catherine's view that was most affected by the abroad experience. In her pre-departure questionnaire, Catherine had revealed that she had only a slight critical view of the United States, but after her experience abroad, she reported being more disapproving of her country, and particularly of some of the residents of Louisiana:

I've become much less tolerant of small minded, conservative Louisiana folks. There also seems to be a fair amount of hostility toward French people and the French government because of the Iraq War, even from people who don't really know about France, the culture or even who the leader of France is, or even where France is located on a map. [...] I love all of our conveniences here in the U.S. and I was the first one to whine in France at the small showers and the stiff laundry, but our gluttony in the U.S. disgusts me now. I take part in some of the gluttony—watching too much TV or taking ridiculously long, hot showers—but I'm more aware of it now and that it's happening. I would defend France's viewpoint on foreign policy and the wars in the Middle East more so now than I would have before the trip. I would speak up now and I feel like I'm more informed. (PSQ, January 15)

Equally as interesting is that *no* participant felt that there were more differences than similarities among humans of varying cultures. In fact, all four participants felt they had achieved a deeper understanding of the problems and issues that confront all human beings on this planet. In addition, after the experience in the French Alps, they felt that they had a greater awareness of political, economic, and social events occurring around the world.

Perceived Influence on Personal Development

The program's influence on the personal development of its participants was noticeable, particularly since the program was only a month in length. All four participants recounted that they believed they had a greater ability to empathize with others before making any judgments, were more flexible and able to adjust to changes and take more risks; therefore, they believed they had matured as a result of the experience. As a result of all the different social situations which they encountered in Ubaye, all the participants believed they had a greater willingness to take on roles and tasks to which they were unaccustomed. Eric and Dorothy both designated the "improvement of observation skills" as a benefit of their experience in Ubaye. Eric, in particular, observed the interactions among French residents as well as among the group of participants as well. These observations, particularly of the French, led him to note that, as a result of the program, he felt more surely that common bonds unite all human beings.

When asked whether the experience in Ubaye had any influence on their desire to travel or study abroad in the future, all participants gave a resounding "YES!" As stated earlier, Dorothy was already a seasoned traveler, so this experience did not appear to affect her desire to travel as much as the other more novice travelers:

I am a traveler by nature [. . .] I've traveled a lot in my lifetime and I plan to keep on doing so. I'm not sure if I will "study" abroad again with an organized program (I've done two already), but I will travel abroad at least once a year, I hope. (PSQ, January 15)

Eric revealed that the program had simply reaffirmed what he knew before the trip:

I have always wanted to travel, live and study abroad even before going to Barcelonnette, but I think the experience there just added to my curiosity. Yes, I will travel abroad again and I am planning to study abroad in China next year! (PSQ, January 15)

More so than the other participants, Miranda emphasized that she became more aware of the opportunities in life that are open to her. While she had always believed she would go to

graduate school after her undergraduate degree was completed, the experience in Ubaye made her realize just how much is out there to be discovered in the world, and she was more determined than ever to explore her educational options, most likely out of the state of Louisiana.

As for the subject of international travel and study abroad, Miranda wrote:

I want to travel abroad so much more. I see what I'm missing now [. . .] the great food, the cool experiences. Yes, as a result of the Ubaye program, I have increased my desire A LOT to travel abroad again. I am going to graduate, so I probably won't study abroad again, but travel extensively and for longer periods of time, yes! (PSQ, January 15)

Even though all participants reported that they wanted to travel to France and the Ubaye Valley again, Catherine was the most determined not only to return to these locations, but to stay for an extended period of time in France:

I am looking into going to France next year to teach English! I'm also pondering the Peace Corps in a French-speaking area. I am very excited and I don't think I ever would've had the courage to do something like that if I hadn't gone to Ubaye. It was just the sort of experience I needed—not too long, but long enough where I got a taste of what being abroad is like and I want to go back for a longer period of time. I believe the Ubaye trip was like a stepping stone to future trips, like to “get my feet wet” sort of trip. (PSQ, January 15)

All the participants specified that their experience with the program made a lasting positive contribution to their lives, while no participant suggested that the program had left a lasting negative effect.

Perceived Influence on Linguistic Development

All perceived that they had improved their ability to communicate in a foreign language (Eric and Miranda emphasized this area). When asked how they felt about their French courses at LSU after their Ubaye experience, all the participants stated that they felt more at ease in French class and had noticed a definite improvement in their listening and speaking skills as a result of the program. Miranda described herself as “a better student who understands spoken French more easily” (PSQ, January 15). Catherine noticed that she was certainly more at ease

speaking French and had improved her French skills; however, she stated that going back to learning French in a classroom setting in an American classroom was difficult because it did not compare to her experience in Ubaye:

I definitely understand more than before I went to Ubaye and I think I speak a lot better, but the classes just aren't as rewarding as being in France right in the middle of the action. I find sitting in classes now sort of boring compared to my amazing experiences in Ubaye and all the adventures we went on. I'm still learning in my classes here, but nothing compares to being abroad and learning it. [. . .] I feel more comfortable speaking French now and I understand a lot more from my professors now. I feel more confident in class. (PSQ, January 15)

Eric noticed an improvement of his skills as well:

I'm currently in a grammar class, so I feel that I am not using my newly attuned speaking skills as much as I wanted. Nevertheless, I can judge more clearly the way French people write and the way they speak/spoke when I was abroad. (PSQ, January 15)

However, while Dorothy originally thought she made gains in her abilities to speak and interpret spoken French, she pointed out that she was a bit perplexed when back in a French class at LSU:

I am not quite sure how I feel. When I was in Ubaye, I thought [. . .] why did I not study more while at LSU so that I could speak better with the Ubaye citizens. Now, when I am at LSU, I ask myself [. . .] why did I not take more advantage of native speakers of French to ask about idioms, famous sayings, grammar, and colloquialisms. Oh well, I do the best I can. I think the professors do as much as they can to get us to speak the language, but the classes are large, so I think the optimum way to learn how to speak and understand French is in a small group or one-on-one setting as on the Ubaye program. (PSQ, January 15)

As for their views on learning French and possibly other foreign language(s), all the participants indicated a renewed commitment to improving their French (Catherine in particular) and that the program had reaffirmed their "love" of French. In addition, they pointed out that their experience abroad had reinforced their interest in foreign language study in general. Dorothy revealed that she wanted to continue learning French so she could go back to France and to Ubaye to communicate better. She was also more motivated to learn more languages:

I am going to start taking Spanish classes as a result of my trip to Ubaye. I was motivated to try Italian after our day trip to Italy, but I figured Spanish would be more useful in the U.S. and I'd like to travel to Spain. (PSQ, January 15)

Miranda's language goals were also influenced by the program and the day trip to Italy:

Yes, I'd like to keep up with my French [. . .] I love the language and culture and history and Ubaye just affirmed that. I would like to learn another language [. . .] going to Italy was great, but I would like to get my French better first. (PSQ, January 15)

Eric's position on learning languages was not changed as a result of the French Alps program, but it was rejuvenated:

I have always wanted to learn French very well as well as other languages—I'm very curious about languages and cultures. I am trying to pick up Italian, Spanish and Chinese, and I plan to study abroad in at least one more country, China, but hopefully more. (PSQ, January 15)

It was Catherine, again, who seemed the most influenced by the program in her desire to continue French and possibly other languages in the future:

I want to go back to France to teach English and live for a year and maybe do the Peace Corps, so I want to keep learning French. And, yes, the Ubaye trip positively impacted my decision to do so. France doesn't seem so "foreign" anymore, after the trip. I would like to maybe learn German or something, but will stick with French right now. I have a great appreciation for learning languages—it's rewarding to speak with people in their language and not always revert to English, it just takes a lot of time, but I think going abroad is the best way to learn it. (PSQ, January 15)

When asked about the effect that participation in the "LSU in the French Alps" program had had on their career paths or aspirations, all four participants believed that the skills they acquired abroad would (positively) influence their career choices. After the experience abroad, they had developed a new interest in a career direction—everyone declared a desire to include either French, international relations, or the study of cultures in their future careers.

Summary of the Perceived Effects of Study Abroad

Overall, the group indicated that their lives were greatly influenced by participating in the "LSU in the French Alps" program. All the participants declared that they felt the experience

abroad had positively contributed to their personal, cultural, academic, career, and linguistic development. Every student believed he or she had become a more open-minded, well-rounded person who was more sensitive to diversity and sought to learn more about diverse cultures and languages. In areas of personal development, the participants mentioned that they felt they had “grown as a person” (Catherine, PSQ, January 15) and could better handle new situations and adventures. They revealed that their desire to travel and learn languages was not necessarily changed, but it was definitely reaffirmed. They all had a prior interest and always had a strong desire to learn French, thus they decided to major or minor in the language and participate in the French Alps program; however, the participants indicated that this short-term program reinforced their commitment to learn the language and travel where it is spoken. All four students believed that participation in the program motivated them to improve their French so they could communicate better “next time.” All anticipated traveling to a French-speaking area of the world in the near future.

Furthermore, I wanted to collect information on the participants’ perspectives about the effects of study abroad on their lives. They were questioned about several areas of development: cultural, personal, career, academic and linguistic. I asked them to self rate to what degree (in a typical five-point Likert scale) they felt influenced by the experience.¹²⁸ Self ratings of the perceived intensity of the effects were: 1) not at all, 2) slight, 3) fair, 4) considerable and 5) great. This type of rating system also allowed me to connect an actual number or degree of intensity to each participant, which supplemented his or her open-ended responses and gave me the opportunity to create a visual representation of his or her perceptions. Figure 4.1 offers a line graph summary chart of what was gathered from the participants’ responses to the Likert-type questions.

¹²⁸ See the post-study questionnaire in Appendix C of this dissertation.

This graph allowed me to visualize precisely how the individual participants rated the specific effects in each area of development or growth. In this manner, it was easy to make comparisons of their self-ratings. From this graph, it is clear that all participants felt that the study abroad experience had the most effect on their “cultural acquisition” or growth (all participants reported a 5, or “great” effect). Rated a 4.5 or greater (“considerable” to “great”) by

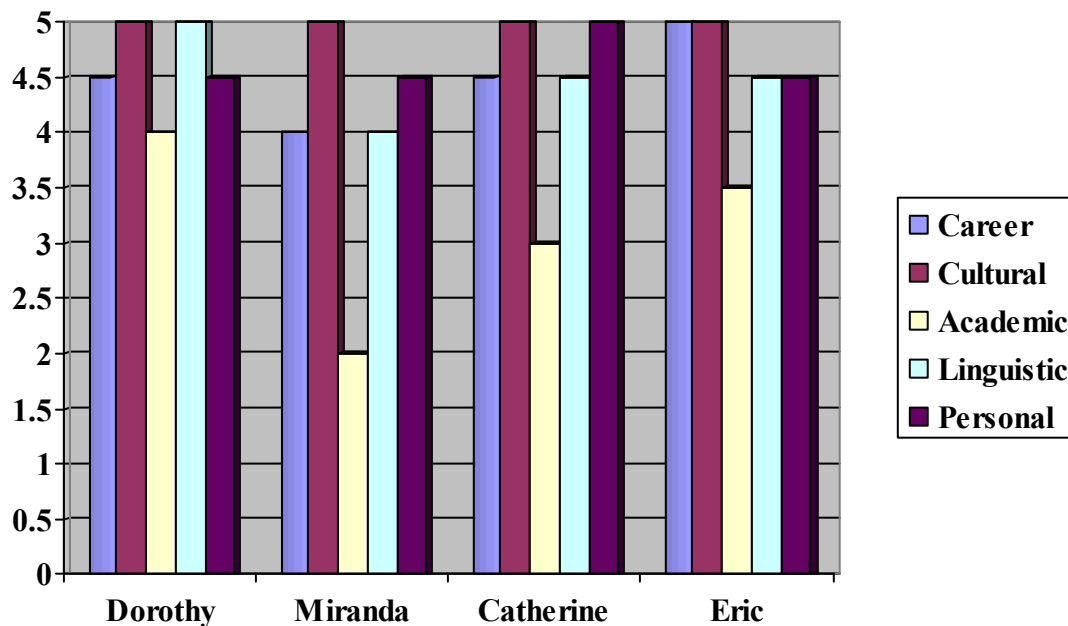


Figure 4.1 Line Graph of Participants’ Perceived Degree of Effect

every participant was the effect on “personal” development. Influence on “linguistic” and “career” development followed, respectively, with each participant reporting a 4 (“considerable”) or higher. The lowest reported influence was on “academic development,” which was rated the lowest by Miranda (2 or “slight”), slightly higher by Catherine (3 or “fair”), and “fair” to “considerable” by Eric and Dorothy. Overall, however, the participants testified that in a program abroad that lasted less than one calendar month, they felt a “significant” or “great” degree of benefits.

To gain a better perspective of individual ratings in each area of development, I used the data to create pie charts for each participant. Below (Figures 4.2 to 4.5) are these individual pie charts of perceived influence, as reported by each participant. Catherine perceived the highest degree of growth in the areas of personal development and cultural acquisition. She gave both of them the highest rating, a 5 or “great” effect. In the group, Catherine had experienced the greatest culture shock in France and consistently mentioned how she missed the comforts of home. By the end of the trip, however, she had learned to appreciate the French culture and became more critical of her own (American) culture, mentioning her disgust for “American gluttony” (PSQ, January 15) numerous times in her questionnaire responses. More than the other

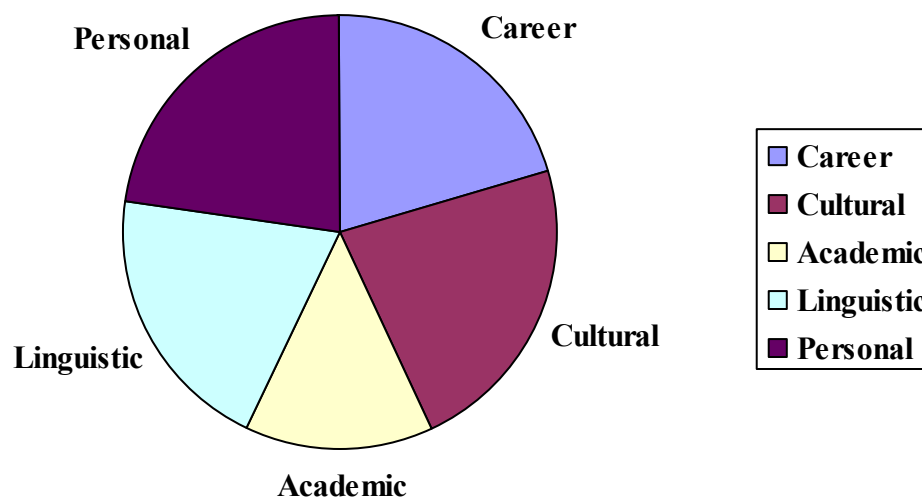


Figure 4.2 Individual Pie Chart of Perceived Effect (Catherine)

participants, Catherine expressed that her experience had greatly influenced her view of the world and had opened her eyes to the vast possibilities in the world. In just several weeks in the program, she had become committed to “experiencing life outside of the southern United States” (PSQ, January 15). Her desire to travel or live abroad was hugely influenced and although she

began by using this experience to complete her French minor, she acknowledged that the experience “significantly changed [her] entire life” (PSQ, January 15). As for linguistic development, Catherine stated that prior to departure, she was not confident in her French language skills; however, after her experience in Ubaye, she stated that she was much more comfortable speaking French (even “in front of several native speakers”, PSQ, January 15) and had gained confidence in her French skills. Catherine entered the program very unsure of her career path and confused about her future. In her post-study questionnaire, she accepted that she was still unsure of her career path, but her experience abroad had convinced her to go live and/or study abroad again and pursue graduate studies outside Louisiana.

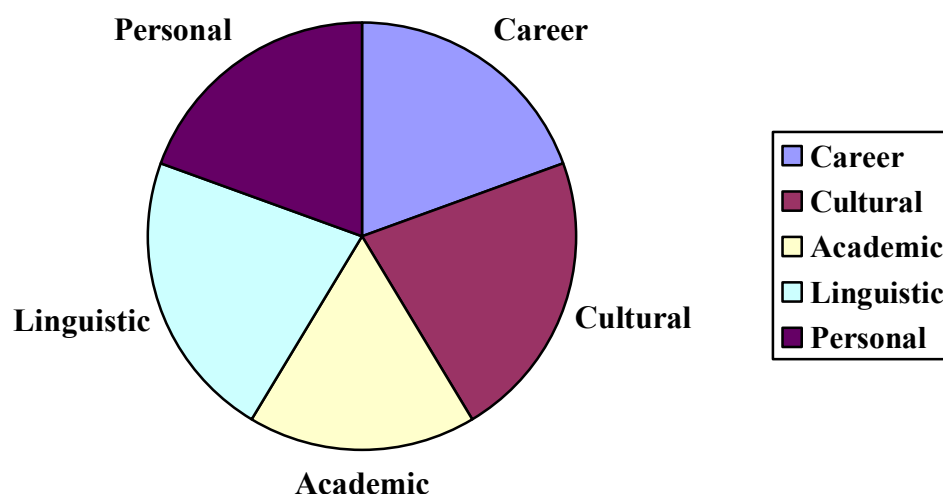


Figure 4.3 Individual Pie Chart of Perceived Effect (Dorothy)

It is evident from this pie chart (Figure 4.3) that Dorothy gave similar ratings to each area of development, with a slightly lower rating to “academic” development. To summarize the program’s effects on Dorothy, she reported that she was a veteran traveler before this trip abroad, so she experienced little shock abroad and upon re-entering the United States. Since she was very observant of the active lifestyle of the French (particularly French citizens of her age

group), she stated that her observations had a great deal of effect on her personally, as she was motivated to incorporate this active lifestyle into her own. Dorothy was very appreciative toward host nationals and the warm welcome she received in the Ubaye Valley. She revealed that the cultural influence on her life was great. Due to her mature age and the fact that she was a returning student and a retired woman, Dorothy was not necessarily as concerned as the other students with the formality of course credits.

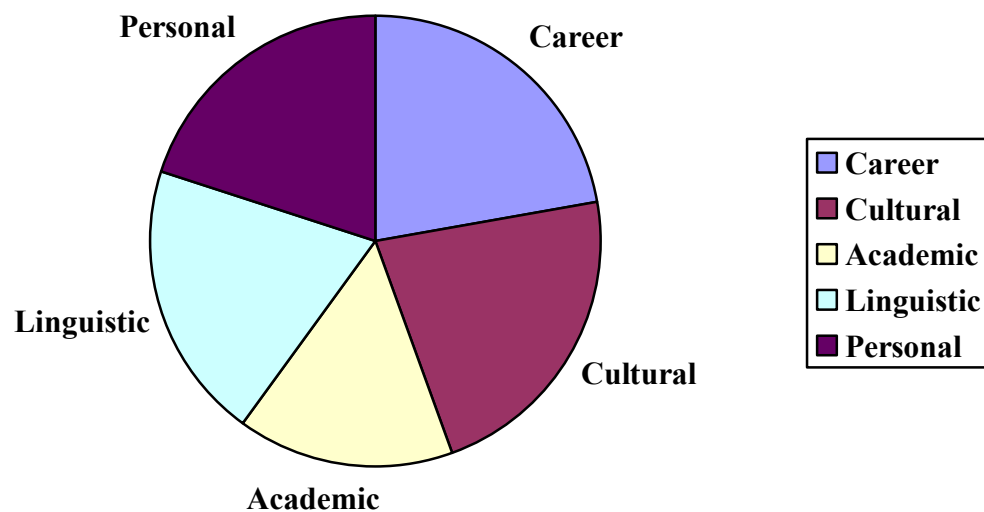


Figure 4.4 Individual Pie Chart of Perceived Effect (Eric)

Much like Dorothy, Eric gave similar ratings to each area of development, with highest ratings in career and cultural growth (5 or “great”), closely followed by personal and linguistic growth (4.5 or “considerable” to “great”), and lastly by academic growth (3.5 or “fair to considerable”).

During data collection, Eric had indicated in open-ended questions that he did not believe his views were notably changed because of the trip abroad. He stated that he was critical of the U.S. beforehand and remained so afterward. He often expressed thoughts of feeling “different” or like an “outsider” in his own (American) culture. He disclosed that he had experienced these similar feelings during the program, as he felt different from the other participants and like the

outsider in the group. He perceived that he developed personally as a result of the experiences on the trip and that he “knew himself better” in the end (PSQ, January 15). Eric stated that, as part of the cultural effect of the program, he found that while cultural differences exist, we are all part of the human race and there are more similarities than differences among us. Eric noticed an effect on his career and academic goals, as the trip reaffirmed his desire to continue learning several languages, participate in future study abroad programs in at least one other language besides French, and use these languages in his future career. Miranda was enamored with the

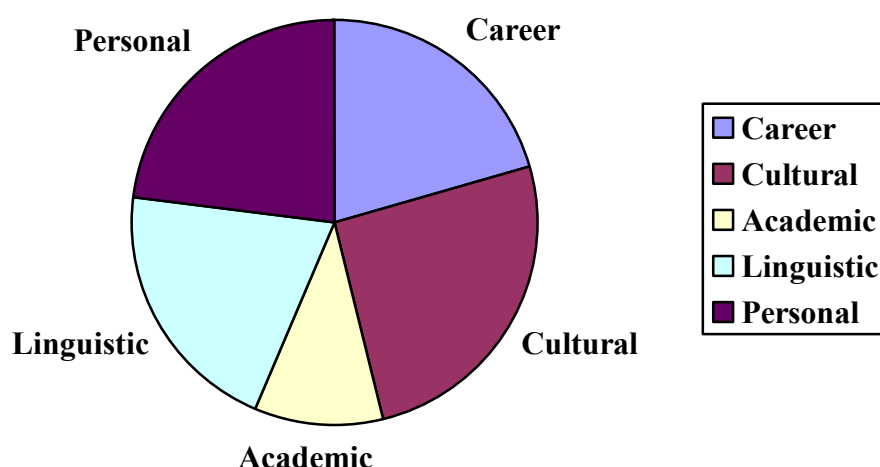


Figure 4.5 Individual Pie Chart of Perceived Effect (Miranda)

French language and culture before the trip to Ubaye and the experience abroad reinforced her passion. She reported significant to great growth in the areas of personal development, cultural acquisition or growth, and career and linguistic development. Miranda's own words can perhaps best summarize her feelings of how the experience abroad contributed to her life:

I think studying abroad has made me a more well-rounded person in addition to helping me reinforce my future career goals. I want to use French somehow in my future career and I know now more than ever that I want to research people in my field [sociology]. I love learning about culture and it was so amazing to see the culture for myself and learn about it in their language. (PSQ, January 15)

Miranda was the most critical participant toward the organization of the program (lack of schedule or syllabus) and she felt there were crucial details that were missing from the pre-departure orientation. As a result, she rated the academic development of the experience at 2, or “slight.”

Unexpected Follow-ups with the Participants

Almost a year after the program, two participants (Miranda and Catherine) shared with me their great desire to return, together, to France and the Ubaye Valley (independently from the LSU program). I mentioned that I, too, would be returning to the Alps in the summer to do more research on the historical ties between Southern Louisiana and Ubaye Valley. Catherine and Miranda, in turn, asked me if I would be interested in documenting their “stories of return” (personal communication, May 3 of the year following their participant in the program) to the Ubaye Valley. I indeed thought it was a wonderful idea and therefore asked for, and was granted, an extension through LSU IRB to conduct further research of these two participants. When I met them in Ubaye, we had an informal interview about their return, their thoughts and their lives. Catherine and Miranda updated me on their academic and career progress. Miranda told me that she was going to go to graduate school, and even though she was not doing her graduate work in French, she stated that her abroad experience in Ubaye helped her realize that she needed to live outside Louisiana and “experience what life has to offer” (informal conversation, June 5). Catherine also said that as a result of the “LSU in the French Alps” program, she had greatly improved her confidence level in “venturing out” of Louisiana (informal conversation, June 5); in fact, the experience in Ubaye had made her want to return to France. She planned to take a teaching internship in France in October following her graduation from LSU. The internship would be a more a long-term stay in France, with a total duration of

about ten months. She was nervous about the upcoming, long-term stay in France, but she was also very excited, saying that “the first Ubaye experience just got me started on going abroad. [. . .]...it made me see that French people are just people and I can do this” (informal conversation, June 7). Overall, Catherine and Miranda confirmed that the international experience with the LSU program had enabled them to open their minds to living outside their home state of Louisiana and gave them a desire to pursue their dreams.

Another unexpected follow-up with a participant came in the fall semester of the year after the original fieldwork for this study was completed. I had begun to do a separate practicum as part of my Education Specialist degree at a language immersion program in Southern Louisiana. To my amazement, who do I find as a French immersion teacher, but one of the participants in this study, Dorothy! She stated that her immersion experience in Ubaye had made such a profound (positive) contribution in her life that she decided to become a French immersion teacher. She expressed great interest in returning to a French-speaking country to keep improving her French. She was also interested in going back to Ubaye Valley to see her “friends in Barcelonnette” (informal conversation, October 11). She articulated to me that her experience on the “LSU in the French Alps” program had a very special place in her heart. She said that she “realized the experience was unique, but really did not appreciate it totally until several months later” (informal conversation, October 11) when she could look back so fondly on the trip and realized how special it was “to be there with that small group of Louisiana kids in the middle of the Alps with such a great group of caring French people” (informal conversation, October 11). Therefore, well after the French Alps program had ended, participants’ experiences abroad had continued to have lasting, positive effects on their lives.

Recent Perspectives of the “LSU in the French Alps” Program

During my research into this program, important data sources (in addition to the program participants) experienced with the program became available to me.¹²⁹ Through email correspondence with Seola Arnaud-Edwards, I learned more about her personal opinions on certain aspects of the program. When asked whether she thought the LSU program has contributed to the people of Ubaye, she wrote:

It most definitely does! The Ubayens are very proud of this program. Even those who play the smallest of roles are delighted to do so. Most of them had never heard of LSU before, now they think of it as ‘their’ university. (Personal communication, September, 2009)

She also found that the “LSU in the French Alps” program made positive contributions to the LSU community and the larger community of southern Louisiana:

Its richness is broadening and wonderfully infectious. The students are learning how to preserve one of Louisiana's most valuable natural assets, the French language and culture. Most "Cajuns" can pull out their family tree and show you how their ancestors got here from France. Meanwhile LSU has moved up the ladder to the highest tier of American universities in regards to its French department and faculty. (Personal communication, September, 2009)

When I probed further into her opinions, she remained very positive about the program's influence on LSU and its students:

Programs like the Ubaye Valley program have strengthened the LSU French department. The department's French majors and minors have several options for study abroad, and after talking to former participants and seeing them in action in Ubaye, I know the experience on the Ubaye program is a positive one. The fact that LSU French has taken steps to develop such programs and opportunities for their students has truly added to the rigor and quality of the department. (Personal communication, September, 2009).

In regard to changing the program, Mrs. Arnaud-Edwards remained open to suggestions and committed to the continual improvement of the program:

Minds are open and we look to the students when they return after a month in the Ubaye to tell us how we can improve the program, what's working and what needs changing.

¹²⁹ The data from these sources are pertinent and relevant to this research, so I have included them here.

[. . .] My husband has suggested extending the program a week or more so the students could visit with universities in Aix-en-Provence. (Personal communication, September, 2009).

She confirmed that the program is a work in progress and will continue to change with feedback from program participants, LSU faculty and French host nationals.

For yet another perspective on the program, I also conducted an informal interview with a former graduate student co-director of the “LSU in the French Alps” program. This former co-director¹³⁰ can also provide some insight into changes that occurred in the program after the fieldwork for this dissertation was conducted. For the pre-departure orientation at LSU, this former co-director indicated that more effort¹³¹ was made to prepare the participants for the historical connections between southern Louisiana and the Ubaye Valley:

More historical articles on the Ubaye Valley were included. We also read articles on the current economic climate in France (decentralization, workweek concerns, etc.). This assignment served as a good lead-in to discussions about business culture in France and helped students identify particular concerns they might encounter in the internships in Ubaye. [. . .] We also discussed some literature about the historical connections between LSU/Louisiana and the Ubaye Valley. (Personal communication, September, 2009)

Other apparent changes to the pre-departure program were also confirmed. For instance, it was indicated that previous participants of the program came to the pre-departure meetings to discuss the program with current participants and answer their questions. It was also revealed that the participants in that summer’s program signed a “French only” pledge and “did a great job keeping up the French” (former co-director, personal communication, September, 2009). Furthermore, the participants were introduced to common French “meet-and-greet vocabulary” used in conducting daily business. They were also able to practice vocabulary, including

¹³⁰ Due to the small number of current and former graduate students affiliated with this program, this informant requested that his or her identity be withheld to protect anonymity. He or she was a (graduate student) co-director of the program during one or more summers following the fieldwork for this dissertation.

¹³¹ The four participants in this study, as with all participants in the LSU programs abroad, completed exit surveys about their experiences to provide feedback to the LSU French department and to LSU’s Academic Programs Abroad Office.

working with numbers in the retail internships, as well as other expressions they would perhaps encounter in each of the internships. At the end of their weeklong orientation, the participants, in fact, were able to give brief presentations on French business culture.

As for the in-country portion of that summer's program, there was a more formal instruction component led by LSU faculty during that segment. For five hours per week, the participants met with a faculty member to discuss "meet-and-greet vocabulary" that was essential in the internships, as well as their questions and concerns from the internship experiences. They also engaged in lessons on advanced French grammar and language. For the final project of the program, the "participants did create a group video based on their experiences in Ubaye, in addition to a longer research paper on one aspect of French culture related to business" (personal communication, September, 2009). There were no reported formal re-entry meetings held as part of that summer's program.

Next, I tried to find out more about this former co-director's personal reflections about his or her experience on the program. My inquiries into the projected learning of program participants were met with much positive feedback:

The most important lesson was probably not specific to the Ubaye program, but more of a lesson in general for any student who studies in a Francophone context. These students were forced to speak French 24/7—therefore, this experience, even though short, probably gave them more L2 [second language] input than an entire semester of French in Baton Rouge.

Secondly, and more specifically to the Ubaye experience, the students were forced to interact with clients in a business context. Therefore, they had to master quintessential French skills, such as *politesse* ["politeness"]. This important lesson cannot be learned under the traditional study abroad/university context. This skill emerged out of the specific context of the customer/worker relationship as well as with the age difference between the students and the majority of people in Barcelonnette. With this age disparity, students were forced to use a more reverent tone and linguistic code to interact with their elders. (Personal communication, September, 2009)

Much like the four participants in the current study, this former co-director indicated that the participants learned much about the French culture and speaking the French language in context. The interaction between program participants and host nationals and business people was an essential part of student learning.

Next, I probed deeper into the program's duration and what this former co-director thought of its appropriateness:

The program's duration is perfect. [. . .] I think a stay of any longer period of time, in such a remote area, would have opened the door to, not necessarily boredom, but a feeling that it was necessary to travel outside of Ubaye (not an easy task) to a more cosmopolitan area in which one would experience many of the cultural and artistic experiences that are affiliated with a college trip to Europe. Also, because we stayed in such close quarters, much more time together in our small group may put a strain on the group dynamic as well as the relationship among our LSU group. With the duration of 4 weeks, there was plenty to do everyday and much to explore, but in the end, participants were ready to explore other areas of France on their own. (Personal communication, September, 2009)

This viewpoint mirrors much of what was pointed out previously by this study's four participants. A shorter program would not have allowed the participants to feel settled in the environment, and perhaps the program would have been too rushed; a longer program might have led to participant boredom (given the remoteness of the valley) or conflict among participants (given the small number in the group and the close quarters of the lodging).

When asked to provide the top three learning goals of the program, the former co-director responded: "1) to speak French more fluently and confidently; 2) to understand how businesses work in France; and 3) to understand the historical ties between the Valley and Louisiana" (personal communication, September, 2009). These learning goals indeed correspond with many of the goals of the four participants in this study. Since these three goals fit into distinct categories of learning (linguistic, cultural, historical and academic), the multi-faceted learning experience of the program participants is reinforced. Finally, when asked if he or she would

make any changes to the program, the following response was given: “I would assign a bit more work, have more formal classroom lessons per week, and have the internship schedule organized more concretely prior to departing the U.S.” (personal communication, September, 2009).

In a recent edition of LSU’s *Kaleidoscope* magazine (2009), several other viewpoints about the program were revealed from different individuals affiliated with the program. French Studies professor Kevin Bongiorno stated:

This is a particularly rich experience for our students. [. . .] The students practice their French, learn about French commerce, have direct contact in a French community, and take part in a number of sporting and cultural activities. Of course, their favorites seem to be working in the chocolate shop and mountain biking in the Alps. (LSU College of Arts & Sciences, p. 19)

Again, the multi-faceted learning experiences available in the program were mentioned. Here, Bongiorno discussed the linguistic, cultural and leisure activities that are built into the participants’ learning. Seola Arnaud-Edwards also indicated that the experience of spending a month in the Ubaye Valley does not disappear from the participants’ minds and hearts after the program is over:

‘When it’s over, it isn’t really over because the students go back on their own. The people of Barcelonnette make sure the students feel like they are part of the family. One student told me she felt like she had spent three weeks in heaven.’ (LSU College of Arts & Sciences, p. 19)

Also included in the article in *Kaleidoscope* were the personal reflections of former participants in the program (not the participants in this study). Christine Pyle, a student from the 2008 program in Ubaye, reported having a very positive experience:

The small-town experience gave me the opportunity to form relationships and improve my French; I learned about the local culture by being part of it. I loved spending time with our wonderful hosts, who often entertained us at their homes and led us on sightseeing trips and outdoor activities. The setting was breathtaking. We took excursions to hike and drive—and even to cycle—in the Alpine passes, and every morning I looked out my window to a beautiful vista. (p. 19)

Another participant from the 2008 program, Connie Renee Boudreaux, discussed her positive learning experience in the Ubaye Valley:

The best part about the trip wasn't the scenery or the food, though both were amazing. It was the people both from LSU and those we met there. All ten of us from LSU got along really well, truly became friends and have remained so. We have some classes together, so the trip not only improved my French language skills, but also improved my academic experience providing me with a network of friends to study with. (LSU College of Arts & Sciences, p. 19)

These former participants again mentioned the beautiful scenery and access to French host nationals. Given the small group atmosphere of the program, Boudreaux commented on the bonds she formed with other participants and the improvement to her "academic experience," as she had a bigger network of friends and study comrades as a result of the program.

Conclusion

The results of this study on the "LSU in the French Alps" program have revealed many details about the participants' perspectives on all phases of the program, from pre-departure orientation to their sentiments six months after studying abroad. The participants thoroughly discussed their perceptions of their learning experiences during the program. They indicated that their learning experience in Ubaye had been very different from that of any class they had attended in the past. The participants reported that they were "learning from their experiences" (in-country internship interviews, June 22), including through the internships and contacts with host nationals. In the next chapter, I will discuss how the participants' comments about their learning relate to the experiential learning theory and to previous research.

All four participants revealed (in-country, re-entry and post-study) that their experiences abroad had positively influenced their personal, linguistic, cultural, social, and career or professional development. They also gave many suggestions on how to improve the program, particularly in the organization and the structure of the pre-departure orientation. Therefore, the

design of study abroad programs and program evaluation and assessment will be discussed further in the next chapter. Also, although all the participants felt unprepared for the internship experiences, their feelings of culture shock were minimal (slightly higher for Catherine). Instead, they suggested that they simply observed a few instances of cultural difference (not culture shock) (in-country interview, June 11). What was somewhat of a shock to them was the amount of contact they had with each other. An interesting development arose when the participants discussed their interaction with their peers in the LSU group. All participants, at times, were frustrated with the other participants and with having to spend so much time with each other. By the end of the trip (end-of-program questionnaire, June 25; and end-of-program interviews, June 22 and June 23), *all* four participants were ready to separate from the LSU group. These findings bring up the issue of the “stranger group” as first discussed in the literature reviewed in this dissertation. This issue, as well as many others which emerged from the participants’ perspectives and this study’s results, will be discussed, in relation to previous literature, in the next chapter.

In order to uncover as much information as possible about the program and its participants, I sought out additional feedback from individuals with experience with the program (who were not participants in this study). Similar to the participants in this study, two former participants (from a different summer) reported having a positive learning experience during the program, and stated that participation in the program improved their overall academic experience in college. Seola Arnaud-Edwards discussed her beliefs on how the LSU program positively contributes to the residents of Ubaye, as well as the LSU community and southern Louisiana. She referenced the cultural and historical dialogue that has been opened between Ubaye and Louisiana as a main positive contribution of the program. Finally, two LSU faculty members

associated with the program mentioned the linguistic, cultural and leisure activities that are built into the participants' learning experiences, and the subsequent benefits of such activities.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

According to Creswell (2005), the goal of the final segment of qualitative research is to interpret and make sense of the findings. This includes a review of how the research questions were answered, a brief discussion of the study's findings in regard to related literature, as well as the research implications and suggestions for further inquiry (Creswell, 2005). The overarching query that guided this study sought to explore this short-term cultural internship program in the Ubaye Valley of France. In chapter 1, in order to situate this study and the LSU program in today's climate of education programs abroad, I include a brief account of the recent past and current situation of study abroad programs for American college students. Details about the "LSU in the French Alps" program (e.g., structure, duration and location) and this study's prospective questions are also discussed. Furthermore, the historical and immigration connections among the Ubaye Valley, Mexico and Louisiana are included in order to inform the reader about this background, as well as the foundation of the "LSU in the French Alps" program.

Several prospective questions are posed to uncover the program participants' motivations and goals for studying abroad, their perspectives on their learning (e.g., potential effects of studying abroad and possible culture shock), and their views on certain aspects of the program (e.g., pre-departure orientation and program internships). In an exploratory case-study approach, the questionnaires and interview protocols are used during data collection and fieldwork to investigate the emerging participant perspectives. As a result, new themes and several answers to the prospective questions evolve. In this chapter, these emergent themes and the participants' perspectives will be discussed in terms of each prospective question in this study. I will identify and interpret the most important results in this study, and evaluate these results in light of

previous research. In addition, I will discuss the possible limitations to this research, implications for future programs and suggestions for future research.

Discussion

Participants' Perspectives on Pre-departure Orientation

Prospective Question #1. How do the participants react to the pre-departure orientation week and do they feel that it significantly prepared them for this immersion experience?

All participants agreed on several issues in regard to the pre-departure orientation. They also gave many similar suggestions on how to improve the pre-departure orientation for this program. First, they suggested that the pre-departure meetings were the most essential part of the preparation process for the study abroad experience. In pre-departure meetings, they hoped to learn important vocabulary and cultural expressions used in France, particularly those terms used in everyday business French. All four participants indicated displeasure in the amount of vocabulary preparation and linguistic training provided in the pre-departure meetings. In fact, one of their most adamant suggestions for future programs was to increase the amount of vocabulary and terminology training for program internships. All four participants firmly declared that the most important tool in preparing students to go abroad was the pre-departure orientation.

The participants suggested that the orientation meetings should have had better thematic organization. Prior to pre-departure orientation, the participants did not receive a schedule of specific topics to be discussed for each day of the orientation. Every participant thought that the group should have been better informed about the historical ties between Louisiana and the Ubaye Valley. They were sincerely disappointed that they did not read more about this history before the trip began and that a pre-departure trip to Arnaudville, Louisiana was not scheduled.

The findings of this study confirm the bulk of research surrounding pre-departure orientation, as most studies have shown that rigorous pre-departure programming minimizes student anxiety and subsequent culture shock abroad. Several researchers (Citron & Kline, 2001; de Nooy & Hanna, 2003; Furnham, 1993; Jurasek, 1991; Kitao, 1993; Levy, 2000; Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002) have recommended that pre-departure “training” concerning the host culture, stages of culture shock and coping strategies to use while abroad, can help prevent the devastating effects of panic, maladjustment or culture shock once in the host country. Furthermore, most of the above studies found that pre-departure orientation or training could put students at ease prior to departure. Archangeli (1999) found that, particularly for non-traditional programs abroad (i.e., internships or service learning) in which students may be unfamiliar with the learning strategies or environment, students tended to be especially nervous and anxious before departing. The researchers in the studies listed earlier (e.g., Citron & Kline, 2001; de Nooy & Hanna, 2003; Furnham, 1993) suggested that students be given intense training during pre-departure orientation about what they were to expect on their programs abroad.

In this study of the LSU program, all four participants recommended the use of a study abroad guidebook or workbook manual to help them reflect on the experience of going abroad. As mentioned in the review of literature, several manuals or guidebooks on studying abroad (Dowell & Mirsky, 2003; Paige et al., 2006; Kappler-Mikk et al., 2009) have been published as a tool to help both participants and instructors work through the study abroad experience from pre-departure to post-study. Topics include pre-departure questions for learning more about diversity and aspects of culture, as well as in-country units on strategies to cope with cultural adjustment, ways to develop intercultural competence, and suggestions for keeping a reflective journal. In addition, the books have many chapters on the re-entry and post-study phases of

studying abroad. These chapters discuss such issues as reverse culture shock, maintenance of new skills learned abroad and lifelong learning. However, many universities do not incorporate these texts into their programs abroad or into the pre-departure orientations. It is essential that research be conducted to determine whether there are actual benefits for students in using such literature in any phase of the study abroad process. Although Cohen et al. (2005) published an extensive study of the possible benefits of using CARLA's guidebooks with study abroad students, language instructors and study abroad advisors, they used only CARLA's guidebooks and no other materials. Furthermore, unanswered questions emerged from the study by Cohen et al. (2005), and, clearly, one study is not sufficient research on a topic. In general, further research on pre-departure orientation and training would be a welcome addition to study abroad research.

Participants' Motivation and Goals

Prospective Question #2. Why do the participants choose this program (motivation) and what do they hope to accomplish as a result of participation in the program (goals)?

Question 2 also focused on the pre-departure phase of the program. It was asked in order to seek information about why the participants chose to study abroad (motivation) and why they chose the "LSU in the French Alps" program in particular. This research also sought to learn what the participants hoped to accomplish during the program (goals). My review of previous research indicates that, despite growing interest in study abroad programs, less than 1% of college students choose to participate (Obst, Bhandari, & Witherell, 2007). Why then, did this group of individuals decide to go abroad, and why did they choose this program? This research data reveal that these students decided to go abroad for several reasons, including the fulfillment of French coursework and the chance to travel to a foreign country. One of their main goals was

to improve their French language skills and knowledge about French culture. When asked in the pre-departure questionnaire about their choice specifically of the “LSU in the French Alps” program, they expressed very precise motivations: small group atmosphere (Dorothy), small town atmosphere (all participants), close contact with and access to French people in a real-life context (all participants), unique program structure with cultural, linguistic internships (all participants), historical connections between Louisiana and Ubaye (Dorothy and Catherine), and the cultural, historical excursions included in the program (all participants).

When these participants’ motivations were compared with the findings in prior research, much remained inconclusive, since little research has been conducted in the area of an individual’s motivation for the choice of program structure, particularly in a non-business internship. However, the results of this study confirm the results of the previous research that does exist. Sánchez, Fornerino and Zhang (2006) uncovered that their American student participants abroad appeared motivated to use their study abroad as an opportunity to learn a foreign language, seek personal change and improve their future careers. Although informative, this study did not fully investigate the specific motivations for the choice of program type or duration. Several studies (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2003; 2004; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; and Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005) found that participants’ were motivated to choose short-term internships, service learning, or other short-term study abroad programs, because of the direct contact with host nationals that takes place during many of these programs.

In regard to their goals, improvements in their listening and speaking skills in French were Dorothy and Miranda’s main goals. Catherine could not wait to experience another culture “first-hand” (pre-departure questionnaire). She also said she wanted to experience a foreign culture and see whether she could succeed by herself outside Louisiana. Miranda also indicated

that one of her goals was to gain a better understanding of the “real” French culture, not the one she read about in her French textbooks (pre-departure questionnaire). All participants wanted to immerse themselves in the French culture and expressly desired to experience France outside a major metropolitan area. Finally, Eric was also interested in learning more about the French language, but he showed extreme interest in “discovering the French culture” (pre-departure questionnaire), as well as comparing and contrasting this culture with others which he had encountered thus far in his life.

The review of literature also found little research about the participants’ motivations for choosing abroad programs of non-traditional structures (e.g., internships or service learning) in lieu of traditional ones (e.g., coursework at a foreign university). In this study, several themes emerged that could help guide future research. One of the top reasons the participants chose the Alps internship program was its structure. They were intrigued by the opportunity to intern in French businesses, meet French people and spend a month learning French outside a classroom setting. For the future of study abroad programs, it would be helpful to determine why students are choosing particular programs over others. Their motivations could help universities and study abroad organizations create more attractive and beneficial programs. Furthermore, another lack of research surrounded the question of the participants’ motivations for choosing programs of shorter durations. In the findings of this study, the participants revealed that the LSU internship program’s short duration was a key factor in their choice in the program. Financial concerns, anxiety about being away from home and family obligations in the U.S. were areas that motivated students to choose a short-term program.

These findings confirmed the results of the prior research reviewed in this study. The Lincoln Commission (2004) reference short-term programs as a “relevant study abroad

experience” (p. E-6), that is a better option for many students who could otherwise not afford the costs and time necessary for a long-term program. The short-term study abroad participants in Dwyer (2004a) state that they chose programs of shorter duration due to the lower cost, less time commitment, and the summer or January programs would allow them not to miss any classes at their home campus (inflexible semester curriculum requirements). Spencer and Hoffa (2002) and Dessoiff (2006) report similar findings—the participants who normally could not go on long-term programs chose short-term programs because they offered a lower price and a shorter time commitment. The short-term programs also allow student participants to try going abroad for a few weeks, instead of for several months. Participants in several short-term programs agree that they chose short-term programs because they felt less anxious about just a few weeks abroad. They also state that, due to their anxiety over a long-term program, they may not have gone abroad if it not had been for the short-term option (Spencer & Hoffa, 2002; Dessoiff, 2006). Few studies, however, have investigated the participants’ motivations for the choice of program type and duration. These findings bring up issues that deserve further investigation, especially considering that the majority of American study abroad participants are choosing short-term programs.

Culture Shock

Prospective Question #3. Do students foresee experiencing any culture shock and once in the Ubaye Valley, how do the participants believe they experience culture shock, if at all?

Prior to departure, the participants were asked whether they anticipated experiencing any culture shock once in Ubaye. In previous research on studying abroad, “culture shock” (Oberg, 1960; Chen, 1992; Pedersen, 1995; Jurasek, Lamson, & O’Maley, 1996; Archangeli, 1999; Engle & Engle, 1999; Kohls, 2001; Martin & Nakayama, 2001; Brandt & Manley, 2002; Lutterman-

Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002; Montabaur, 2002; and Tange, 2005) was one of the most popular themes in study abroad research. However, it was not a considerable, emergent topic in the findings of this study. No participant indicated that he or she expected to experience severe culture shock on the program. Due to the short duration of the program and because they would be in a faculty-led program with three other participants from their home university, they did not predict serious feelings of culture shock. All three female participants believed they would experience a mild form of cultural “adjustment” in France, including the differences in food, language barriers and different habits in communication (pre-departure questionnaire, May 25). They did not foresee that they would be “shocked” by the French culture. Eric, however, did not expect to have any level of culture shock in France. In fact, he reported that he was looking forward to the change in scenery and “mentality” (PDQ, May 25).

During the in-country experience, the participants were asked whether they believed they were in fact experiencing culture shock. Data reveal that Dorothy and Miranda experienced a few instances of “cultural difference,” but they labeled nothing as strongly as a “shock” (ICI, June 11). However, after some adjustment, they indicated that these small differences had become more “quirky,” and they became quite fond of them (ICI, June 11). Catherine reported that she felt as if she were experiencing the most difficulty (among her peers) in the adjustment to France. At times, she did struggle with feeling “very different” from the French (mostly in height, clothing and language skills) (ICI, June 11). It was Eric who reported the least difficulty adjusting to France, as he stated that he had “no unexpected difficulties of any kind” (EPQ, June 25). These findings are consistent with Kohls (2001), Montabaur (2002) and Tange (2005), as these researchers found that the “honeymoon” stage, or the initial fascination with the host culture, lasts well past the first month. Therefore, according to these researchers, the participants

of the “LSU in the French Alps” program could not have experienced “culture shock” because their stay in France was too short. One question that was not answered as a result of this study (or from any previous research reviewed) was, if participants do not leave the “honeymoon” stage of cultural adjustment during a short-term program, are they truly able to learn about all dimensions of the host culture?

The answer to this question is not easily reached. The review of previous research has revealed that difficulties in this debate exist because researchers (Pedersen, 1995; Kohls, 2001; Martin & Nakayama, 2001; Montabaur, 2002; Tange, 2005) disagree on the duration and order of each phase of culture shock and cultural adjustment. Each researcher has his or her own model for the specific phases of culture shock and for the duration of each phase of shock. In terms of the LSU program, one researcher’s model (i.e., Martin & Nakayama, 2001) may find that culture shock is possible in this short-term study abroad program, while another model (e.g., Tange, 2005; Kohls, 2001) may indicate that the participants do not spend enough time in the host culture to get past the initial “honeymoon” phase. Therefore, in short-term study abroad programs such as “LSU in the French Alps,” the issue of culture shock is up for debate and more research needs to be conducted to reach more concrete conclusions.

The participants also reported that they experienced more of a wonder about the French culture than shock. They found themselves comparing and contrasting French habits and culture with the American counterparts, a notion which supports Kim (1995) and Wilkinson (1998a, 1998b). All participants stated that they found the French culture to be more similar to the American culture than different. One day in the middle of the program (informal conversation, June 13), Eric made a rather strange statement at the dinner table at Jean Chaix: “French people are humans.” While this was an obvious statement, it brought about an interesting conversation

among participants. It brought to light that the study abroad experience “humanized” the French to these American students (Eric, informal conversation, June 13). Instead of thinking of the French and their culture from excerpts of a textbook, after having the experience in Ubaye, the participants had formed relationships with French people and their families. Therefore, instead of being intimidated by the French or by speaking French in front of native speakers, the participants indicated that they were becoming more at ease (observations and informal conversations).

Along similar lines, the participants also reported that they had developed a more open-minded approach to thinking about other cultures and had gained a greater sense of independence from their home culture. As they negotiated the similarities and differences of the French culture, they began to recognize both the good points and shortcomings of their home culture. Since all participants successfully managed their encounters without serious culture shock, they turned these instances into positive events in their lives, which is an action in support of Kim (1995) and Wilkinson (1998a, 1998b).

As seen with the participants in this study, cultural adjustment and culture shock are very personal experiences. The level of “shock” and the duration of the adjustment depends on many individual factors for the participants: their prior exposure to diversity, prior trips abroad, level of independence from friends and family, open-minded viewpoints, flexibility in lifestyle, personality and so on (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Searle, 1991). Much is also dependent upon the details of the program in which these participants were enrolled (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Searle, 1991). The participant who is surrounded by Americans and/or English speakers and lives in a dorm in which he or she only speaks English for most of his or her entire time

abroad, will perhaps experience less culture shock than someone who travels abroad alone to participate in a program in which he or she is surrounded by the host culture and host nationals.

All four participants indicated that because the program was only four weeks in duration, they felt they could “deal with” (Miranda, ICI, June 11) any cultural differences, difficulties or inconveniences. The female participants all stated that knowing they could go home in a few short weeks if something went wrong or if they did not like France was reassuring (ICI, June 11). Specifically, Miranda and Catherine mentioned that if the program had been longer (i.e., a full semester), they would have experienced “a major panic” several weeks into the experience (informal interview, June 10). They both found the thought of staying in France, away from home and family and friends, to be “daunting” (informal interview, June 10). They felt the program was a nice “first experience” abroad, particularly for its short-term duration and because they had time away from the LSU group (during internships), but could come back to the group for lunch and dinners (informal interview, June 10).

The participants’ comments support previous research (e.g., Spencer & Hoffa, 2002; Dessoiff, 2006) about participants’ reactions to short-term programs and the lack of culture shock. The participants in several studies (Spencer & Hoffa, 2002; Dwyer, 2004a; and Dessoiff, 2006) reported that, during their short-term programs abroad, they were not hindered due to major culture shock because they knew any discomfort would end when they went home in several weeks. Much like the participants in this study, they seemed confident in overcoming or pushing aside any feelings of cultural difference, because they would soon leave the host culture to return to their own culture.

All female participants indicated that having the other participants at their lodging and the opportunity to talk about their experiences and difficulties was a “comfort” (ICI, June 11). Eric, on the other hand, seemed to experience more shock being with four American females (three participants and one program director) for several hours per day for four weeks than in his experiences with the French culture. These comments by participants brought about an interesting look at the “stranger group.” Previous research¹³² (De Ley, 1975; Herman & Schild, 1961; Nash & Tarr, 1976; and Wilkinson, 1998a, 1998b) has shown that many study abroad participants cling to members of their own culture or language (“stranger group”) as a natural coping mechanism to culture shock, or as a technique of avoiding individual contact with the host culture (De Ley, 1975). Because of their interaction with the “stranger group,” many participants make a choice to interact with people of their own culture and/or language while abroad, and may never have optimal exposure to the host culture. Several studies, including Herman and Schild (1961) and Nash and Tarr (1976), have cautioned against the power of the stranger group, which has been found to negatively influence the attitudes of each individual member of the group. If the general attitude of the stranger group is negative toward the host culture, research (De Ley, 1975; Herman & Schild, 1961; Nash & Tarr, 1976; and Wilkinson, 1998a, 1998b) has found that the members of the group follow the negativity. Colleges and universities frequently send groups of students abroad with other participants from their home campuses. However, no research has examined the effects of the participants in the group on one another, and the notion of a “forced” stranger group in these situations.

In this study, all participants initially found comfort in traveling abroad with a small group of Americans from LSU. However, after several weeks together in France, all the

¹³² Few studies, in general, about the “stranger group” could be found for the review of literature. Also, it is clear that several of these studies were conducted several decades ago, and no research has been conducted in 10 years.

participants experienced varying levels of frustration with the group members. In this study, Eric experienced difficulty with the “forced” stranger group. Even if he tried to distance himself from the other participants, he was forced to spend more time with his American counterparts than he would have liked. The group went on excursions together and spent several hours per day in one another’s company. By the end of the trip, Eric admitted that he was “finished” with the other participants and he had been ready, by week two, to “be on [his] own” (post-French interview, June 23). He reported “extreme isolation” from the group and that he was frustrated by their “extreme negativity” (interview, June 23). Because of this, he took steps to distance himself from the other participants. After lunches and dinners during free time, he went off by himself and explored the town and the nature trails. From his statements (observations and interviews), near the end of the trip, it was clear that he was much happier exploring the French culture by himself than with the group.

Dorothy was content with having a “good balance” of time with American and French people (ICII, June 22). She indicated that she would have been overwhelmed if she had been in France by herself or on an internship program alone. She looked to her fellow participants for conversation and discussions about their experiences. Meanwhile, Catherine and Miranda experienced both comfort and frustration with their peers. In their in-country interviews and questionnaires, they reported looking forward to lunch and dinner with the other LSU participants because they could talk about their days. They also stated that they had “formed friendships” (ICI, June 11) with each other and with Dorothy and Eric. However, the female participants, although they reported a few moments of frustration with the other group members, remained generally positive about the group.

In my in-country observations, I did see several instances (e.g., complaints about a lack of schedule) of the “stranger group theory,” (Herman & Schild, 1961; Nash & Tarr, 1976; and Wilkinson, 1998a, 1998b) in which one participant’s negativity carried over to another participant, and then to the group. However, I also observed that just as the group’s demeanor could quickly turn negative, it could turn positive. If one participant grew excited or positive about something, the other participants seemed to follow (e.g., paragliding or the trip to Italy). Therefore, it seemed as though the individuals (specifically the females) in this small group were very dependent on one another emotionally, in levels of both positivity and negativity. No research in “stranger group theory” links the “stranger group” to having positive effects on a participant’s study abroad experience. In this study, Dorothy, in particular, reported that the other participants had a very positive effect on her experience abroad. From the findings of this study, it is clear that many unanswered questions surround the idea of “stranger group theory” in study abroad. Therefore, more future research is warranted.

Emerging Aspects of the Experiential Learning Theory

Prospective Question #4a: How do the participants view their learning on this program, particularly in regard to learning the French language and culture? What do participants perceive they learn on this type of short-term abroad program in which instruction is non-classroom based with internships and excursions?

The participants in this study were also asked to reflect upon their learning during the program, particularly in regard to learning the French language and culture in an environment that was non-classroom based (internships and excursions). In fact, one of the most insightful revelations of this study occurred when the participants described what, how and why they were learning during their experience abroad. Upon my own analysis of this data, I was struck by how

the participants talked about their learning process, particularly on the program's internships. A specific instance occurred during an in-country interview, when Catherine discussed how she had learned from her internships in Ubaye:

Unlike the classroom at home, we can actually just go out and talk to people. The first afternoon at "La Diligence" [the clothing store] was really difficult for me because I didn't understand a lot of the vocab for the clothing and the differences between France and American sizes. I was sort of overwhelmed, I guess, and a little afraid because I felt kind of stupid. But, I mean, everyone there was really nice and tried to talk about other things, like they asked me questions about how I liked Barcelonnette, questions about Louisiana and the U.S. [pause] so I would be part of the conversation. It made me feel better. So, as I went back there more and more, I learned more of the vocabulary for the clothing and the ways to ask someone if they need to try something on or if they need help.

When asked if she could elaborate on how this specific internship at the clothing store was so "unlike the classroom." She responded at length:

Sure. I mean, the only thing I've ever done in a college French class that even remotely compares to these internships is like an end-of-the-semester skit or something. Something that is prepared and rehearsed, like to relate it to an internship here, like you and your group are given a topic and you create a skit. [pause] They are funny and stuff, and we get a chance to speak, but, come on [. . .] it's rehearsed, and we usually read off a paper [pause] Well, that's how I see this experience as being different. For the skit in class, we'd have "the clothing store"—the group has to act out a "real-life" scenario. [pause] It's, um [pause] I guess, trying to make it seem like a real-life scenario, but it just isn't. There's really nothing they can do to make it "real."

Well, here, it's totally real. You have to think on your toes. There's no rehearsing—you can try to prepare. Like after that first day at "La Diligence," I was kind of frustrated, so I went back to Jean Chaix and looked up the words I know I didn't know, like "cardigan" or "corduroy." And simple stuff like the French word for the color "teal." I was really frustrated that I didn't know such a simple word. So, I looked up a bunch of words and also got the idea to bring a little note pad to the internships to jot down words. Here I talk to real French people.

As this study's participants began to indicate more and more how much they were "learning from their experiences," "taking away from the internships," or "learning French so much more in the 'real-life' setting than in a classroom," (paraphrase of all participants' reactions), I found myself recalling the discussion of the theory of experiential learning from previous studies. As a

result, I did more research into the main principles of the theory and was able to apply it to many of the participants' perspectives of their learning.

Looking back at Catherine's statements (and other participants' statements), she indicated that she truly worked through the learning process according to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle (as referenced in Table 2.4). She was an active participant in her learning of the French language, culture and certain business norms. After she had an experience (e.g., being unaware of French clothing sizes or vocabulary), she made observations during her internship and then analyzed and reflected upon what she was seeing, hearing and saying. Next, she used this information to develop new concepts of what was the accepted vocabulary term or cultural cue. Finally, she was able to re-enter the internship for a new experience (with some prior knowledge), in which she tested her notions, and in the end, fine tuned her learning. These findings support previous research about the benefits of experiential learning and outside-the-classroom contact with host nationals (Archangeli, 1999; and Brecht & Robinson, 1995).

Catherine's statements about in-class (LSU) versus in-country (Ubaye) learning were crucial points as to why experiential learning can be so meaningful for most students. In a typical classroom situation in the United States, no matter how much educators try to simulate a real-life learning environment in foreign languages, everyone is aware that the class is not taking place in a country in which the language is spoken. Catherine indicated that she appreciated the practice of pretending like she was in a French-speaking country, but she was consistently reminded that the activities were for class, not for "real." Keeton and Tate (1978) have offered some insight into the phenomenon of direct encounter with learning through experience:

[. . .] the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied [. . .]. It involves direct encounter with the phenomenon being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter or only considering the possibility of doing something with it. (p. 2)

In her statements, Catherine appeared to be more in touch with the realities being studied when she was participating in her internships as opposed to short skits or dialogues in the college classroom. Instead of just thinking about what she would do in a situation or the “encounter,” she was able to act upon her observations with concrete learning experiences.

Furthermore, students who participate in experiential learning are given constant feedback, which they can use to further their concepts of what they are learning (as referenced in Table 2.5). Kolb (1984) indicates that feedback is often the missing link when students do not learn, as educational “ineffectiveness could be traced ultimately to a lack of adequate feedback processes” (p. 22). The participants in this study stated that they had “constant feedback” (Catherine) in their learning. Catherine, in fact, discussed in her in-country interview, why she thought she “learned better” on the program versus in a typical college classroom in the United States:

Unlike the classroom [U.S.], here, I’m not speaking with students whose French is mediocre at best; I’m talking with real French people, who correct me, give me new words and I’m learning the correct lingo while performing tasks. I don’t know, I also feel like I’m remembering it better. Like, at home in French, I’d have to make flashcards and write out the words and really make an effort to study them. Here, I just hear the word and it seems to stick better, I’m not sure if it’s because I’m using the words or if it’s because it’s immersion or what, but it seems to be working for me.

[. . .] It’s more memorable, too. In 20 years, if I look back upon my French courses, I probably wouldn’t remember a random semester-end paper topic I picked for a class in basically any college course, but my experiences here in Ubaye...I will never forget.

In addition, Dorothy reported similar findings when she discussed her learning on the program internships. Below is a conversation I had with Dorothy during our in-country interview about the program internships. First, she explained how she got over her over analysis of grammar when she was trying to speak during the internships and activities during the program:

[Dorothy:] I've always thought about how or if I would communicate well in France, not only in a class like at LSU, but in everyday life in France. I didn't know if I would freeze up or stumble or make any sense at all. What would I do if I didn't understand? My grammar isn't all that great, and I mess up like the *imparfait* and *passé composé* [imperfect and preterite] all the time, so what if I just used everything wrong? But, when I got here, I realized that French people are humans. For the most part, they are friendly, and I mean, especially here at Jean Chaix or with the people who go on the activities with us and the people at our internships, they are amazing to talk to. They let us just speak, they help us "get it out". I may not be able to say exactly what I want, but I will find a way to say most of what I want to say and if it's not perfect, I'm so busy trying to keep up with the conversation that I don't get stuck on one word.

[Researcher:] Did you "get stuck" on words or have issues conversing in your classes in the U.S.?

[Dorothy:] Oh yes. I would think about it too much [pause] I almost "over think" it? I didn't really want to volunteer to speak unless it was like a fill in the blank answer. If I had to talk on and on about something, I didn't want to speak. But here, we are basically forced to, which is part of the reason why I signed up for this program. I want to speak French and understand French and while I was getting better in my classes, it was a slow process and I just couldn't get over the "over thinking" of speaking French. So, I figured this program seemed kind of "sink or swim", so "voilà" [there you have it].

Next, I asked Dorothy whether she thought she was in a lot of "sink or swim" situations during her experiences in the program. She explained:

Sometimes, but not really often. [Pause] I mean, I don't feel every second of the day like there's a lot of pressure and I'm close to drowning or something. I'd say it's a comfortable feeling [pause] I feel comfortable here [pause] everyone is extremely nice and I feel comfortable just talking with them [pause] and trying to use the best French I can, but at the same time, there's an element of surprise. At first, it was a little outside of my comfort level, but we are all in the same situation, our group from LSU, and we talk about our experiences, ask our director things, so it's not like we will actually "sink." There may be moments of panic if I can't think of the right word or have no idea what someone is asking me.

You never know from one day to the next, from one minute to the next, what sort of activity you will be doing or what you will be asked or asked to do at your internship. That's sort of the exciting thing about this program and exactly what I was looking for—it's controlled to a point because we are with a group from LSU and if we have any issues, someone who is of our culture and speaks our language is here and can help us, but we are also on our own a lot to well [. . .] I guess, discover, flounder around and just have at it. It's exciting! I mean, one minute I'm eating a piece of French bread and jelly with my "chocolat chaud" [hot chocolate] for breakfast [. . .] looking at the amazing morning, mountain views in the comforts of "home" and the next minute, I'm, you know, strapped to a French army man yelling, "Courez, courez!" ["Run, run!"], as we are about to jump off a cliff together for "parapente" ["paragliding"]. It's quite an experience!

In the above statement, Dorothy referred to several experiences that she actively worked through; activities that added to her knowledge base about French. She was able to feel independent yet at ease because there was an on-site director from LSU with the group.

Next, I further explored Dorothy's views on her learning. I asked her whether she thought the structure of the program allowed the participants to learn French differently from the way they learn in an American college classroom setting. She responded quickly and with great conviction, "Oh my, yes!" She continued:

I've never viewed learning French in this way before—I'm like a little sponge soaking up new words and expressions every second I'm here, and with the correct pronunciation. Like at the *fleuriste* [florist] [pause] I never would've known how to greet someone and ask how to help them before. At the "La Diligence" [the clothing store], I didn't know how to ask for help or how to ask to try something on. I not only know these words now, but after a few practices and times at my internships, I can use them in the right context and without hesitation.

Much like Catherine, Dorothy reported that at the beginning of the program, she was unaware of much of the proper vocabulary associated with the internship locations; however, as a result of the *experiences* in the internships and being able to make errors and learn from them, she was able to learn the appropriate French expressions.

All participants reported similar stories. While they may not have known appropriate gestures and terminology in each business before they arrived in France, after their experiences in the internships, and given the chance to practice and "test out" their new skills, they learned quickly. Other participant-reported improvements in their usage of French which employed the experiential learning theory (Kolb 1984) included: answering phones properly at the tourism office (Eric, ICII, June 22), giving directions to people unfamiliar with the town and being able to ask (Eric, ICII, June 22) and answer questions rapidly in various tenses (Miranda, ICII, June 22). These examples alone are not necessarily instances of the entire experiential learning

theory, but rather a small step in the larger process. In my discussion with Eric about his learning processes, he indicated that he was frustrated that the ladies at the tourism office had to help him with the appropriate phrases for answering the telephone. He did not realize that there was a very specific way to politely answer the phone at a business in France. He was equally frustrated that it took several practice attempts before he could succeed. However, after attempting the task, receiving feedback, observing, and trying again (experiential learning theory, Kolb, 1984), he was able to succeed at this task and put the skill in his long-term memory. These examples of learning from experience during a non-traditional study abroad program support previous research, in particular Henthorne and Miller (2001), Hopkins (1999), Katula and Threnhauser (1999), and Montrose (2002).

These precise examples of a learner's process of experience (learner data collection), observation and reflection (data analysis) were present throughout each participant's learning, particularly during program internships. In addition, the participants indicated that they began to form generalizations about accepted behaviors, gestures, cultural norms and language skills. They were then able to test these recently developed concepts in a new situation in order to gain knowledge. Therefore, with the emergence of numerous non-traditional study abroad programs, many of which employ the experiential learning theory and outside-the-classroom contact with host nationals, more research is needed.

The Effects of Study Abroad

Prospective Question #4b: How, if at all, do the participants believe the experience on this program has influenced their lives and their knowledge and goals (academic, personal, linguistic, cultural or professional)?

One of the most carefully examined areas of this study surrounded the potential benefits incurred by the participants as a result of their participation in a short-term abroad program. All four participants were asked to reflect upon their experiences abroad and self-rate how they felt their participation in the program had influenced their lives and their growth or goals (academic, personal, linguistic, cultural or professional). Also, they indicated the perceived effects of study abroad. The overarching findings that emerged from this research confirmed that the experience on the short-term LSU program contributed in a positive manner to participants' lives. Some of these perceived areas of development included learning about the French culture (e.g., eating habits, speaking gestures, appropriate greetings and business practices), developing linguistic skills in French or finishing a French major or minor. Others were very personal and included Catherine's realization that she could survive and succeed in the French culture, thousands of miles away from Louisiana. She reported feeling very proud of herself for finishing her first abroad program and after participation in the program, she vowed to return to France as well as move out of Louisiana for graduate school (two goals which she has since achieved).

Other participant-perceived areas of growth or development of knowledge resulting from participation in this four-week study abroad program included: increased open-mindedness and overall confidence, a greater ability to empathize with others before making judgments, and more flexibility and ability to adjust to changes. Every participant believed he or she had become more sensitive to diversity and sought to learn more about diverse cultures and languages. They revealed a greater desire to travel internationally and a renewed commitment to becoming fluent in French. Finally, when asked to rate certain areas of personal growth (cultural, linguistic, career and academic), all four participants gave the highest rating in growth or development to cultural acquisition.

The perceptions of the students who participated in this study of the “LSU in the French Alps” program align with previous research. Previous research has found that study abroad has had a positive effect on the following areas in the participants’ lives: a more sensitive world view (Myers, Hill, & Harwood, 2005), enhanced cultural awareness (Black & Duhon, 2006), positive influences on personal development, independence, maturity and self-confidence (Black & Duhon, 2006), personal growth and increased sense of personal efficacy (Younes & Asay, 2003), growth in intercultural awareness as well as improved self-awareness (Pennington & Wildermuth, 2005). Barnhart and Groth (1987) asserted that even three-week programs can be “eye-opening” and “life-changing” for their participants (p. 84). Dwyer (2004b) found that “programs of at least 6 weeks duration can be enormously successful in achieving important academic, personal, career and intercultural development outcomes” (p. 162). Overall, the findings of this study have added to the body of literature on the positive effects of study abroad. However, it is crucial to uncover more about the possible benefits of short-term study abroad programs, particularly ones that are non-classroom based. In addition, more studies which seek the participants’ perspectives on the perceived effect(s) of study abroad need to be conducted.

The Limitations of This Study

It is essential for researchers to address the limitations of a study, which “reminds the reader what the study is and is *not*—its boundaries—how its results can and *cannot* contribute to understanding” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 42). The summer program examined in this dissertation is *not* a traditional study abroad program, in which students stayed abroad for a semester and attended formal classes in foreign institutions. Aside from the pre-departure orientation held in the classroom on the LSU campus, there was no formal classroom instruction

in the program during the summer in which this study was conducted.¹³³ Student learning occurred on site during excursions and activities with host nationals and during program internships. Furthermore, the participants lived together in a mountain lodge for almost four weeks, as opposed to a semester or year in a foreign university dorm or with a host family.

Therefore, this study has provided an in-depth look at an emerging program type and how it was developed from the historical ties between the home institution and the destination. It has also examined the possible effects of such a program on its participants and their perspectives on a variety of topics. As a result, this study does *not* necessarily seek to analyze the specificities of the participants' linguistic improvement, since the study's focus was on the participants' perceptions and perspectives. Overall, this study has examined numerous aspects of the many study abroad program options. Since study abroad programs exist in a multitude of types, durations and destinations, the investigations into the study abroad experiences of the four participants in this study provide a snapshot of the context of study abroad.

Another possible limitation to this study was my status as an LSU graduate student who studied an LSU program abroad. Before I began my research on this program, I had heard from numerous previous participants that it was "a life-changing experience" and they "learned so much" during the program. These wonderful comments motivated me to find out more about the "LSU in the French Alps" program; however, they also made me feel positive about the program. To avoid ethical issues and bias, I took steps to remain as impartial as possible (i.e., bracketing in field notes).

Also, the graduate student director of the program during the year in which I conducted fieldwork, started out being very pleased about my research and even suggested that I do several roundtable discussions with the participants during the pre-departure orientation (and throughout

¹³³ Note that more formal instruction (classroom setting) was added to the program since this study occurred.

the program). However, once the pre-departure orientation began, she appeared to be anxious at my presence and she told me she preferred that I not participate actively in the pre-departure meetings. Therefore, besides the pre-departure French interview, questionnaire, and informal conversations with the participants (which took place after the allotted time for the scheduled pre-departure meetings), I was mostly an observer during this time. During the in-country segment of the program, I maintained a professional relationship with the graduate student program director and met with her numerous times to gauge her comfort level in my participant-observer role.

Emergent Topics in Study Abroad Programs—Implications for Future Research

Previous research has serious gaps in several of the topics examined in this study. The emergence of the experiential learning theory in the participants' discussions about their learning is just one example of the potential implications for future research. In the past, experiential learning theory has been thoroughly researched as an independent topic. Similarly, study abroad programs of varying structures¹³⁴ have been researched to some extent. However, very little research has investigated the connection of the experiential learning theory to the participants' learning during the study abroad experience. Again, there is a particular lack of research in short-term programs that are non-classroom based.

Kolb (1984) thought experiential learning had a bright future in educational research and practice. In fact, he suggested that experiential learning could serve as a framework for the future of education, particularly since it focused on real-world applications. He stated:

¹³⁴ These structures include student fieldwork (Brandt & Hadley, 2002), service learning (Berry, 2002; Engle & Engle, 1999; Porter & Monard, 2001; Steinberg, 2002; Vahlbusch, 2003; Welch, 1999; White, 2000), internships (Steinberg, 2002), and out-of-class contact with host nationals (Archangeli, 1999; Lutterman-Aguilar, & Gingerich, 2002).

The experiential learning model pursues a framework for examining and strengthening the critical linkages among education, work, and personal development. It offers a system of competencies for describing job demands and corresponding educational objectives and emphasizes the critical linkages that can be developed between the classroom and the “real world” with experiential learning methods.

[. . .] As a learning environment that can enhance and supplement formal education and can foster personal development through meaningful work and career-development opportunities. (p. 4)

In today’s education, educators are expected to apply their subject matter to the “real world,” which is often not an easy undertaking. Kolb (1984) saw experiential learning methods as a link between the classroom and the real world. The participants in this study agreed. They revealed that the learning they experienced on the program was much more applicable to the actuality of interacting with the French language and culture than was the classroom setting in the United States.

Several studies (Juraseck et al., 1996; Engle & Engle, 1999; Citron & Kline, 2001; Brecht & Robinson, 1995; and Pellegrino, 1998) emphasized the need for a combination of outside-the-classroom contact with host nationals and in-class instruction. They called for more research about the role of in-class vs. outside-the-classroom learning during study abroad programs. In fact, one of the questions that emerged from this study surrounded this topic: What is the role of formal instruction (classroom based) in a non-traditional study abroad program? This study’s results on the LSU program indicated that the participants would have preferred to have more formal instruction (or a more formal “class” component) during the in-country segment of their experiences. However, prior to departure, they reported (in pre-departure questionnaires) that they had chosen the LSU internship program because it took place outside the classroom. Therefore, in order to maximize students’ learning and their experiences abroad, what is a good balance of formal (in-class) instruction and outside-the-classroom learning in a non-traditional program? More research is needed in order to answer this question.

Kolb (1984) saw experiential learning methods as a way to improve university curricula, particularly with an ever-changing and more competitive, globally-savvy job market:

In the field of higher education, there is a growing group of educators—faculty, administrators, and interested outsiders—who see experiential education as a way to revitalize the university curriculum and to cope with many of the changes facing higher education today. (p. 4)

However, Kolb (1984) saw a need to proceed with diligence and continued research for the future integration of experiential learning into university curricula:

Yet in spite of its increasingly widespread use and acceptance, experiential learning has its critics and skeptics. [. . .] [W]ithout guiding theory and principles, experiential learning can well become another educational fad. [. . .] Experiential learning theory offers something more substantial and enduring. It offers the foundation for an approach to education and learning as a lifelong process that is soundly based in intellectual traditions. (p. 3)

Kolb (1984) rightfully mentions the need to develop a solid foundation of guiding theory and principles for experiential learning, in order to maintain its longevity in the field of education.

In fact, Kolb's request for guiding principles and theory applies directly to the context of study abroad. A precise lack of guiding principles, program design and methods of evaluation can be found in education abroad programs. Many researchers (Marcum & Roochnik, 2001; Gillespie, 2002; Santanello & Wolff, 2007-2008) called for immediate action to develop comprehensive methods for the assessment of study abroad programs. Gillespie (2002) stated: "[f]ormal assessment of study-abroad programs lags behind the assessment of other kinds of programs on college campuses. While institutions are likely to apply their own standards to their programs, no national standards exist to guide them" (p. B20). Gillespie (2002) also proposed "comprehensive standards for different types of programs" (p. B20) and called for a "set of minimum standards" (p. B20). Gillespie (2002) suggested that future qualitative and quantitative research would be necessary in the development of these standards.

The Forum on Education Abroad has very recently released (2009) its work centered on building a foundation for the principles of study abroad programs. The Forum, officially headquartered at Dickinson College (Pennsylvania), comprises a diverse group of individuals affiliated with study abroad: directors of academic programs abroad, professors from American and international colleges and universities, coordinators or directors from several study abroad organizations (e.g., AIFS, IIE, NAFSA), and the United States Government. The Forum has conducted research on several aspects of study abroad (e.g., assessment, improvement, quality) and has a “working group” of researchers for each publication. In addition, it has advocated dialogue (conferences and collaborative publications) among professionals, researchers and educators associated with international education.

The Forum is committed to “developing and promoting standards of good practice for the field of education abroad” (Forum, 2009b).¹³⁵ Its “ultimate goal” is to research and publish official standards of study abroad that will:

- Provide a forum for discussion and generation of good practices.
- Develop, publish and disseminate agreed upon standards of good practice.
- Develop and provide tools for measuring good practices.
- Advocate for global adoption of standards of good practice. (Forum, 2009b)

In 2008, the Forum published the *Code of Ethics for Education Abroad*.¹³⁶ On its main website, the Forum reveals that this code seeks to improve international education in several areas:

[. . .] it will provide direction to institutions and organizations involved in education abroad and help ensure that students achieve the maximum benefit from their education abroad experiences. The Code should assist organizations as they seek to provide services in accord with the highest ethical standards, with the ultimate goal that students’ international educational experiences are as rich and meaningful as possible.

[. . .] This Code is the culmination of exhaustive research, discussion, and consensus-building among our members to establish high standards and a uniform set of ethical guidelines. The development of the Code has involved contributions from the

¹³⁵ Information from Forum (2009b) was accessed in October, 2009. It is currently available on the Forum’s website: <http://www.forumea.org/standards-index.cfm>.

¹³⁶ Please see <http://www.forumea.org/documents/ForumonEducationAbroadCodeofEthics.pdf>.

Forum's membership of more than 300 institutions and organizations that together represent approximately 80% of the U.S. students who study abroad. The membership includes institutions and organizations located around the world, which has ensured a balanced and culturally sensitive approach to the development of these principles and guidelines. (Forum, n.d.)

In addition, the Forum has developed QUIP, the Quality Improvement Program for education abroad.¹³⁷ QUIP hopes to achieve “quality assurance” in education abroad:

QUIP is an evaluation tool that assists organizations to assess how well their education abroad programming conforms to the Forum's Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad.

QUIP provides organizations and education abroad programs with customized recommendations and action plans for quality improvement. Assessment results apply to all facets of education abroad programming, and program improvement directly benefit students. (Forum, 2009a)

Perhaps most relevant to this study on the LSU program is the Forum's most recent publication, the *Standards of Good Practice for Short-Term Education Abroad Programs* (2009b).¹³⁸ The Forum has noticed the staggering increase in the participation of short-term education abroad programs and has acted: “This important initiative recognizes the growth of student participation in short-term programs and responds to the expressed need for a more specific set of standards that apply to short-term programs” (Forum, 2009b). One of the main goals of these standards is to “help to assure the quality of short-term programs by increasing their effectiveness so that they accomplish their goals and benefit students” (Forum, 2009b).

Overall, it is clear that a professionalization of the field of study abroad has been steadily emerging. More research organizations (e.g., IIE, NAFSA, the Forum, AIFS, CARLA, CALPER) have been founded or expanded to improve research in the education abroad programs. More conferences are becoming available for scholars who conduct research on the topic and more refereed journals (specifically *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study*

¹³⁷ See the website for QUIP at <http://www.forumea.org/quip-index.cfm>.

¹³⁸ For a copy of this publication, see: <http://www.forumea.org/documents/ForumEASStandardsShortTermProg.pdf>

Abroad) are including study abroad as a legitimate field of research. These developments show the recognition for the need to continue research in international programs and study abroad.

The Future of Study Abroad: Concluding Remarks

Although research about study abroad programs and its participants has increased in both rigor and frequency in the past decade, numerous gaps still exist. In each of the themes in study abroad examined in the prospective questions in this research, further research is needed where unanswered questions remain. A few unanswered of these questions are discussed below. Under the theme of “participants’ motivations,” why do participants choose non-traditional programs (e.g., internships and service learning) over more traditional programs abroad? Under the theme of “culture shock,” one question that was not answered as a result of this study (or from any previous research reviewed) is, if participants do not leave the “honeymoon” stage of cultural adjustment during a short-term program, are they truly able to learn adequately about the host culture? Under the theme of “the effects of study abroad,” more research is needed on the possibility of experiential learning during non-traditional study abroad programs. While it is widely accepted that learning during non-traditional programs is “experiential,” there is a lack of academic research specifically dedicated to the experiential learning theory during such programs. Along the same lines, this study discussed the role of outside-the-classroom learning (versus formal, or classroom, instruction). While the participants in this study reported that they chose the “LSU in the French Alps” program because of the opportunities to learn specifically “outside” the classroom and in a “real-life” setting, one of their critiques about the program was the lack of formal instruction. Little research can be found on student perspectives about outside-the-classroom versus formal instruction during non-traditional programs. Under the theme of “pre-departure orientation,” what is the best format for the structure of study abroad

programs (pre-departure, in-country, re-entry and post-study), particularly in a program in which formal, or classroom, instruction is a minimum part of the program? Overall, future research is essential in all aspects (e.g., motivation, culture shock, the “stranger group,” pre-departure training, program structure, experiential learning, and the effects of study abroad) of short-term, non-traditional programs, as these programs are emerging in great numbers and they effect thousands of American college students.

In addition to the government initiatives mentioned previously in this dissertation, many more initiatives and programs have been debated, proposed and/or implemented since the research for this dissertation began. For instance, “The Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act,” passed the U.S. House of Representatives (June, 2009) as part of The Foreign Relations Act. It included new initiatives aimed at “advancing U.S. global engagement” (NAFSA, 2009).¹³⁹ This NAFSA press release also included comments from NAFSA’s Executive Director and CEO, Marlene M. Johnson:

The inclusion of the Simon Study Abroad Act [. . .] will increase fourfold the number of students studying abroad each year in quality programs across the globe and will ensure that our college graduates have the skills they need to meet today's global demands. (2009)

The press release included Senator Simon’s¹⁴⁰ belief that “a more internationally educated citizenry would ‘lift our vision and responsiveness to the rest of the world’” (NAFSA, 2009). In fact, it was revealed that Senator Simon was a key member of the aforementioned Lincoln Commission, which was established in 2004. Johnson further explained that The Simon Study Abroad Act has set up many lofty goals to improve participation in study abroad in several areas:

[T]he Simon Act sets the goal that in 10 years' time at least one million American college students from diverse backgrounds will study abroad annually in locations across the

¹³⁹ This NAFSA press release can be found at http://www.nafsa.org/press_releases.sec/press_releases.pg/house_passes_simon/.

¹⁴⁰ The Simon Study Abroad Act is named for the late senator from Illinois.

globe, with an emphasis on destinations in developing countries. To achieve this goal, the legislation establishes an innovative new structure that will provide financial support to students to study abroad, while at the same time requiring U.S. higher education institutions to address the on-campus factors that currently impede students' ability to study abroad. It is the Simon Act's innovative approach to leveraging institutional reform that will make it possible for this program to dramatically increase participation in study abroad [. . .] to make it an integral part of the 21st-century education of American college students. (NAFSA, 2009)

With each passing year, it becomes more and more apparent that the issues in the field of study abroad have entered into the spotlight of many facets of American institutions of higher learning as well as the U.S. government. In fact, in her commencement address¹⁴¹ to graduates at New York University in May 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton specifically mentioned study abroad programs and how important they will be to the improvement of higher education in the United States:

You know, study abroad is like spring training for this century. It helps you develop the fundamentals, the teamwork, and the determination to succeed. And we want more American students to have that opportunity. That's why we are increasing funding for Gilman scholarships by more than 40 percent. More than 400 New Yorkers have used Gilman scholarships to spend a semester abroad, including nine students from NYU last year. (U.S. Department of State, 2009)

Since the U.S. government and American colleges and universities continue to put more emphasis on the discussion of study abroad, it deserves a more rigorous research agenda from academic scholars. Particularly since short-term study abroad programs are the fastest-developing type of program and have the highest percentage of overall study abroad participation, the IIE has emphasized that more research is needed on all aspects of such programs. This includes how short-term overseas study can benefit participants and what exactly they can learn from an experience abroad of three weeks to three months (as opposed to previous research which focused on semester and year-long programs). Since increasing numbers of

¹⁴¹For a complete transcript of Secretary of State Clinton's commencement address, see <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/05/123431.htm>.

students study abroad as part of their academic careers, educational institutions need to improve their programs and student access to such opportunities. Accomplishing these tasks will not be easy, particularly since the trends of study abroad have changed drastically in past decades and continue to change with each passing year. However, with more research, educators, educational institutions, and the U.S. government can continue to further develop study abroad opportunities for future students.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

1. Study Title: Student Perspectives of LSU's Student Exchange Program to Ubaye Valley, France.
2. Performance Sites: LSU campus (pre-departure and re-entry meetings), Exchange to France (observation of group meetings, cultural activities with French residents, internships)
3. Investigators: The following investigators are available for questions about this study.

Terri Schroth [Researcher's email address and phone number]¹⁴²

Dr. Caroline Nash [Professor's email address and phone number]
4. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research project is to examine student perspectives (impact; how/what they learn; perceptions of the culture and the program) of this short-term program on their lives. The investigator will also study the strategies used by participants to negotiate, adjust to, and acquire a foreign culture during a student exchange in the target culture (France). The stages of pre-departure, in-country, and re-entry to the United States and post-study of the experience will be studied.
5. Subject Inclusion: Individuals participating in LSU in the Ubaye Valley program, a student exchange/internship, summer 200X.¹⁴³ Students must be non-native speakers of French and must not acknowledge French culture as their maternal culture. Past program participants may also be contacted for their perspectives.
6. Number of subjects: 4
7. Study Procedures: The study will be conducted in four phases (pre-departure, in-country, re-entry and post-study). In the first phase, the investigator will observe and interact with discussions of cultural aspects of the exchange during pre-departure meetings and in-country activities and internships. In pre-departure and in-country phases, subjects will fill out questionnaires and participate in interviews. In the re-entry and post-study phases, subjects will fill out questionnaires.
8. Benefits: Subjects will not be paid to participate in the study. The study may yield valuable information about cultural acquisition and adjustment during an abroad experience and could thus help future participants prepare. Additionally, the study may yield information about how to improve this program and study abroad in general.

¹⁴²The investigators' actual email addresses and phone numbers were present on the forms given to the participants. They have been deleted in this dissertation to protect privacy issues.

¹⁴³ The year was present in the original form and has been deleted here to protect the identity of the year (and thus the participants) in which this program was studied.

9. Risks: This study carries no more than a minimal risk. The investigator will be observing subjects in their natural educational environment of the program. Some of the discussions and journal entries about culture may contain personal, private information and opinions. Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of participants' study records. Files will be kept in a secure location to which only the investigator has access.
10. Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate and may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.
11. 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.
12. Financial Information: There will be no compensation or uncompensated costs for participation in this study.
13. Signatures:

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 Robert C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Signature of Subject

Date

Please type or sign your name and date and return this consent form to Terri Schroth as 1) an attachment to [researcher e-mail address], or 2) in a sealed envelope to Hodges Hall 416 (French Dept. Office) with Attn. Terri Schroth on the front. You may then answer the attached questionnaire and either send it as an attachment or send it or bring it to Hodges 416. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time. Thank you for your participation and time.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

LSU in the French Alps: Pre-departure individual French Interview¹⁴⁴

Personal

1. D'où viens-tu? ... de quelle ville?
[Where are you from? ...From which city?]¹⁴⁵
2. Dis-moi quelque chose à propos de toi ... de ta famille, de ta vie.
[Tell me something about yourself...about your family, your life.]
3. Quel âge as-tu ?
[How old are you?]

University Life

4. Tu es étudiant à LSU depuis quand ?
[How long have you been a student at LSU?]
5. As-tu déjà choisi une spécialité à l'université ? Laquelle ?
[Have you already chosen a major in college? Which one?]
6. Quels sont tes projets pour l'avenir ... dans ta vie ? Et comme emploi ?
[What are your plans for the future...in your life? And as a career?]
7. Si tu avais le choix, où habiterais-tu ?
[If you had a choice, where would you live?]

French Language Background

8. Tu parles français depuis quand ?
[How long have you spoken French?]

¹⁴⁴ Interviews were conducted with individual participants on May 25.

¹⁴⁵ The English translations follow the French questions. Note that the English translations were not provided to the participants during the interview.

9. Tu as suivi quels cours en français à LSU ?

[Which French courses have you taken at LSU?]

10. Quelle est ta langue natale ?

[What is our native/maternal language?]

Est-ce que tu parles d'autres langues étrangères (bien, couramment, etc.) ?

[Do you speak other foreign languages (well, fluently, etc.)?]

11. Dis-moi ce que tu penses de tes abilités en français.

[Tell me what you think of your abilities in French.]

As-tu des problèmes avec la langue ? Pour toi, quels sont les aspects les plus forts et les plus faibles de la langue (l'écoute, l'écrit, la lecture, la langue parlée, la grammaire, etc.) ?

[Do you have any problems with the language? For you, what are the strongest and weakest aspects of the language (listening, written, reading, spoken, grammar, etc.)?]

Ubaye Program : Motivations and Expectations

12. Peux-tu m'expliquer les raisons pour lesquelles tu veux aller à Barcelonnette ? Tes motivations ? (Pourquoi est-ce que tu veux aller à Barcelonnette ?)

[Can you explain for me the reasons why you want to go Barcelonnette? Your motivation? (Why do you want to go to Barcelonnette?)]

13. Que veux-tu apprendre en France ?

[What do you want to learn in France?]

14. On va maintenant parler de l'apprentissage de la culture française. Penses-tu que tu apprendras beaucoup à propos de la culture française cet été avec ce programme ?

[Now, we are going to talk about learning French culture. Do you think that you will learn a lot about French culture this summer with this program?]

Dis-moi qu'est-ce que tu espères apprendre.

[Tell me what you hope to learn.]

Pour apprendre ces choses, qu'est-ce qu'il faut que tu fasses en France?

[In order to learn these things, what do you have to do in France?]

15. Quels sentiments as-tu à propos du voyage—As-tu peur/ Es-tu nerveux/se, anxieux/se, enthousiaste ? De quoi ? Pourquoi ?

[What feelings do you have in regard to the trip—are you afraid, nervous, anxious, excited.? Of what? Why?]

LSU in the French Alps: In-country Interview¹⁴⁶

This interview was conducted at the beginning of the second week in Ubaye.¹⁴⁷

1. What do you like about your new environment?
2. What don't you like about your new environment?
3. What have you noted about your new environment? (What has specifically struck you?)
4. How have the locals here in Ubaye responded to you?

Have any of the locals talked to you or made comments about Americans or the United States? If so, please explain:
5. How much contact are you having with the locals?
6. Does this contact allow you to learn about the local culture?

What have you learned about the local culture so far?
7. Are you having a difficult time adjusting to the French culture?

If yes, please explain in what ways.
8. What behaviors from the local culture have you adopted?
9. In what contexts do you feel well received by the locals?
10. In what contexts do you feel out of place?
11. Are you experiencing any stress? If so, from what and how are you managing this stress?
12. If you could choose an adjective to describe how you generally feel everyday in Ubaye, which one would you choose? Why?
13. How do you think this experience is changing you?

Are there any other feelings, experiences, or concerns you would like to express?

¹⁴⁶ In the drafting of this questionnaire, I consulted Dowell & Mirsky (2003).

¹⁴⁷ Interviews took place with individual participants on June 11.

LSU in the French Alps: Internship Experience Interview¹⁴⁸

This interview was conducted at the beginning of the fourth and final week in Barcelonnette. ¹⁴⁹

1. What was your motivation for participating in the internship program in Ubaye?
2. How would you rate the character and quality of the internship experience?
3. In which specific locations in Barcelonnette did you complete an internship experience?
4. Which locations did you prefer? Why?
5. What particular positive and negative experiences or aspects come immediately to mind when you recall the internship experiences?

positivenegative
6. What special activities did the internship make possible for you (improving language skills, meeting French people, traveling, etc.)? How would you rate these activities?
7. Do you believe the internships helped you learn French culture? If yes, list specific examples of your cultural acquisition through the internships.
8. What specific personal, linguistic, or professional benefits did you gain from the internships in Ubaye?
9. Please recall a specific instance, if you can, where you tended to think more internationally or interculturally because of your internship experience (as opposed to before your abroad experience).

¹⁴⁸ In the drafting of this questionnaire, I consulted Weinmann & Bragg (1993).

¹⁴⁹ This interview took place with individual participants on June 22.

LSU in the French Alps: End-of-Program Individual French Interview¹⁵⁰

Personal Experience

--Décris pour moi ton expérience ici à Barcelonnette.

(Sujets possibles : les excursions ou les endroits préférés, les anxiétés, les réactions aux gens, à la culture, aux traditions, à l'horaire, au logement à Barcelonnette)

[--Describe for me your experience here in Barcelonnette.

(Possible topics: favorite places or excursions, any anxieties, reaction to the people, culture, traditions, schedule, lodging in Barcelonnette)]

Self-Assessment of Learning

--Penses-tu que ton niveau de français s'est amélioré pendant ce programme en Ubaye ?

(Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas) ?

(Quand? Pendant les excursions, les stages, les repas, etc.)

(Comment ? Niveau d'écrit, de parler, de compréhension, ou de lecture en français ?)

[--Do you think that your level of French has improved during this program in Ubaye?]

[(Why or why not?)]

[(When? During excursions, internships, meals, etc.)]

[(How? Level of writing, speaking, listening, reading in French?)]

¹⁵⁰ This interview took place with individual participants on June 23. The English translations follow the French questions. These translations were not provided to the participants during the interviews.

Expectations for Future

--Si tu avais le choix et assez d'argent, resterais-tu à Barcelonnette plus longtemps ?

[--If you had the choice and enough money, would you stay longer in Barcelonnette?]

--Penses-tu que tu reviendras en Ubaye ou en France encore une fois à l'avenir ? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

[Do you think that you will return to Ubaye or France another time in the future? Why or why not?]

--Est-ce que ton expérience ici a influencé ton désir de continuer tes études en français ? Si oui, comment ? A-t-elle influencé ta vie d'autres façons ? (voyager plus, apprendre d'autres langues étrangères)

[Has your experience here influenced your desire to continue your studies in French? If so, how? Has it influenced your life in other ways? (to travel more, to learn other foreign languages)]

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRES

LSU in the French Alps: Pre-departure Questionnaire¹⁵¹

Please answer all the following questions. Any additional information or comments you provide will be useful and appreciated. Please use the other side of the page if you need extra space. Remember that your names will not be revealed as a result of this study and your anonymity will be protected. Thank you so much for your cooperation and participation in my research. I hope this study will allow you to reflect on your journey abroad. I think our work together will improve the study abroad experience for future students. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask me! Finally, *Bon Voyage*!

Background Data

In order for me to interpret as accurately as possible the information you provide in later stages of this study, it would be helpful for me to obtain some information about you and your background.

1. Year of birth: _____
2. Sex: F _____ M _____
3. What is your present nationality? U.S. _____ Other _____
4. What was your nationality of birth? U.S. _____ Other _____
5. Were your parents born in a country other than that of your present nationality? (Circle)

Father NO / YES Country of birth: _____
Mother NO / YES Country of birth: _____
6. What is the highest level of education your father and mother reached?
(If you are not sure, please give your best estimate.)

	father	mother
Eighth grade	_____	_____
High School	_____	_____
Some college	_____	_____
Associate Degree	_____	_____
Bachelor Degree	_____	_____
Masters Degree	_____	_____
PhD	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____

¹⁵¹ In the drafting of this questionnaire, I consulted: Carlson (1991); Burn (1991); Carlson, Burn, Useem, & Yachimovwicz (1990); and Weinmann & Bragg (1993).

7. What your first (maternal or native) language? _____
8. Were you exposed to the French language (including Cajun French or Creole) while growing up? ____ If yes, explain.
9. Do any of your family members speak French (including Cajun French or Creole) as their native language?

LSU Experience, French Education Background and Career Goals

1. How long have you been studying at LSU?
(Transfer students: How long have you been in higher education?)

 ____ Up to 2 semesters
 ____ 2-4 semesters
 ____ 5-6 semesters
 ____ More than 6 semesters (Please specify: _____)
2. What is/are your major(s)? _____
 What is/are your minor(s)? _____
3. Did your professional or career goals influence your decision to participate in the Alps program?
 NO / YES If so, please explain.
4. How have you financed your studies in higher education?
 Please estimate percentages.

Cash or other contributions from parents, such as rent	_____ %
Income from your own work	_____ %
Income from your spouse/partner	_____ %
Grants or scholarships	_____ %
Student loans	_____ %
Other (Please specify: _____)	_____ %
Total	100 %

5. How are you financing this study abroad trip?

If you have received scholarship money for this trip, would this trip have been possible without it? Please explain.

6. List French courses you have completed at LSU:
7. What is your approximate grade average in those courses?
8. List any French courses completed elsewhere:
9. How would you rate or describe your experience in French-language courses thus far at LSU?
(i.e., exciting, enriching, dull, fulfilling, boring, difficult, tiresome)
10. How do you think the Ubaye experience will compare/differ from your French classes in the U.S?

Now, please give me your opinion about your ability in French—a self-evaluation of your French proficiency.

11. Rate your French language skills from weakest to strongest:
listening, speaking, writing, reading
12. Rate your skills from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)
Listening ____
Speaking ____
Writing ____
Reading ____
13. Which skill do you hope to improve most during the Ubaye program?
-How will you achieve improvement in this area?

Foreign Interest and Prior Abroad Experience

1. Briefly discuss your intercultural background. To what extent have you had direct contact with diverse cultures in the United States as well as with foreigners or foreign students? Explain.

2. Have you ever traveled abroad? NO / YES If so, please elaborate:

When? _____
Where? _____
Why? _____
For how long? _____
At what age? _____

3. Have you ever studied abroad with an organized program? NO / YES If so, please elaborate:

When? _____
Where? _____
Why? _____
For how long? _____
At what age? _____

What would you change about your experience?

Motivation, Choice and Preparation for Study Abroad

1. What are your motivations for studying abroad (linguistic improvement, cultural acquisition, desire to travel, language requirement, college credits, personal goal, résumé builder, etc.)? Please explain.

2. What major factors influenced your decision to choose to participate specifically in the Alps program?

3. Who most influenced your desire to study abroad?

4. How did you hear about the Ubaye program?
5. List sentiments or adjectives which best describe how you feel about the experience you are about to have in Barcelonnette? (i.e., nervous, curious, ecstatic)
6. What personal goals are you hoping to achieve as a result of the Alps program?

Cultural Perceptions

1. In your opinion, what is “culture”?
2. In your opinion, what makes up a culture?
3. How would you define the term “culture shock?”
4. Do you expect to experience “culture shock” during your Ubaye experience? In what ways?
5. How do you anticipate feeling while you are abroad?
6. What obstacles do you think will be challenging for you abroad?
7. What things do you think you will really enjoy while you are abroad?

How would you describe your position on the following?

	Non- Existent	Slight	Fair	Considerable	Great
Desire for international peace.	1	2	3	4	5
Respect for historical and cultural traditions and achievements of nations other than your own.	1	2	3	4	5
Need for closer cooperation among nations.	1	2	3	4	5
Desire to meet and interact with persons not from your home or native country.	1	2	3	4	5
Actual or desired travel to foreign nations.	1	2	3	4	5
Actual participation in activities aimed at improving intercultural understanding.	1	2	3	4	5
Negative perceptions of foreigners.	1	2	3	4	5
Critical views of your own country.	1	2	3	4	5
Values of your own society are not universal and those of other societies are just as valid.	1	2	3	4	5
Conflicts among particular nations do not affect the rest of the world.	1	2	3	4	5
Interest in learning more languages.	1	2	3	4	5

LSU in the French Alps: End-of-Program Questionnaire¹⁵²

Please answer all the following questions. Any additional information or comments you provide will be useful and appreciated. Please use the back side of the paper if you need extra space. Remember that your names will not be revealed as a result of this study and your anonymity will be protected. Thank you for your participation and cooperation.

Cultural Adjustment

1. Did you/are you having a difficult time adjusting to the French culture? If yes, please explain in what ways.

2. How do you feel about France and the French culture (including people and language) now as opposed to when you first arrived?

Do you feel differently about France and French culture from before you participated in this program? Please explain.

3. Please describe a specific situation in which you experienced culture shock. How did you cope?

Pre-Departure Orientation

4. Give your opinion about the pre-departure orientation/meetings at LSU.

5. Which aspects of pre-departure were most helpful to prepare you for the Ubaye experience?

¹⁵² In the drafting of this questionnaire, I consulted: Carlson (1991); Burn (1991); and Weinmann & Bragg (1993). This questionnaire was distributed at the beginning of the last week of the in-country segment of the program (June 21). I received all questionnaires before the end of the program on June 25.

6. Would you change anything? Describe in what ways the pre-departure orientation could have helped you more.
7. In what ways, if any, did you feel unprepared for the international experience? Please provide any additional comments about the pre-departure program:

Personal Activities and Development While Abroad

8. How do you think your attitude toward foreign cultures, France, French culture, the United States, LSU, has changed, if at all?
9. Discuss your linguistic acquisition from the Ubaye experience. What do you think you've improved the most in (listening, speaking, reading, writing)? Why?
10. Do you feel your progress in the language was a) what you expected it would be; b) beyond your expectations; or c) below your expectations?
11. Are you satisfied with your linguistic experience in Ubaye? What would you change if you could?
12. Which specific aspects of the program have helped you improve your French (i.e., internships, extracurricular activities)?

13. Let's discuss your cultural acquisition from the Ubaye experience.

Rate your level of knowledge about the French culture before you left the United States.

poor fair good excellent

What do you think about your level of knowledge of French culture now?

poor fair good excellent

14. Which specific aspects of the program have helped you improve your knowledge of French culture (i.e., internships, extracurricular activities)?

Please explain:

15. Has this program helped your academic development? If yes, how?

LSU in the French Alps: Re-entry Questionnaire¹⁵³

Please answer all the following questions. Any additional information or comments you provide will be useful and appreciated. Please use the reverse side of the page if you need extra space for your responses. Remember that your names will not be revealed as a result of this study and your anonymity will be protected. Thank you and welcome back!

1. What is your initial reaction to returning to the United States?
2. Did you find yourself making comparisons between French culture and your own? How?
3. What changes in your life occurred as a result of your experiences in another country?
4. Complete the following statement: What changed most about me from being abroad is...
5. What adjustments did you have to make after returning to the U.S.?
6. What would you like LSU to do, if anything, to help returnees readjust to being back in the U.S.?

¹⁵³ This questionnaire was distributed via email to the participants on June 29. They were asked to email it back to me within 10 days of their return to the U.S. I received all the completed questionnaires by July 16. In the drafting of this questionnaire, I consulted: Raschio (1987); Weinmann & Bragg (1993); Lerstrom (1995); and Fantini, McCoy, Soquet, Tannenbaum, & Wright (1984a).

7. Do you think that it would be a good idea to require both a pre-departure orientation and a re-entry workshop/series of workshops at LSU as part of the program? Please explain.
8. How would you define the term “reverse culture shock,” or “re-entry shock”?
9. Do you believe that you experienced re-entry or reverse culture shock? If yes, please explain.

Please complete the following statements:

Through this abroad experience, one of the most important things I discovered about myself is...

A personal attitude or characteristic that has changed as a result of this experience is ...

“Re-Entry Challenges”¹⁵⁴

Below is a list of “re-entry challenges” mentioned by many university students who have just returned to the U.S. after a sojourn abroad. Please read the descriptions and rate to what extent you are experiencing them (numbers 0 to 5 depending on severity). Any comments about your re-entry experiences or challenges would be helpful.

Rating scale: 0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5
not minimal slight fair considerable strong
a factor challenge

Boredom

After all the excitement of going abroad and all the new things I experienced there, returning home seems dull and I have experienced feelings of boredom.

Your Rating _____

Your Comments and Experiences:

“No One Wants to Hear.”

People do not seem to want to hear about my experiences abroad.

Your Rating _____

Your Comments and Experiences:

Reverse “Home” Sickness

After your return to the U.S., you have been experiencing “home” sickness for France or the Ubaye Valley (“reverse home sickness”). You may be feeling a desire to return to the people, places, routine, or lifestyle from your abroad experience.

Your Rating _____

Your Comments and Experiences:

¹⁵⁴ See LaBrack (2004) for more information.

Relationships Have Changed

You have noticed that some relationships with friends or family seem different or altered since you've returned.

Your Rating _____

Your Comments and Experiences:

Feelings of Alienation or "Critical Eyes"

You feel some alienation from your home society, your friends, or your family. You see faults in your home society you never noticed before, or you feel critical of people or habits.

Your Rating _____

Your Comments and Experiences:

Inability to Apply New Knowledge and Skill

You have noticed, and may be frustrated with, the lack of opportunity to apply newly gained linguistic skills. You may feel upset that you cannot speak French to everyone.

Your Rating _____

Your Comments and Experiences:

Please list any other re-entry challenges you are experiencing, did experience, or expect to experience:

Overall Reactions to the Program

1. How appropriate is the time frame of the Ubye program (a few days in Paris and 4 weeks in Barcelonnette)? Do you think the length of the program was about right, too short, too long?
2. Looking back on the entire experience, do you think the program was priced about right, too expensive, or too inexpensive? Please explain.
3. What is your opinion about the lodging in Barcelonnette? Looking back, do you think you would have preferred a host family, the lodging you experienced or some sort of combination of the two? Why?
4. What changes would you recommend making to the format and content of this program? How do you think your study abroad experience could have been enhanced?
5. Would you recommend the Ubye program to someone? Please explain.
6. Reflecting on the entire experience, what would you do differently today to take fuller advantage of opportunities the internships and associated activities offered?

LSU in the French Alps: Post-study Questionnaire¹⁵⁵

Have You Changed From Having Been Abroad?

As it has been about six months after your experience abroad, please take some time to reflect once again on your abroad experience and complete this post-study questionnaire. Once again, thank you! Your participation is much appreciated!

Please place an (X) by each change you believe has occurred in you. Any additional comments you would like to provide would be helpful.

- ☐ I have improved my ability to communicate in a foreign language.
- ☐ I am more knowledgeable about another culture and lifestyle.
- ☐ I am more confident and positive when meeting new people.
- ☐ I am more confident and assertive when facing new situations.
- ☐ I have a greater capacity to accept differences in others.
- ☐ I have more curiosity about and respect for new ideas.
- ☐ I am more flexible and able to adjust to changes.
- ☐ I believe I have matured as a result of this experience.
- ☐ I have a greater sense of respect for other people and cultures.
- ☐ I have a greater willingness to take on roles and tasks to which I am unaccustomed.
- ☐ I have increased my capacity to experiment and take risks.
- ☐ I am more able to accept as valid other values and lifestyles.
- ☐ I have a deeper understanding of the values and lifestyle of my native community (U.S.)
- ☐ I appreciate my native country (U.S.) more than I did before going abroad.
- ☐ I have a greater respect for my native country (U.S.).
- ☐ I am more aware of the opportunities in life that are open to me.
- ☐ I am more independent in my relations with family and friends.
- ☐ I feel greater respect and appreciation for my own family and friends.
- ☐ I believe the lifestyle of my native country (U.S.) is better than that of the target culture (France).

¹⁵⁵ This questionnaire was distributed to the participants approximately 6 months after their return to the United States. I emailed this questionnaire to them on January 5 and all participants had sent it back by January 13. In the drafting of this questionnaire, I consulted Lerstrom (1995).

- ___ I am more aware of the way I use and structure time.
- ___ I feel a greater need to have diverse experiences and friends.
- ___ I feel the need to learn another foreign language.
- ___ I believe I would like to travel to France again.
- ___ I believe I would like to visit Barcelonnette again.
- ___ I better understand my own cultural values and biases.
- ___ I am more capable of solving life's day-to-day problems.
- ___ I have improved my observation skills.
- ___ I feel more surely that common bonds unite all human beings.
- ___ I feel that there are more differences than similarities among humans of varying cultures.
- ___ I have a deeper understanding of the problems and issues that confront all human beings on this planet.

- ___ I have greater awareness of political, economic, and social events occurring around the world.

- ___ I am better able to keep an open mind about opinions which differ from my own.
- ___ I am a better student after this experience.
- ___ This experience has reinforced my interest or commitment to foreign language study.
- ___ The skills I acquired abroad will influence my career path.
- ___ I developed a new interest in a career direction after the experience.
- ___ I feel more confident now in my French classes at LSU than before my Ubaye experience.

- ___ My experience will have a lasting positive impact on my life.
- ___ My experience will have a lasting negative impact on my life.

Now, please go back through your responses and put an extra (X) by the two or three changes that are the most significant for you.

Perceived Influence of Study Abroad

Please rate how much you think your abroad experience on the “LSU in the French Alps” program has affected you, your development, your growth and/or goals in the following areas:

	Not At All	Slight	Fair	Considerable	Great
Influence on Career	1	2	3	4	5
Contribution to Cultural Knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
Influence on Personal Development	1	2	3	4	5
Contributions to Linguistic Development (Improvement in French)	1	2	3	4	5
Contributions to Academic Development	1	2	3	4	5

Please feel free to elaborate:

Please explain briefly how your abroad experience has affected your attitude and opinions toward yourself as a person, student, or citizen. Use as much space as needed.

Your general comments...

Specific Questions

1. How do you feel about your French classes at LSU after your Ubye experiences?
2. How do you feel about the United States in general (culture, politics, etc.)? Has your attitude toward the U.S. or being “American” changed since your abroad experience?
3. How do you feel about France in general (culture, politics, etc.)? Has your attitude toward France or “the French” changed since your abroad experience?
4. Did your experience in Ubye have any influence on your desire to travel or study abroad in the future?
5. Did your experience in Ubye have any influence on your desire to continue learning French and/or learn another language?

APPENDIX D: THE COLLOQUIUM OF 2006

In November 2006, LSU's Center for French and Francophone Studies welcomed an interdisciplinary colloquium surrounding the topic of the Ubaye-Louisiana-Mexico connection. This colloquium was titled, *Une première rencontre sur le dialogue historique entre la vallée de l'Ubaye, la Louisiane, et le Mexique* (A First Encounter of the Historic Dialogue between Ubaye Valley, Louisiana and Mexico). The meeting represented the first of its kind, as all three nations affected by the immigration stories were in attendance.¹⁵⁶

At the colloquium in Louisiana, the "LSU in the French Alps" program was showcased as the main link between Louisiana and Ubaye Valley. As coordinator of the colloquium, I assisted the Center for French and Francophone Studies with the organization of the conference, including with the selection of the variety of topics and papers. The colloquium, in which all presentations were given in French, was divided into three particular themes: 1) *The Ubaye Valley* (regional and migratory history, regional language, cultures and customs), 2) *Ubaye and Louisiana* (family stories and histories of emigration, histories of Louisiana parishes implicated in the Ubaye-Louisiana story, the history of the village of Arnaudville, Louisiana, genealogy, the "LSU in the French Alps" program, and historical, linguistic and cultural ties), and 3) *Ubaye and Mexico* (stories of emigration, Mexican businesses of the Barcelonnettes, and their return to Ubaye).

Specific topics presented at the colloquium included: the French-Acadian immigration to Louisiana (*le Grand Dérangement*), the conditions in Ubaye prior to the massive emigration (particularly at the time of emigration from Ubaye to Mexico and Louisiana), the emigration from Barcelonnette to the banks of the Mississippi (emphasis on the parishes of St. John the

¹⁵⁶ Another French-Mexican colloquium on emigration was held in Barcelonnette in April, 2009. See the program at http://www.barcelonnette.com/InfoliveDocuments/programme_collogue.pdf.

Baptist and St. James), the Ubayen businessmen-planters of Louisiana, and the history and the identity of the emigration of the Ubayens to Mexico. This event reaffirmed the importance of this topic as a viable topic of academic research,¹⁵⁷ whether it was through the stories of immigration or the historical ties between these three geographical areas. My research on the historical ties between South Louisiana, Ubaye Valley and Mexico was strengthened greatly by this colloquium, and it showed me that much research was yet to be done.

In the opening ceremony for the colloquium, Dick and Seola (Arnaud) Edwards again reaffirmed the connection between southern Louisiana/LSU and the Ubaye Valley. In addition to their vision of the immersion program, they reaffirmed their support of the program by announcing their funding for professorships to the LSU Department of French Studies. These professorships included: “[t]he Jacques Arnaud Professorships, honoring the ancestor who brought family members in two countries together; and the LSU-Ubaye Valley Program Professorship, honoring the Mercier, Robert, and Charpenel¹⁵⁸ families.” (LSU College of Arts and Sciences, 2009, p. 19).

¹⁵⁷ Several authors affiliated with the Sabença, and thus referenced in this dissertation, were in attendance at the colloquium. They included Arnaud-Edwards (2006), Coste (2004), Hippolyte-Piolle (2006), Homps (2004, 2005) and Martin-Charpenel (2004).

¹⁵⁸ The Mercier, Robert and Charpenel families are from the Ubaye Valley. They helped Seola Arnaud-Edwards discover the answers to her questions about her family history. In addition, they were instrumental in starting the “LSU in the French Alps” program and remain very active with program participants when they are in the Ubaye Valley.

VITA

Terri Lee Schroth, the only child of Robert and Sharon Schroth, was born and raised north of Green Bay, Wisconsin. After graduation from Oconto Falls High School, she entered her undergraduate studies at St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin. During this time, she studied abroad in Avignon and Antibes, France, and Morelia and Merida, Mexico. In 1999, she graduated *Summa Cum Laude* with a Bachelor of Arts degree in French and a minor in Spanish. She also became a certified teacher in both languages. In 2002, Terri received her Master of Arts degree in French from Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona. During her time at ASU, she was a graduate fellow and an instructor of French. She also completed superior-level French courses during her role as an assistant director for ASU's French summer exchange with Université Laval in Quebec. After graduate-level studies at the Universidad de Alcalá in Spain, Terri entered the doctoral program in French studies at Louisiana State University. During her studies at LSU, she earned a graduate fellowship from the Board of Regents and also taught several French courses at the university. In addition, Terri completed graduate-level Spanish courses at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain, and several weeks of doctoral research in the French Alps. In 2007, she earned her Education Specialist degree in curriculum and instruction (foreign languages) from LSU. She will graduate with her doctoral degree in French (with a minor in Spanish) in May 2010. She hopes to continue teaching French, Spanish, and foreign language teaching methodology as she pursues her professional interests in the research of study abroad programs, applied linguistics, and immigrant literature of French expression.