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International FFA School to School Linkage Program: case studies of two families

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INTERNATIONAL FFA SCHOOL TO SCHOOL LINKAGE PROGRAM:
CASE STUDY OF TWO FAMILIES

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 School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development

by

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ABSTRACT

The National FFA Organization is an agriculturally-based youth organization in the United States which has been providing/facilitating international experiences for its members for a number of years. One of these programs is the International FFA School to School Linkage Program (SSLP), in which selected American agricultural education/FFA programs are linked with specialized secondary agricultural schools/lyceums located in one of the countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU). The program’s main mission is for American students and teachers to share ideas with their FSU counterparts about the initiation and maintenance of small-scale agricultural entrepreneurship based on the United States’ agricultural education Supervised Agricultural Experience Program (SAEP) model as well as exposing them to FFA leadership activities.

During the 1997-98 school term, six agricultural education students and two adults from Prairie High School located in Prairie, Louisiana (pseudonyms), participated in the SSLP as one of six schools from the United States. The school was linked with the Zolatoya Agricultural Lyceum in Zolatoya, Platnaya Region (pseudonyms), Russia. The families of the participants were highly involved in the whole experience, from initial planning to fund-raising to hosting the FSU students to living with their own children upon their return. This qualitative study investigated “How have the lives of two Prairie High School, Louisiana graduates and their immediate families been affected by their participation in the 1997-98 International FFA School to School Linkage Program?” Through literature review, observation, interviews, and obtaining and analyzing pertinent archival information, the major themes identified were:
A) Intellectual Development/Career Guidance Choices, B) Developing International Perspective, C) Change in Perception of Host Country/International Representatives, D) Personal/Family Development, and E) Heightened Sense of Community. Developing an International Perspective, Personal/Family Development, and Heightened Sense of Community had the highest frequencies of reference. Within the major themes, some of the most frequently referenced sub-themes were Career/Educational Choices, Awareness of Cultural Differences, Appreciation for the American Lifestyle, Openness to New Cultures, Parental Life Transitions, Development of Parenting Skills, Anxiety, Building of Family Relationships, Student Maturation, and Concern for Others/Making a Difference. Overall, all participants found this to be a worthwhile and life-changing experience.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The world is continually changing and shrinking with the onslaught of new technology over the past decades in communications and travel. One can merely flip on a television switch and observe live coverage of news events occurring on the opposite side of the world or pick up a telephone and, in short order, be speaking with someone in a distant land. Cellular phones have even furthered this capability by allowing one to call virtually anywhere in the world from anywhere. Electronic mail allows one, at the click of a computer’s mouse, to communicate with anyone in any area of the world who has similar capabilities. A person can board a commercial airliner on one day and arrive well-nigh at any location on the planet by the end of a twenty-four hour period. Due to advances in aerial commercial transport, live Louisiana-grown crawfish can be harvested at dawn and be gracing the tables of a fine European restaurant by the evening of the same day. Such feats were deemed impossible a mere two generations ago. Of course, all of these innovations have greatly affected the lives of people all over the world, including Americans.

Many new questions and situations are arising from these great advances in technology, such as the sources and quality of the food being consumed on the tables in homes around the world, the economics involved in its production, processing, and marketing; and international trade regulations (or lack thereof), just to name a few. To go further, with the ease of travel and communication, faces and voices from foreign lands are now more easily being connected with these questions, which lead to deeper questions/debates with issues such as differences in politics, government, culture, relationships, trust, standards of living, and religion. In a perhaps very sobering
statement, Zhai (2000) articulates the reflections of Reed (1985) when she points out that “Forces that directly affect our lives and decisions are shaped by persons and events far away from us in places we have never seen or visited” (p. 14). Indeed, these are all intertwined with agricultural production systems which directly affect food supplies and subsequently, national security. The gravity of this notion of national security intertwined with a safe, dependable food supply was reinforced with the passage of Public Law 107-188 (introduced and passed in response to the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001), the “Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002” (2002) by the United States Congress (United States Congress, One-Hundred Seventh Congress, Public Law 107-188). Moreover, Title III of this law, entitled, “Protecting Safety and Security of Food and Drug Supply”, specifically addresses the vulnerability of our nation’s food supply and the need to protect it from bioterrorists.

There have certainly been many important historical events around the world which have captured the attention of Americans, especially in the 20th century. One of the most globe-jolting was World War II. In the wake of this tragedy, at a Conference on International Cultural, Educational, and Scientific Exchanges which was held in Great Britain in 1946, the following lines were part of the opening statements:

At no time in history have we been more conscious of the need for close cultural and intellectual relations among nations. Any device to further and to improve such relationships helps to build a framework of international peace and understanding.

The conference proceedings go further to say that

The free interchange of cultural, scientific, and educational information is one of the most critical needs of the world today . . . . International understanding, fundamental to international good will, depends upon the extent to which cultural
materials of all nations are available to all other nations. Intelligent and informed world opinion depends upon the wide dissemination of educational materials” (Williams, 1947, p. xv).

Despite such noble (and necessary) efforts to build bridges of understanding between nations for the cause of peace since that time, there still unfortunately seems to be a seemingly unending stream of countless graphic reports from our news media of even more violence and other expressions of cultural clashes around the globe. On top of this are cyclical famines in many areas of the world due to drought and disease, coupled with food supplies being ravaged in vulnerable areas by natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes; and in some countries, political corruption and instability. However, the chain of events which led to the fall of Communism in the USSR and Eastern Europe in the early 1990's certainly was a pivotal event in the eyes of most citizens of the world in the twentieth century, and the words mentioned at the above-referenced Conference on International Cultural, Educational, and Scientific Exchanges in 1946 still ring strong and true in this early part of the twenty-first century. A great concern in these former Communist countries, for instance, is the establishment of a secure and reliable food production system in the midst of a shift from the collective farm system controlled by the state to that of private production under a free-market system.

There are a number of organizations and governmental agencies found across the globe which have come into existence over the last several years whose mission includes serving the people of these post-communist societies in their efforts in the areas of self-determination and self-sufficiency (with the ultimate goal of political and economic stability). Some of those based in the United States include Citizens Network for Foreign Affairs (CNFA), Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in
Overseas Cooperative Assistance (ACDI/VOCA), Rural Enterprises Adaptation Program International (REAP International), and the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation (USUF). A number of these types of groups tap the financial and knowledge resources of an independent federal government agency, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This agency, which operates in concert with the U.S. Secretary of State’s foreign policy, “works to support long-term and equitable economic growth and advancing U.S. foreign policy objectives by supporting: economic growth, agricultural and trade; global health; and democracy, conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance” (This is USAID, 2002, p. 1). It has its roots in the efforts of the Marshall Plan which had as its main goal the reconstruction of post-World War II Europe. In the educational arena, the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) (2002) was organized in 1984 “to provide a professional association to network agricultural educators and extension personnel who share the common goal of strengthening agricultural and extension education programs and institutions worldwide” (p. 1).

The afore-mentioned technologies in communications and travel, which have certainly affected the ability of nations to more easily expand trade, have also fueled new policies such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993 and increased competition between countries in other areas of the world such as the Caribbean and the Pacific Rim. Louisiana agricultural producers, for instance, anxiously await the inevitable official normalization of relations with Cuba, since there will certainly be winners and losers on both sides of the trading table. Zhai (2000) states that, “The number and scope of international interactions and interdependencies have
increased steadily in recent centuries. The societal, political, and economic environments are changing as the world moves toward becoming a global community” (p. 14).

Kauffman, et al (1992) reflected that, “During the last forty years we have moved from a world in which society, commerce, and education were defined within the context of nation-states to one in which they are increasingly perceived as part of a global community” (p. 1).

Again, more questions are being raised, such as why does the United States agricultural industry rely so heavily on foreign markets? Why have there been historical trade barriers? Why are there still countries which are unable to feed, properly clothe, and provide adequate shelter for themselves in spite of the wide availabilities of advanced technology? This directs us to more profound questions on a deeper human level such as: why is there inherent distrust between particular countries and civilizations? why and how do religion and culture affect attitudes/eating habits/clothing styles? why is freedom more restricted in some countries than others and how does this affect freedom of speech, trade policies, education, and agricultural production?

These questions seem to be perplexing to most people around the world, not excluding Americans. This certainly includes students found in classrooms and laboratories across the United States and its several territories. Martin (1989) agrees that most U.S. high school students in general, including those enrolled in agricultural education, have a less than adequate knowledge of the world and its food and fiber systems. He states further that

Students need a global perspective if they are to be functional and vital citizens of the world . . . . We need citizens who have a knowledge of world agriculture and its effect on trade, simple economics of world agriculture, geography, and the uses of products from around the world. For the economics of agriculture to work
in the world, all citizens need to have an understanding of the cultural differences and similarities of all those involved. Only then can we expect to strengthen communication (p. 4).

Martin and Keller (1989) and Westrom (1989) all recognize that because of the growing interdependency between countries, there is even more cause to expose agricultural education students to the opportunities afforded by the situation. Zhai (2000) stresses that “the necessity of advancing international competence for America’s students has become increasingly apparent as the international community moves toward more interdependence” (p. 1). Over the years, two agriculturally-related youth organizations have addressed these concerns in the forms of exchanges and work experiences - the National FFA Organization (formerly known as the Future Farmers of America) and the National 4-H Organization. In reference to the FFA, Harbstreit and Welton (1992) comment that,

International dependence on agricultural products and technical expertise, satellites, television, jet travel, worldwide employment opportunities, the [National FFA Organization’s] Work Experience Abroad Program, and the importance of international export markets have all served to create a better understanding of the globe beyond the boundaries of states and the nation (p. 11).

Martin (1989) complements this thinking with a very important statement - “Not everyone thinks like Americans think” (p. 4). This is a very important concept which we have found over the years to contain deep truth and has great implications for future human relations. United States Congressman Bob Schaffer, a Republican from Colorado, in his May 9, 2001 address to the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation and Congressional Ukrainian Caucus (Dobczanska, 2001), builds on this point when he stated that it is easy for Westerners to become frustrated with other countries’ seeming lack of reform, such as Ukraine. He explains that, “We would want Ukraine to learn now because the benefits
seem so obvious to us. But, we tend to underestimate the devastating impact communism has had on the psyche of Ukrainians” (p. 2).

There are several other researchers whose views complement those of Martin. Peuse and Swanson (1979) insist that it is essential that students be taught about the relationship of American agriculture with that of our shrinking world and how this affects our own agriculture. McCracken and Magisos (1989) concur with the notion of a shrinking world and go further to express that students of agriculture need to develop a willingness to compete and cooperate internationally, thus requiring a respect for political, social, and cultural differences among countries. They also feel that students who understand these relationships will be able to function better in the many roles that have an international dimension. They further insist that students need to appreciate the strengths and differences among nations and peoples and that unless they learn to appreciate these differences, there will be frustration in relating with peoples of other cultures.

Interestingly, though, one of the founding fathers of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, thought otherwise. Tyack (1967) quotes Jefferson: “. . . the consequences of foreign education are alarming to me as an American” (p. 85). Of course, one must remember the context under which this was written: our forefathers wished to educate new republicans and wanted to avoid contamination from Europe. Tyack further reports that the Georgia legislature went even further in passing a law in 1785 disbarring its residents from civic office for as many years as they had studied abroad (if sent overseas under the age of 16).
It is evident, though, that attitudes toward international experience have changed considerably over the years, particularly in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Speakman (1966) feels that without a doubt that international educational exchange has been wholeheartedly accepted in the United States. In what he refers to as a “peculiarly American combination,” international exchanges appeal to “two strands of American political philosophy - pragmatism and idealism” (p. 3). He explains that pragmatism promotes good cultural relations and promotes peace, thereby having a positive influence on business. Concurrently, idealism, through positive personal contact between cultures and institutions, will further political ends, thus bringing about international understanding and peace. Wilson (1993) reminds the reader that to the objectives of acquiring knowledge and developing self has been the added goal of promoting worldwide understanding. He also points to two major acts of legislation that were enacted in the twentieth century by the U. S. Congress: the Fulbright Program in 1946 and the Peace Corps in 1961, accepting cross-cultural education as part of U. S. foreign policy. Tuch (1988) quotes Senator William Fulbright as writing, “Perhaps the greatest power of educational exchange is the power to convert nations into peoples and to translate ideologies into human aspirations” (p. 31). In a statement before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on International Operations of the U. S. House of Representatives (1992), Fulbright further explained that

Against the background of the enormous destruction of the Second World War and the ominous new potential for destruction in nuclear weapons, it occurred to me that substantial exchanges of students and scholars between nations would help promote [a] new manner of thinking . . . . Relationships will be built on mutual advantage, not on superpower politics. [Thus] the needs of Americans to understand other nations and their languages have never been greater (p. 5).
It seems, then, that all of the afore-mentioned discussion is pointing toward the desired end of international stability and cross-cultural understanding. As Kohls (1981) insists, “There is no more noble calling in the last quarter of the twentieth century than to help the people of the world live together in peace and understanding, with a fully developed spirit of inquiry about other cultures and other ways” (p. 9). Providing a firm foundation within our present educational system, therefore, would seem to be a positive approach which could bear much fruit in the long term.

**Purpose of Study**

As previously mentioned, the National FFA Organization is an agriculturally-based youth organization in the United States which has been providing/facilitating international experiences for its members for a number of years. One of these programs is the International FFA School to School Linkage Program (SSLP) in which selected American schools with agricultural education/FFA programs are linked with specialized secondary agricultural schools/lyceums located in one of the countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU). The program’s main mission is for the American students and teachers to share ideas with their FSU counterparts about the initiation and maintenance of small-scale agricultural entrepreneurships based on the United States’ agricultural education Supervised Agricultural Experience Program (SAEP) model. Students and teachers are also exposed to (and preferably participate in) FFA leadership activities. Of course, this type of experience benefits not only the individuals from the FSU but also the Americans as they learn to increase their own skills in leadership development and personal growth. The relationship begins with initial contact between the schools via telephone facsimile/e-mail/surface mail/SSLP facilitators to begin exchange of basic
information about participants, the schools and their agricultural program, and the communities in which the schools are located. Next, one school visits the partner school with a delegation of six students and two adults for a period of three weeks. The other school then reciprocates for another three week period during the same school term with the same number of participants.

During the 1997-98 school term, six agricultural education students and two adults (myself and a local elementary school administrator) from Prairie High School located in Prairie, Louisiana (pseudonyms), participated in the SSLP as one of six school in the United States selected. Our school was linked with the Zolatoya Agricultural Lyceum in Zolatoya, Platnaya Region, Russia (pseudonyms). Upon examination of this study, it will be highly evident that the families of the participants were highly involved in the entire experience, from initial planning to fund-raising to hosting the FSU students to living with their own children upon their return, expending much effort and self-investment. However, even though this program has been well-received by all participants, Stutzman (2001), President of the World Link Company of Kalona, Iowa, whose organization facilitates this program on behalf of the National FFA Organization, indicates that there has never been any formal study done on the effects of this program on its American participants and their families. Thus, this qualitative study sought to investigate the long-term influence that this experience has had on the students who participated and their families. This was done, in collaboration with the participants, by identifying themes and significant features.
**Definition of Terms**

**Cooperative Extension Service** - Created by the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 when Congress addressed the need to teach the results of research produced by the agricultural experiment stations within the Land Grant University system. Land grant universities were created with the Morrill Act of 1862 followed by the Hatch Act of 1887 which provided funds for the development of agricultural experiment stations at the land grant universities (Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, 2002).

**4-H Clubs** - The 4-H/Youth program is a voluntary educational program [of the Cooperative Extension Service] that supplements formal school education. It provides real-life experiences and an opportunity for youth to plan their own learning, with parents and other adults to guide them and evaluate their accomplishments. Professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteer adults help reach both urban and rural youth. Educational delivery methods include clubs, short-term special interest programs, camps, and programs before, during, and after school . . . More than eighty countries around the world have similar programs and similar words for the four H’s of the 4-H clover: head, heart, hands, and health. All programs are helping young people gain skills needed to become responsible, productive members of society (Seevers, et.al., 1997, p. 78).

**National FFA Organization (formerly known as the Future Farmers of America)** - “The organization of, by, and for students enrolled in agricultural education programs.” It was established in 1928. “Chapters of the National FFA Organization shall be chartered only in such schools where recognized systematic instruction in agricultural education is offered under the provisions of federal vocational education legislation. Such chapters shall operate as an integral part of the instructional program of agricultural education . . .
To be eligible for active FFA membership in a chartered FFA chapter, a student must be enrolled in secondary agricultural education program. State associations may consider secondary agricultural education programs to be grades seven through twelve” (National FFA Organization Official Manual, 2002-2003, pp. 66-68).

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

From the earliest days of organized educational and cultural exchanges/tours such as the “European Grand Tour” of the 1700's taken by privileged young men to present-day programs such as Fulbright-sponsored programs, the actions of such countless groups and individuals have reflected the thoughts of the American author, Mark Twain, who proclaimed that “Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness, all foes to real understanding. Likewise, tolerance or broad wholesome charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime” (Gardner and Washburn, 1961, p. xix). To place a more modern spin and progression of these thoughts, during a hearing before the Subcommittee on International Operations of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate (2000), it was stated that, “The American people, however, understand that our country’s ability to lead, prosper, and protect our national security in the twenty-first century depends more than ever on international knowledge and understanding” (p. 46).

Most certainly, questions arise from governments and other potential sponsoring agencies as to the necessity and cost of such programs. Geoffrey Williams (1990) posed this same question when he insisted that there is a need to convince governments and other groups which supply funds of the worth of funding overseas study programs. He spoke of the constant challenge in justifying the value of cultural exchanges through students. He also insisted that “... there is only one absolutely unassailable comment you can make: study abroad can be justified on intrinsic grounds as increasing humankind’s sum total of furnished minds . . .” (p. 7). Williams adhered to the notion
that no society or academic system can survive without the infusion of new ideas from outside cultures, breathing new life into the institutions. He also reminded the reader that it is essential to remember that the impacts of academic and cultural exchanges are likely to be long term. They will affect social structures and social relationships, institutional arrangements and political processes and relations (between groups and between nations), value systems (including those of higher education itself) and the literature, arts and music of the societies involved (p. 7).

In rounding out his treatise, however, he also warned that negative results could also occur. If students return home feeling that they have not been treated well or made to feel unwelcome he said that there will be long-term costs.

Positive sentiments of the importance of international exchanges have been echoed at the brink of the twenty-first century by United State federal policymakers. In a hearing before the Subcommittee on International Operations of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (2000), it was stated that, “The American people, however, understand that our country’s ability to lead, prosper, and protect our national security in the twenty-first century depends more than ever on international knowledge and understanding” (p. 46). In a discussion paper released by the United States Department of Education entitled “Strengthening the U. S. Government’s Leadership in Promoting International Education,” (2000), former Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright was quoted as saying,

U. S. international leadership, competitiveness, and national security are increasingly dependent on international and cross-cultural awareness on the part of U. S. citizens. Our foreign policy goals are enhanced immeasurably by international education - both American scholarship abroad and international leaders who have studied in the U. S. and consequently better understand our culture and system of government (p. 2).

In answering the question as to why international education is important, the authors of the discussion paper go further to explain that our increasing engagement with other
nations necessitates a greater awareness of cultural diversity and a recognition of our shared values as well as differences. Expanding our horizons will certainly promote a deeper understanding of the cultural heritage and diversity that exists within our very own country. They continued their discussion by stating, “While direct contact between citizens is aided by new technologies, a sophisticated knowledge of other cultures and contexts is essential to the effective exchange of information, to promote democracy and security, achieve greater economic prosperity and increase mutual understanding” (p. 2).

Kraus and Volner (1966) possessed the same train of thought in the 1960's when they stated, “Today’s complex international community requires of its future leaders in business, economics, engineering and the natural sciences an awareness of global problems and opportunities” (p. 153).

One of the most challenging eras in the history of the United States, especially in the domain of foreign relations, was the 1960's when the country was being pulled deeper into the Viet Nam conflict, a situation which was further exacerbated by heightened tensions propagated by the Cold War with the Communist world. Private and governmental concerns were certainly very interested in the state of foreign relations and the future of peace and mutual understanding during this period. Gardner and Washburn (1961) quoted United States Senator J. W. Fulbright who said:

The interdependence of all the world’s peoples in the jet age is now greater, more complex, and more manifest than ever before and gives redoubled emphasis to the promise inherent in cross-fertilization of cultures, and multiplies opportunities for the advancement of human welfare in every corner of the earth. Unfounded prejudices can be softened and destroyed, fundamental education advanced, conditions of health and labor improved, material resources developed. All these possibilities flow from exchange of students, teachers, and technicians between countries of differing cultures and diverse stages of economic and scientific development (p. xix).
The theme of interdependence was echoed in the next decade by the U. S. Advisory Commission on International Educational and Cultural Affairs (1975). In their report which was the culmination of two years of investigation, it was emphatically brought out that “Interdependence is the reality; worldwide problems the prospect; and worldwide cooperation the only solution” (p. v). The report also amplified the argument that this recognition has been accompanied by an increased awareness of the role that educational and cultural exchanges “can and must play in producing the cooperation required to solve the problems of an interdependent world” (p. 5). This commission was obviously preoccupied with the notion of building enduring peace in the world which could “only be built on a base of mutual understanding between peoples, and that exchange of persons is one of the most effective ways that has ever been found for creating such a base” (p. 1). In another quote (Institute of International Education, 2002), Fulbright stressed that educational exchanges “can turn nations into people” and can have a humanizing effect. “Man’s capacity for decent behavior seems to vary directly with his perception of others as individual humans with human motives and feelings, whereas his capacity for barbarism seems related to his perception of an adversary in abstract terms, as the embodiment . . . of some evil design or ideology” (p. 2). Gardner and Washburn (1961) also quoted Juan T. Trippe, former President of Pan American Airways, who concurred with Fulbright and sees an important role for students to play. He insisted that the future of the world greatly depends upon the knowledge and understanding by the peoples of all countries of the customs, language, ideals and aspiration of other countries. “Through the ages students have pioneered the way for others to follow, removing the barriers of doubt, suspicion and fear which are the root of international understanding and
a constant threat to peace” (p. xiii). As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this study, leaders in the agricultural and educational fields agreed that, because of the growing interdependency of countries throughout the world, there is a great need for American students to advance in their international competence. The National Council for Agricultural Education (1992) took a firm stance when it stressed that there is a deep need for developing an awareness of the global nature of the agricultural industry, becoming one of the major issues of our time. An even stronger message to the agricultural education community and the whole nation was relayed when the council said,

It has become increasingly apparent that if a person is to be considered educated in agriculture, he/she must be cognizant of the inter-relationships of various agricultural systems and the governments, cultures and societies in which they function . . . . Development and enhancement of one’s agricultural system is unavoidable interwoven with those of other nations. If these developments and inter-relationships are to be successful, it is critical that students of agriculture and agricultural educators become knowledgeable about systems of agriculture in cultures and societies around the world (p. 1).

It is quite evident, then, that the agricultural education systems that are presently in place in the United States must rise and respond to this challenge. As presented in Chapter 1 of this study, there are two agriculturally-based educational youth organizations in the United States which have been engaging in such activities for a number of years - The National FFA Organization and the National 4-H Organization. A description of the main international exchange activities of these organizations follows:

**FFA**

As early as 1942, correspondence between the FFA and other groups from foreign countries began. Of special note was communication with China in 1958, Denmark in 1969, and West Germany in 1960. In 1968, the first International Agricultural Exchange
Association (IAEA) Annual Meeting took place. Other important highlights in the FFA’s international experience history include: Work Experience Abroad (WEA), initiated in 1969; National FFA Officer team tours of Japan, initiated in 1982; Proficiency Award Travel Seminars, conducted from 1978-96; Dave Dietz Far East Tour (1978); Trainees Tour in 1969 to Australia/New Zealand, Central Europe, Northern Europe, Pacific and South America (National FFA Organization Records, 1916-2000; 2001). In 1948, FFA members participated in the FFA’s first International Exchange Program with the Young Farmers Club of Great Britain. By 1996, FFA would send more than 350 students to more than twenty-five countries annually (FFA Global Programs . . . at a Glance, 2001, pp. 1-3).

It is evident, then, that cultural exchanges have long been an important component of FFA International Programs. As with any educational organization, such programs naturally evolve and shift focus over time. Several of the afore-mentioned programs have been phased out and some have been renamed/refocused. In 1994, the National FFA Board of Directors decided to broaden its view of the concept of international experience for its membership. This now also includes experiences ranging from individuals studying about another culture to actual immersion activities. These are also reflected in several other newer programs that have been added over the last several years. Current programs available through the FFA now include: Long - term (six weeks to twelve months): World Experience in Agriculture (WEA) - Australia, New Zealand, Europe, “Around the World,” United States Department of Agriculture/Foreign Agricultural Service International Internship. Short - term (twelve days to six months): Earth Tour in Europe, Australian Homestay, Adventure New Zealand, Agriculture Ambassadors to the

There are several other short-term programs conducted under the auspices of the National FFA Organization since 1993, coordinated by the World Link Company of Kalona, Iowa, and partially funded by grants from the Freedom Support Act within the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (formerly known as the United States Information Agency) under the United States Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). They include the Russian Leadership Exchange (1993-95), Baltic Samantha Smith Exchange (1993, 1995), Stavropol Entrepreneurship Exchange (1995), Newly-Independent States (NIS) Academic Study Program (1996 - 97), and NIS Youth Leaders at National FFA Convention (1996). Of a longer-term nature, since 1998, World Link has obtained grant funding through the United States Department of State for the Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX). In this program, high school students from the FSU live and attend school in the United States for one school term and actively participate in FFA programs (Stutzman, 2001).

The final component of international agricultural experience programs conducted under the auspices of the National FFA Organization to be discussed is the School to School Linkage Program with countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU). This program, initiated in 1996 and also coordinated by the World Link Company, is partially funded by a grant through the Freedom Support Act within the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs under the United States Department of State. It brings together selected
FFA Chapters from schools across the United States and agricultural schools found in countries of the FSU in a formal linkage. The main philosophy behind the program is for the American counterparts to share information with their partner schools in the area of establishing small-scale agricultural entrepreneurships based on the United States Agricultural Education/FFA Supervised Agricultural Experience Program (SAEP) model. American students also serve as mentors to their student linkage partners. Americans host the international delegation for a period of three weeks in their homes and schools and then make a reciprocal visit. This program adheres to the philosophy of Yahya and Moore (1985) who support the notion that “. . . implementation of the Supervised Occupational (now referred to as ‘Agricultural’) Experience Program [into international experience] would be a step in the right direction” (p. 23). The experience of the team from Prairie High School from Prairie, Louisiana during the 1997-98 school term and the effects on their families will be the main focus of this study.

4-H

In the years following World War II, discussion ensued among 4-H members, leaders, and staff at all levels concerning the issues of world peace and improved international relations. Thus, in 1948, the National 4-H Organization instituted the International Farm Youth Exchange Program (IFYE) where farm youth from England and Germany lived with 4-H and FFA families in the United States. This program was later expanded to include relief activities in the countries of Western Europe and a clearinghouse for youth exchange information (Thompson, 1985). The name was eventually changed to “International 4-H Youth Exchange” and expanded to include non-farm families. Due to the success and popularity of IFYE, a group exchange called “IFYE
Ambassadors” was added, a short-term exchange (four to five weeks) for youth who were from fourteen to nineteen years old (Etling, 1994). Another component of international cooperation was added in 1961 with the initiation of the 4-H Peace Corps and International Youth Development Project (YDP) projects. These arrangements, which were joint projects with the Peace Corps, sent volunteers to several countries in Central and South America and Malaysia on a longer-term basis (18 months) until 1971. Other YDP projects were begun in Botswana in 1967 (and still continue today) with later undertakings in different countries of Central and South America as well as the Philippines, Jamaica, and Thailand. Since 1972, the LABO International Exchange Foundation in Japan has been coordinating one-month exchanges between Japanese and American 4-H club members. During the 1950's, the American Rural Youth Program (PIJR) was developed by the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences (IICA) of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the American International Association for Economic and Social Development (AIA). In 1958, responsibilities were transferred to the National 4-H Club Foundation of America (now known as the National 4-H Council). In 1975, PIJR was phased out. From 1976 - 1980, the Young Agricultural Specialists Exchange Program (YASEP) was conducted with the Soviet Union. 4-H volunteers and professionals also presently have the opportunity to participate in International Travel Seminars for two to three - week stays to observe youth development programs and share information about the 4-H model found in the United States (Thompson 1985, pp.1-4).

A global dimension has also been added to local 4-H programs in the United States. Besides taking part in international travel or hosting students from a distant land
at their homes, members also have the opportunity to participate in international study projects at home. In addition, all leadership training done at the National 4-H Center contains components of cross-cultural training and discussion of global topics (Thompson, 1985, p. 4).

**Other Efforts**

There have been concerted efforts from groups through the years other than agriculturally-based youth organizations to stress the need for international experience and understanding. Burn (1980) stated that in April of 1978, an Executive Order was issued by the White House which authorized the establishment of the President’s Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies. It initially made no reference to international exchanges; however, at the Commission’s first meeting, such exchanges were given high priority because of their importance to development of foreign language skills and international studies. The Commission recommended exchanges at all levels of education (except elementary schools), including high schools for both students and staff. The Commission stressed that Exchanges also provide new generations of U.S. specialists with opportunities for the on-the-ground training and experience, and strengthen the interest and competence of our college and high school teachers and students in foreign languages and international topics. For students, whatever their field of interest, carefully planned experience abroad [programs] can have a lifelong impact on values and on concern for and understanding of other cultures (p. 2).

Dragonas (1984) also reviewed the Commission’s report. Included in the rationale for International Exchange Programs was the premise that adolescence is an ideal time for such exchanges to take place, because it is during these formative years that they are most impressionable. They also provide a means of developing cultural and
global understanding. In addition, what seems to be an important leap from the original intent of the Commission was the following:

The primary objective of study-abroad programs has been to increase the language competence of program participants. Of equal importance, however, is the goal of cross-cultural understanding, the discovery of otherness and self, and the acquisition of new interpersonal relationships as one becomes integrated into another culture . . . . Daily interaction creates a greater awareness of similarities and differences between cultures, which leads to a better understanding of the lifestyles and values that influence everyday behavior (pp. 5-6).

**Benefits of International Experiences**

Within the minds of educators in the classroom and those in administrative positions, of course, is a firm sense of the measurable benefits of such international experiences for students. Major themes which arose from the review of literature include: Intellectual Development/Career Guidance Choices, Developing an International Perspective, Changes in Perception of Host Country, and Personal Development.

**Intellectual Development/Career Guidance Choices**

Kauffman et. al. (1992) reported that many students who study abroad/take part in international experiences receive a good dose of realism about the nature of their chosen fields. This sometimes causes them to narrow their choices and sometimes it opens their eyes to a world of new possibilities. Other benefits include coming to value systematic thinking, becoming familiar with different schools of thought, development of one’s own point of view, and acquiring knowledge from different disciplines and from independent work. In addition, they noted that such experiences influenced students’ future directions in life and vocation. Zhai (2000) cited the research of Good and Campbell (1997) which indicated that the long-term impacts of such programs enhanced the employability of the participants, with many potential employers looking with favor at applicants with
international work study/experience. Zhai (2000) continued this train of thought by pointing out that students who came back from study abroad programs gained valuable international work experience and prestige that would help them as they enter the future professions. Zhai (2000) also referred to Miller (1993) whose research revealed that these programs provided the necessary learning tools in today’s world and was on the cutting edge of expanding career possibilities.

**Developing an International Perspective**

Kauffman, et. al. (1992) quoted a study by Goodwin and Nacht (1988) which addressed the issue of how an educational experience abroad endows students with an increased international perspective:

> The defenders of this goal speak especially of a personal metamorphosis in those who partake - a gestalt change that varies with the individual, cannot be predicted in detail, but is enormously important as an outcome. Students in this way become, it is said, more mature, sophisticated, hungry for knowledge, culturally aware, and sensitive. They learn by questioning their prejudices and all national stereotypes. They ask meaning of national culture. Their horizons are extended and they gain new perspectives (pp. 56-57).

Kauffman and his coauthors also referred to the work of Peter Adler (1975), a social psychologist who has done much work in culture learning. Specifically stated, “... the journey abroad begins as a journey into another culture but ultimately becomes a journey of enhanced awareness and understanding of oneself” (p. 68). This also included new ways of looking at one’s own culture. Kauffman, et al (1992) went a step further in the affective realm when they stated that participants have the ability to see the world from the perspective of another culture and to develop empathy.
Changes in Perception of Host Country

One of the most frequently promoted objectives of study abroad/international experience programs is for the student to develop more positive attitudes toward other cultures. Kauffman, et. al. (1992) restated the assumption that “if individuals are simply given the opportunity to interact, mutual understanding and positive attitudes will ensue” (p. 58). They also pointed to literature in social psychology by Allport (1954), Amir (1969), Brislin (1981) and Gudykunst (1979) which suggests that cross-cultural contact leads to favorable attitude changes only if certain conditions are met. This includes interaction of the other group in a supportive environment and if there is an opportunity to go beyond superficial action. Sell (1983) went further to say that other important conditions include preexisting attitude, duration of stay, and the degree to which the student is immersed in the host culture. Kauffman, et al (1992) stated that research also suggests that where students study may contribute to their attitudes, negative or positive, about their host countries, though the results are inconclusive and even somewhat conflicting. In addition, they submitted that a first cross-cultural experience is more likely to produce growth in the personal area than an increase in in-depth cultural and global understanding. More specifically, “During a first trip abroad, a student primarily matures, expands horizons, learns to be more independent and self-reliant, and acquires survival skills for coping with new environments. In subsequent intercultural experiences, the student can concentrate on building cultural and global understanding” (pp. 75-76).
**Personal Development**

A very important component of international experience is, of course, personal development. I totally agree with Kauffman, et al (1992) when they insisted that “When students grow intellectually and gain a new understanding of the world, they discover that they are changed people. They begin to relate differently to others and to think about themselves and their futures in new ways” (p. 92). Of course, different individuals develop at different rates and degrees from their colleagues. They pointed to research which finds that those who are more mature at the outset of the experience tend to exhibit greater change in their understanding and appreciation of the values of the other culture, whereas those who are less mature reported lesser changes. Kauffman et al (1992) state that the majority of studies which utilized self-reporting questionnaires and interviews revealed significant changes in several intrapersonal dimensions such as a positive change in self-concept, an enhanced self-confidence and self-esteem, a higher level of self-reliance, and an increase in independence or autonomy. In the area of interpersonal development, they also reported that study abroad provides a “fertile environment” for the furtherance of integration of the self with others since it introduces students to different cultures and provides an opportunity for them to open their minds to people who have different ideas and values. Further, “In a more subtle way the study abroad experience releases the students from their present peer group and frees them to recompense their criteria for their friendships. It can free them to ask new questions, try new interests, and form new conceptions of life” (p. 106). With regard to value development, studies conducted by Smith (1971), Billigmeier and Foreman (1975), Abrams (1979), Pfnister (1979), and Pyle (1981) have associated study abroad with
positive changes in values. Carlson et al. (1990) have found in their research that in the area of life direction/vocational development, students with study abroad experience tended to be more open with regard to career choice than those who had no experience.

**The Value of Individuals with International Experience**

It should be quite evident and logical to the reader, especially one involved in education, that international experiences should not be an end in themselves; rather, “Descriptions of internationally experienced persons in schools could provide models showing how international experience can be connected to and utilized in classrooms . . . Internationally experienced persons usually come to accept differences among peoples and cultures and recognize multiple perspectives and interpretations” (Wilson 1993, p. xii). In a discussion paper released by the U. S. Department of Education entitled, “Strengthening the U. S. Government’s Leadership in Promoting International Education,” (2000), former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright supported this point when she responded to the release of President Clinton’s Executive Memorandum on U. S. International Education Policy by saying,

> U.S. international leadership, competitiveness, and national security are increasingly dependent on international and cross-cultural awareness on the part of U. S. citizens. Our foreign policy goals are enhanced immeasurably by international education - both American scholarship abroad and international leaders who have studied in the U. S. and consequently better understand our culture and system of government (p. 1).

The paper went further to explain that “a sophisticated knowledge of other cultures and contexts is essential to the effective exchange of information, to promote democracy and security, achieve greater economic prosperity and increase mutual understanding” (p. 2).

The appeal for global education in schools was made by Tye and Tye (1992) who explained that global education involves:
1) the study of problems and issues which cut across national boundaries, and the interconnectedness of cultural, environmental, economic, political, and technological systems, and 2) the cultivation of cross-cultural understanding, which includes development of the skill of “perspective taking” - that is, being able to see life from someone else’s point of view. Global perspectives are important at every grade level, in every curricular subject area, and for all children and adults (p. 6).

Wilson (1993) felt strongly that the contribution of internationally experienced teachers as well as students can and should be set in a multicultural/international context. Barber (1992) took it a step further by deeming such classrooms as opportunities for overcoming prejudice. Bennett (1990), in developing her model for multicultural education, maintained certain core values within a responsibility to a world-wide community, a respect for cultural diversity and human dignity, and respectfulness for fundamental human rights. Wilson (1993) also suggested that schools can have a role in “encouraging reflective thinking . . . about international experience and about cross-cultural interpersonal relationships” (pp. 32-33).

It is evident, then, that many educational programs have adopted the philosophy as expressed in the Commission’s report, such as those promoted by FFA and 4-H. As well, there are several government-based and professional organizations whose main missions are to increase awareness of international experience through education, research, and direct assistance. Harbstreit and Welton (1992) reported that the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) was established in 1984 to provide a professional association and network of agricultural educators and extension personnel concerned with the advancement of agricultural education programs in developing countries. McBreen (1989) described one of AIAEE’s official objectives as tying closely with the concept of student involvement when it states
To encourage the inclusion of and promote research related to an international
curriculum focus in agricultural and extension education programs in all settings
and at all levels including elementary, secondary, post-secondary, and
undergraduate and graduate university programs; 4-H and FFA activities; and
other outreach activities (p. 22).

Inevitably, such international experiences have varying degrees of influence on
the career decisions of students. McCracken and Magisos (1989) agreed that in the
course of learning about the different aspects of international agriculture, they are
afforded many opportunities to learn about the worldwide range of jobs in international
development, trade, research and development, education, and technical assistance.

It is evident, then, that a number of professionals agree that international
experiences, particularly those associated with high school-aged students who have an
interest in agriculture, are definitely worthy of consideration. The literature points to the
fact that such experiences can indeed have a positive effect on the development of youth
in the areas of leadership, personal growth, and career awareness/preparation.
CHAPTER 3: METHOD OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this multiple-case study was to investigate and document the effects that an international agriculture experience program had on the lives of two of the six Prairie High School, Louisiana graduates and their immediate families who participated in the International FFA School to School Linkage Program (SSLP) during the 1997-98 school term. In order to produce valid data, I employed the triangulation process, utilizing appropriate techniques of 1) observation (involving thick description), 2) interviews, and 3) obtaining and analyzing pertinent archival information. Data analysis was conducted as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1985): 1) unitizing, 2) categorizing, 3) filling in patterns, and 4) member checks. Of high priority to me was the selection of high-quality interviewing methodologies and the organization of appropriately prepared questions. Several references were consulted, including resources from Michael Quinn Patton (1990), David Silverman (2000), Bogdan and Bicklen (1992), and Richard A. Krueger (1998). Of these resources, I found Patton’s (1990) guidance to be of most benefit to me in formulating the interview questions, while Krueger (1998) was the most helpful in organizing the focus group process employed in preliminary research with the six student participants in 2001. Another issue of high priority was the development of a conceptual framework with which to guide this study. Dyer, Haase-Wittler and Washburn (2003) voice their concerns that the quality of research in agricultural education has often been questioned, being “criticized as being without focus . . . “ p. 61). Newcomb (1990) feels that agricultural education research needs to become more focused and coordinated and with more vision. Thus, Dyer, Haase-Wittler and
Washburn (2003) refer to Crunkilton (1988) who “suggested that a framework be developed to show researchers where they have been, and where they can and should go” (pp. 61-62).

Warmbrod (1986) defines a theoretical/conceptual framework as “a systematic ordering of ideas about the phenomena being investigated . . .” (p. 2). Camp (2001) refers to Creswell (1994) in “describing the framework of a study as dependent on the researcher’s worldview and culminating in a selection of either the qualitative or the quantitative paradigm . . .” (p. 11). Thus, this chapter will cover the overview for the steps involved in the development of a conceptual framework for this study, which includes the following points: the rationale for the case study approach, major features of the study (major research design), and the issues of credibility and ethics involved with this type of research.

**Rationale for the Case Study Approach**

In the search for appropriate research methodology (e.g., experiment, survey, archival analysis, history, or case study) to delve into the lives of individuals, Yin (1994) explains that in order to choose the appropriate strategy, three conditions must be considered: “(a) the type of research question posed, (b) the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioral events, and (c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events.” (p. 4). He presents the above-mentioned methodologies in the Table 1 which assists the researcher in this decision-making process (p. 6). In examining this table, Yin explains that if the research question is “what,” this may take the researcher in two different directions. Since some types of “what” questions are exploratory, any of the five research designs could conceivably be utilized.
Table 1
The Effects of the 1997-98 International FFA School to School Linkage Program on Selected Prairie High School Participants and Their Families - Relevant Situations for Different Research Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Form of research question</th>
<th>Requires control over behavioral events?</th>
<th>Focuses on contemporary events?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>How, why</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Who, what, where, how many, how much</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival analysis</td>
<td>Who, what, where, how many, how much</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>How, why</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>How, why</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If this “what” question investigates “how many” or “how much,” surveys or archival strategies would be the preferred method. Likewise, the “who” and “where” questions could also be answered by surveys and archival analysis. Case studies, histories, and experiments are the preferred methods in answering the “how” and “why” questions since they “deal with operational links needing to be traced over time rather than mere frequencies or incidence” (p. 6). He goes further to explain that the case study is the preferred method in examining contemporary events but when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated. Another important feature of the case study, he stresses, is that it depends on many of the same techniques as a history, but that there are two more sources of evidence that are not normally found in the historian’s repertoire: direct observation and systematic interviewing. Although he does concede that there is some degree of overlap in these two techniques, “the case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations.”
[commonly referred to as “triangulation”] – beyond what might be available in the conventional historical study” (p. 8). He deepens the discussion by explaining that “the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena, [allowing] an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (p. 3). Stake (1995) supports this by stating that “a case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case [and] is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). Lincoln and Guba (1985) quote Denny (1978) who refers to a case study as an “intensive or complete examination of a facet, an issue, or perhaps the events of a geographic setting over time” (p. 360). Piantanida and Garman (1999), in speaking of qualitative studies in general (case studies included), “aim to generate deeper understandings and insights into complex . . . phenomena as they occur within particular contexts” (pp. 131-132). Yin (1994) brings up the traditional notions/prejudices held by some researchers of the quantitative bent against case studies, citing the concern of lack of rigor or that they provide scant basis for generalization to the greater population. He counters this argument with the fact that case studies “do not represent a ‘sample’ and the investigator’s goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)” (p. 10). Case study methods are used, he insists, where the researcher makes a deliberate effort to cover contextual conditions with the belief that the information that was found would be highly important to the phenomenon being studied. Camp (2001) supports this when he explains that theory guides quantitative research while theory emerges from qualitative research. Marriam (1998) adds that in qualitative research, hypotheses arise
simultaneously with data collection and analysis rather than being stated prior to data collection as done in quantitative research. To round off this discussion, Yin (1994) feels that case studies indeed have their rightful place in evaluation research since they have the ability to “explain the causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies” (p. 15).

Carson et. al. (1990) concede that even in their own well-established social science research there are at times conflicting understandings of how to define and describe certain traits and behaviors of human subjects. One reason is that certain labels or terms of identification are not always understood and perceived uniformly. Another issue which compounds this challenge is what type of instrument should be used in assessing change in individuals who have undergone particular life experiences such as international experiences. The three most commonly used are: 1) standardized instruments, 2) specifically designed instruments, and 3) self-report or interview-type questionnaires. Kauffman and his cohorts report that more indications of positive impact from international experiences are reported from the self-report/questionnaires/interview approach than from the specially-designed instruments and standardized measures. Why the disparities? Bereiter (1963), Feldman and Newcomb (1969), Treanor (1970), and Feldman (1972) insist that attitude scales can be unreliable because of the variabilities within each respondent such as moods or states of mind and difficulties in scoring. Pfnister (1979) and Koester (1985) even report that there is a lack of uniformity and basis for comparison between self-reporting studies due to differences of interpretation of certain concepts among between subjects. Despite these challenges, Ellison and Simon (1973) insist that this should not be cause for devaluing such studies entirely. Instead,
they saw these problems as reason to substantiate such studies with other methods such as visits to homes, participant observation, and personal interviews. In other words, research of a qualitative nature would be in proper order.

Wilson (1993) also considers qualitative-type research to be more appropriate for her work in exploring the lives of individuals who have taken part in international experiences. She explains, “Inquiry is the never-ending and uncertain process of interpreting the interpretations of others” (p. xii).

Therefore, the decision as to what is the preferred research methodology is ultimately based on defining the research question itself. What is the study about: how, why, who, what, where, how many, how much? Yin (1994) stresses that “the form of the question provides an important clue regarding the appropriate research strategy to be used,” (p. 8) although he does concede that there are large areas of overlap in research strategies. It is obvious, then, that a decision must be made that is the most appropriate for the situation. In examination of my stated research question at the beginning of this chapter, “. . . to investigate and document the effects that an international agriculture experience program has had on the lives of two of the six Prairie High School, Louisiana graduates and their immediate families who participated in the International FFA School to School Linkage Program (SSLP) during the 1997-98 school term,” it is clear that the type of question being asked is “how” with no control over behavioral events and with a focus on contemporary events. In studying the criteria as discussed in these pages, I feel that the case study was the most appropriate method to employ for this situation of interest. The following section will explain the research components in more detail.
Major Features of the Study

The major features of this study (research design) were comprised of 1) a description of the cases, 2) procedures for data collection, and 3) data analysis.

Description of the Cases

This study involved interviewing and collecting data on two selected families during the Fall of 2003 and Spring of 2004. They are located in two communities situated in south Louisiana. Three components in this area that Yin (1994) articulates provide clarity for describing the cases chosen:

1. a study’s question
2. its propositions, if any,
3. its units of analysis (p. 20)

A Study’s Question: Yin (1994) stresses that the initial task in stating the study’s question is to precisely clarify the nature of the study questions. Along this line of thought, Patton (2002) states that, “Whatever term or phrase is used, case studies depend on clearly defining the object of study, that is, the case” (p. 298). Wolcott (2001) reminds the researcher to “have your purpose well in mind when you can draft a critical, clear, and concise sentence . . . “ (p. 17). Piantanida and Garman (1999) add a deeper dimension to the thought process of formulating the study question by asking the question, “What has brought the researcher to the study” (p. 96)? In addition, to provide greater clarity in formulating a conceptual framework for the study, they insist that the researcher must make connections between his/her persons of interest and the interests of the broader community. As stated in Chapter 1 of this study, I was deeply involved in the SSLP as was a host of other individuals who expended much effort and self-investment. Therefore, the essential question of this research study is, “How have the lives of two
Prairie High School, Louisiana graduates and their immediate families been affected by their participation in the 1997-98 International FFA School to School Linkage Program?” Since there is a clear indication that the question asks, “how,” conducting a case study is an appropriate avenue for investigation.

Propositions: Yin (1994) reminds the researcher that “how” questions help one to focus in on what one is really interested in. In fact, articulating the proposition “also begins to tell you where to look for relevant evidence” (p. 21). Hence, in light of the frequent references in Chapter 2 of this proposal to the overall positive aspects of international educational youth exchanges, it then follows that an underlying intent of this study is to investigate whether these students from Prairie High School and their families who took part in this type of experience had similar positive effects on their own lives.

Units of Analysis: Six students were selected in the fall of 1997 through an application process and were ultimately selected by me. The group consisted of four females and two males. All were juniors and seniors in high school at the time of this experience and were members of the Prairie High School FFA Chapter. All were active members of the chapter, being involved in a variety of interest areas, including serving as chapter officers. Students were selected on the basis of their leadership abilities and the quality of their own Supervised Agricultural Experience Programs (SAEP’s), which involved entrepreneurial/placement activities.

Yin (1994) states that, “As a general guide, the definition of the unit of analysis (and therefore of the case) is related to the way the initial research questions have been defined” (p. 22). As evidenced by the study question as stated, I investigated and documented the effects that an international agriculture experience program had on the
lives of two of the six Prairie High School, Louisiana graduates and their immediate families who participated in the International FFA School to School Linkage Program (SSLP) during the 1997-98 school term.”

There are several reasons why I chose to conduct case studies on only two of the six. First and foremost are the practicality and time limitations that a dissertation-type project imposes. As Patton (2002) explains, “There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p. 244). He adds that “qualitative sampling designs specify minimum samples based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study and stakeholder interests” (p. 246). The next question, then, is how the choices are made as to which families will be chosen, which leads into the discussion of purposeful sampling. Such sampling focuses on choosing information-rich cases which will hopefully yield answers to the questions under study. Patton outlines a number of examples of purposeful sampling, ranging from extreme or deviant case sampling (unusual or special such as outstanding successes of notable failures) (pp. 230-231), intensity sampling (intense manifestation of phenomenon) (p. 234), and homogeneous samples (describing small sub-groups in detail) (p. 235). However, I chose his examples of convenience sampling (what is most convenient) (p. 241) and maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling which “aims at capturing and describing the central themes that cut across a great deal of variation” (pp. 234-235).

In my own research situation, there are several reasons why I chose these particular two families. First was the issue of availability. Of the six families who were
involved in the international experience, two of them are no longer available. This is due to a divorce and split family situation where most of them no longer live in the area. The other situation deals with one of the students who now lives out of state to attend school, thus is inaccessible. Of the remaining four who are still intact and live in the area, two piqued my interest, which is where the issue of maximum variation comes into play. The following paragraphs describe each unit.

The Boudreaux family is an intact family (husband and wife live together) with four sons living at home with their parents in 1997-98, with three of them still living with them. Their son/brother, Al, who was part of the SSLP, also reported in his individual interview that I conducted in 2001 that he had an overall very positive experience with his Russian counterpart in the six weeks that they were together in 1998, both as a host in the United States and a guest in Russia. He still lives at home and commutes to a nearby university. They have, since the 1997-98 experience, also hosted a Ukrainian student during the 2000-2001 school term through the Future Leaders Exchange Program (involving the National FFA Organization and facilitated through the World Link Company). This Ukrainian student now attends the same university as Al and visits the family fairly frequently.

The Landry family has several differences from the Boudreaux family. First, the parents in this family are divorced and had been separated even prior to the 1997-98 SSLP experience. The student participant, Jill, lived with her mother in 1997-98. She has two older brothers, both of whom have not lived with their parents for a number of years prior to 1997-98 and have their own families. Jill’s father, although living in another part of the state and now re-married, still played an active part in his daughter’s
life (and still does) and assisted with the planning and fund-raising for the SSLP experience to the best of his ability. During her individual interview that I conducted with her in 2001, although she reported an overall very positive experience with SSLP, she did, as opposed to Al, experience some challenges with her Russian counterpart during her hosting experience in the United States as well as during the reciprocal exchange in Russia. Jill’s mother still resides in the same community while Jill is a graduate student at a state university. Thus, Jill and her two parents are easily accessible.

**Data Collection**

Yin (1994) outlines three important principles of data collection to which I plan on adhering:

1. **Use Multiple Sources of Evidence** (p. 90): As previously mentioned, in order to produce valid data and address potential challenges with construct validity (establishing correct procedures of operation), I employed the triangulation process, utilizing appropriate techniques of 1) observation (involving thick description), 2) interviews using appropriately prepared questions, and 3) obtaining and analyzing pertinent archival information. Yin also points out that “the most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of converging lines of inquiry” (p. 92) which is achieved by the triangulation process. Figure 1 illustrates this concept.

2. **Create a Case Study Database**: This area includes case study notes (handwritten, typed, and audiotapes), case study documents (organized in an annotated bibliography), and narratives of interviews.
CONVERGENCE OF MULTIPLE SOURCES OF EVIDENCE (single study)

Archival records

Documents

Open-ended interviews

Observations (direct and participant)

Focused interviews

Structured interviews and surveys

FACT

Source: Yin (1994, p. 93)

Figure 1
Convergence of Multiple Sources of Evidence (single study)
3. **Maintain a Chain of Evidence:** This principle increases the reliability of the information obtained and will allow an external observer of the case study to “be able to trace the steps in either direction (from conclusions back to initial research questions or from questions to conclusions)” (p. 98).

Camp (2001) stresses that:

As a minimum, for a qualitative study to have an adequate theoretical framework, the basic assumptions of the researcher must be elucidated to provide an intellectual context for the research. If the study will begin with specific research questions, a study-specific theoretical framework should provide the rationale by which the research questions were derived... (p. 14).

Thus, as indicated by this study’s main study question as well as noting the content and context of the standardized open-ended questions found in Appendices A and B used to guide the interviews of the informants, they are all a reflection of the major points of the information found in the review of literature and the content of the interview responses relative to the effects of international experiences of students, namely: 1) Intellectual Development/Career Choices, 2) Developing an International Perspective, 3) Changes in Perception of Host Country/International Representatives, 4) Personal/Family Development, and 5) Heightened Sense of Community.

The next step was to organize my case study field notes. Silverman (2000) quotes Spradley (1979) who suggests that four separate sheets of notes be taken:

- **(field session)**
  
1. short notes made at the time
2. expanded notes made as soon as possible after each field session
3. a fieldwork journal to record problems and ideas that arise during each stage of fieldwork [and] (pp. 141-142)
4. as discussed by Kirk and Miller (1986), a provisional running record of analysis and interpretations (p. 53)
Miles and Huberman (1984) offer guidance in more detailed note-taking, (to which I adhered) suggesting that contact summary sheets accompanied with the following questions be utilized:

- What people, events or situations were involved?
- What were the main themes or issues in the contact?
- Which research questions did the contact bear most centrally on?
- What new hypotheses, speculations or guesses about the field situations were suggested by the contact?
- Where should the fieldworker place most energy during the next contact, and what sorts of information should be sought? (p. 50)

**Data Analysis**

My next task was to analyze the data that I accumulated from the observations, interviews, and pertinent archival information. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) define data analysis as,

. . . the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others. [It] involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others (p. 157).

Therefore, my plan was to adhere to the above-mentioned steps: organizing my data, breaking it down into manageable units, synthesizing it, looking for the emerging patterns, discovering the most important points and what is to be learned, and deciding what will be told to others of the findings. This was executed by developing a list of coding categories and to mechanically sort them. Prior to the analysis, copies of the interview transcripts were given to the informants for cross-checking.
Credibility and Ethics

From 1979 – 2000, I served in the capacity of an agriscience educator at Prairie High School located in a south Louisiana parish, including having taught all of the student informants in the study. During this tenure, much of our school-based activities were also integrated into numerous grassroots community development activities. My normal teaching activities also involved extensive travel within the state, nation, and overseas. Also, three support groups were vital to the success of my program: Prairie High School Agriscience Department Advisory Council, Prairie FFA Mothers Club, and Prairie FFA Alumni. Through these interactions, I worked closely with very willing key community leaders and parents who assisted me in the evolution of my program. Members of these same groups also provided guidance and assistance in hosting and educating several other international agriculture representatives (students and adult professionals) over several years prior to 1997 as well as planning the SSLP experience. These people also included the families of the students who participated in the SSLP. Thus, a high degree of trust and credibility was necessarily developed through these relationships. I feel that the trust and credibility that I developed with these selected families spilled over into the proper execution of this study.

Concerning the issue of ethics in research dealing with human subjects, I concurred with Bogdan and Bicklen (1998) in the importance of being mindful in following proper guidelines which ensure that there is informed consent and protecting the subjects from harm. (In this case, I was granted approval through the Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board.) Each informant signed consent forms, plus I concealed the true identities of the informants by using pseudonyms.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This qualitative study sought to investigate the long-term influence that the International FFA School to School Linkage Program (SSLP) experience had on the lives of two of the six student participants and their immediate families. This was done in collaboration with the participants, identifying themes and significant features. In order to produce valid data, I used the triangulation process of a) observing (involving thick description), b) interviewing (using open-ended questions), and c) obtaining and analyzing pertinent archival information. In dealing with the issue of ethics in research dealing with human subjects, I concurred with Bogdan and Bicklen (1998) in the importance of being mindful in following proper guidelines which ensure that there is informed consent and protecting the subjects from harm. (In this case, I was granted approval through the Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board.) Each informant signed consent forms, plus I concealed the true identities of the informants and geographical locations/institutions by using pseudonyms.

In the area of thick description, I made direct observations of the physical home and home life situations of the families and obtained demographic information on each of the informants through the interviewing process. The organization of these field notes was done according to the methods suggested by Spradley (1979) and Miles and Huberman (1984).

I conducted a total of five interviews: Sue Landry, divorced mother of Jill Landry (interviewed at her home on December 26, 2003); Jill Landry, student participant (interviewed at her mother’s home on December 26, 2003); Al Boudreaux, student participant (interviewed at my home on January 3, 2004); the Boudreaux family, family
of Al Boudreaux (interviewed at their home on January 4, 2004); and Joe Landry, divorced father of Jill Landry (interviewed at his home on January 5, 2004). The interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed for analysis. Copies of these transcripts were given to the informants for cross-checking. Data analysis was conducted as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1985): 1) unitizing, 2) categorizing, 3) filling in patterns, and 4) member checks. As I conducted the analysis of the data, I kept the main study question in mind: how have the lives of the student participants and their immediate families been affected by their participation in the SSLP? This enabled me to identify five major themes/coding categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) which ultimately related to the major themes found in the review of literature as well as other emerging themes which arose during the interviews. This information can be found in Table 2.

A variety of archival sources were located to document all of the steps and events related to the School to School Linkage Program. This material was examined and each item was labeled with its appropriate name. These items were then assigned to one of two lists: one included those appropriate for analysis by the coding categories found in Table 2 (participants had control/effect) and the other included those not appropriate for analysis (participants had no control/effect – were pre-planned events/procedural items) but are important substantive materials. A more detailed description of this process will follow later in this chapter.

In presenting each of these case studies, I shall report them as follows: Description of the Family Members, Description of Home Setting, and Analysis of Interviews according to coding categories. References to specific themes will be made
Table 2  
The Effects of the 1997-98 International FFA School to School Linkage Program on Selected Prairie High School Participants and Their Families – Coding Categories - Data Analysis/Themes and Sub-Themes Based on Standardized Open-Ended Interviews  

A. Intellectual Development/Career Guidance Choices  
   Sub Themes  
   1. Language/Communication - challenges & learning new language  
   2. Increased technical agricultural knowledge  
   3. Career/educational choices  
   4. Willingness to learn  
   5. Appreciation  
      a. for American lifestyle  
      b. for American agriculture  

B. Developing an International Perspective  
   Sub Themes  
   1. World Peace  
   2. International Awareness/Understanding  
      a. Concern  
      b. Political  
      c. International Relations  
      d. Economics  
      e. Mutual beneficence  
      f. Cultural Differences  
      g. Appreciation of value of SSLP/Awareness of Mission of SSLP (and similar programs)  
      h. Agriculture  
   3. Specific Russian understanding/awareness  
      a. Legal/governmental system  
      b. Educational system  
      c. Agricultural system  
   4. Empathy with international students  

C. Change in Perception of Host Country/International Representatives  
   Sub Themes  
   1. Adapting to Cultural Differences  
   2. More positive perception  
   3. Openness to New Experiences/Ideas/Cultures
Table 2 (continued)

D. **Personal/Family Development**

Sub Themes

1. Relationship Building
   a. Parent/Family
   b. Student
   c. Russian student to family (and vice-versa)

2. Student
   a. Self-Empowerment
   b. Self-Confidence
   c. Sense of Independence
   d. Maturation
   e. Increased Sense of Responsibility/Commitment/Discipline
   f. Leadership Development
   g. Anxiety/Fear/safety

3. Life Transitions
   a. Parent
   b. Student

4. Dealing with Challenges (student and parent)
   a. Educational/Personal Development
   b. Sense of achievement/pride

5. Helping/concern for others/making a difference

6. Travel/New Experiences

7. Parental/Family
   a. Anxiety/Concern for Child or sibling/Fear
   b. Support of child
   c. Parenting Skills
   d. Sense of family
   e. Social skills

8. Trust
   a. Trust in Teacher

E. **Heightened Sense of Community**

Sub Themes

1. Community Development
2. School Development
3. Community Support
4. Support/bonding between parents/families
within the discussion of the analyses of the interviews. I shall also present an Interpretation of the Archival Data gleaned from these documents.

**Case Study: Boudreaux Family**

**Description of Boudreaux Family Members**

Bill Boudreaux, husband of Sally and father to Al, Clyde, Jim, and Russ, is 43 years old. He and his wife, both of French-Acadian descent, have been married for 25 years, and also have two grandchildren. He spent his formative years in a large metropolitan area in south Louisiana, attending elementary school and early high school. After this time, his family made a series of moves within the state and he transferred to a high school in a smaller community where he attended until his tenth grade year, then dropped out of school. As he shared this information, he admitted that it was not a wise decision on his part. After leaving school and moving closer to where he and his family now reside, he was employed in various locations as a carpenter’s helper, then finding employment in the oilfield. He has been engaged in this type of employment steadily for the past 25 years, serving as a driller for the past two years on an offshore oil rig for a major corporation.

Sally Boudreaux is 41 years old and was born and reared in a neighboring town where she also attended school. While not directly mentioned in the interview, it was inferred that she did not complete her high school education. Unlike her husband, whose family of origin lives in a larger, more distant metropolitan area, she has numerous relatives who reside in the immediate area. After she and her husband were married, they moved to another small community in the area, living there until five years ago when they moved to this present rural location. She was mainly a stay-at-home mother until all
of her children started school. Once she entered the work force, she admits she did not always enjoy working at every location:

Yeah, I worked a few other places . . . I worked at [the truck stop] for three years, I was a short order cook. I worked at a factory a few months. I didn’t like that . . . . I didn’t work that much while my kids were in school. It’s mostly once they were grown that I started working (Sally Boudreaux interview, p. 3).

She presently works as a cashier at a local family-owned grocery store, a position she has held for the past seven years.

Clyde is the oldest of the Boudreaux children at 24 years of age. He attended the local elementary school and graduated from Prairie High School in 1997 where he was a member of the FFA Chapter. Upon graduation, he worked in the offshore oil industry for approximately one year for two different companies. In 1998, he began working at a local motorcycle/small engines sales and service dealership as a mechanic and still works there. He is married, has two children, ages three and six, and resides in a neighboring community in a recently purchased home.

Al, the second oldest child and the SSLP student participant, graduated from Prairie High School in 1999 where he was a very active member of the FFA Chapter and enrolled the following fall in a nearby university, majoring in General Agriculture, where he studied for three semesters. After this time, due to a challenging financial situation, he chose not to return to his studies and found employment as a bay cook with a catering company which served offshore oil rigs. Al worked in that capacity for one year, earning enough money to purchase a reliable vehicle with which he could commute to school and work. It was at this time that he re-enrolled at the university in the same major. This soft-spoken yet very enthusiastic, articulate 22 year-old is single, living with his parents and two of his siblings, and commuting to the university where he is a full-time senior.
He plans on graduating in the fall of 2004. In order to earn money for transportation and college expenses, he has been working 20 – 30 hours per week for the past two years as a mechanic at a nearby motorcycle/small engines sales and service dealership (the same location where his brother Clyde works). He noted that his employer allows him flexibility in his work schedule to accommodate his class schedule and study time. Upon graduation, he plans to enter graduate school at another state university to pursue a program of study which deals with a blend of the science of crawfish production and international agricultural relations. He explains,

I really want to get into crawfish production . . . because as soon as I graduate, I plan on opening a couple of my own fields in crawfish. The reason I want to get my degree in crawfish production is because a lot of the crawfish farmers just passed on knowledge about how to work their fields and stuff; but I really want to learn the science of it to see if I could actually better the field . . . try to better the industry of the whole and just not, to learn what I have learned from past experiences of farming. I want to learn the science of it . . . and I am also interested in the foreign relations. I want to see if I take maybe a couple of courses in that, just ‘cause I do intend on going back to Russia . . . and I think now if I go back . . . and since now I’ve had classes in agriculture, I believe that I could obtain a lot more knowledge and appreciate more what’s going on around me over there - maybe even give some of my input of what I have learned in college, to help them out also (Al Boudreaux interview, pp. 1-2).

Jim is the third oldest of the four Boudreaux siblings and is 19 years old. He also attended the local elementary school and graduated from Prairie High School in 2002 where he was also a very active member of the FFA Chapter. According to his interview, he has had some short-term employment and a brief stint at a local university. He is presently seeking employment with the intention of earning some money to eventually return to school.
Russ is the youngest of the four sons at 17 years of age. Like his brothers, he attended the local elementary school. He is presently a junior at Prairie High School where he is an active member of the FFA Chapter.

**Description of Boudreaux Home Setting**

The Boudreaux family resides in a rural area near the unincorporated community of Pointe Aux Riz (pseudonym) in southern Louisiana. This nearby community consists mainly of people of the French-Acadian heritage, predominantly Roman Catholic, and many of whom still speak French. However, there are numbers of non-French-Acadian citizens who are descendants of people from other states who relocated there after World War II to work in the small oil and gas refineries which at one time thrived but are now operating at a much smaller capacity. The majority of the area’s populace works in the oilfield, welding, construction, farming, other agriculturally-related jobs, and the petrochemical manufacturing industry. Their modest 14’ X 60’ three bedroom/two bath mobile home with a two-toned grey exterior, situated on a lot with the approximate dimensions of 100' X 80', is surrounded by old-stand pine trees with a perimeter of hardwood trees and brush which is part of a much larger forested tract. The location is along a paved dead-end road immediately along the north side of an interstate highway, which clearly provides much traffic visibility and noise. Although their home is along this highway with a neighbor approximately 30 yards northeast of them behind the brush, there is still a sense of privacy and isolation. On the south side of the interstate and directly across from their home is a vast expanse of rice fields and crawfish ponds. On the day of my arrival for the interview, a fishing boat with a Mercury 140 motor and set on a two-wheeled trailer was parked in front of the home along the drainage ditch. A
black bar-b-que/smoker pit was located next to the porch with a push-type lawn mower, plastic fuel can and buckets set under the porch. A 25' gravel driveway led up to the home on the southeast corner of the lot and adjoined the home with a 12’ walkway made of concrete pads. There were several low muddy spots in the driveway and yard. There were six trucks and one sports utility vehicle parked in the driveway, with one of the vehicles obviously belonging to one of the Boudreaux sons, Clyde, who lives in a neighboring community with his family and who had joined us for the interview. On the east and north sides of the lot were piles of old stacked wood, a discarded small boat, and an old basketball goal lying on the ground.

Present at the interview were Bill and Sally (parents); Clyde, Jim, and Russ (Al’s siblings) along with Clyde’s three-year old son who sat quietly near his father. (Al was interviewed at a separate location and date.) I was very well received and made to feel very comfortable. All family members were assembled and seemed to be excited to be interviewed. The family dog, a small white poodle, was placed behind a fence in the hall which adjoins the living area so as to not disturb the interviewing process. The atmosphere was very comfortable and inviting, with the family casually dressed and very attentive. I entered from a white wooden porch which had a tin roof and was situated on the south side of the home. As I walked through the clear glass storm door, I could smell the aroma of a gumbo or stew cooking on the stove. I entered the living area which was approximately 14' X 18' with a vaulted sheet rock ceiling, blue carpet, and dark wood paneling. The north and east walls had a number of family pictures and graduation pictures of three of their children. (Mrs. Boudreaux proudly stated that there was only one remaining graduation picture to be hung - that of Russ’s, who will graduate next year.)
There was an entertainment center along the south wall and immediately next to the front door. A blue cloth semi-circle sofa was placed along the north and east walls (having a break in the middle with a chair in place). Dividing the kitchen and living area was a snack bar with a white formica top. Toys and games for small children were stacked against the bar on its east side (presumably for the grandchildren). The kitchen area, which was approximately 14' X 10', had an island work area in its middle with a simulated wood floor covering and dark wood paneled walls identical to that found in the living area. The kitchen cabinets were also made of dark bare wood.

Al Boudreaux was interviewed at my home at an earlier date. As he entered my home at the designated time, he was casually dressed and eager to begin. He was quite comfortable and cooperative in answering my questions and sharing his knowledge and experiences with me. In comparison to his initial interview some two years earlier, I immediately sensed a higher level of maturity and deepened integration of these experiences into his own life, providing much useful information in a very articulate manner.

Analysis of Interviews – Boudreaux Family Members

Although they are by nature a very soft-spoken family (with the exception of the father, Bill), the members of the Boudreaux family were very willing to speak and were happy to be able to re-live the experiences that they had. It was also very obvious by listening to their responses throughout the interview as well as through my historical relationship with them that they are a close-knit, hospitable family and that they are very supportive of each other. They are also very proud of and satisfied with Al’s participation
Table 3
The Effects of the 1997-98 International FFA School to School Linkage Program on Selected Prairie High School Participants and Their Families - Data Analysis – Interview Major Response Items Analyzed by Coding Categories Found in Table 2 - Boudreaux Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family/Family Members</th>
<th>A N/%</th>
<th>B N/%</th>
<th>C N/%</th>
<th>D N/%</th>
<th>E N/%</th>
<th>TOTAL N/%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boudreaux</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>10/8.9</td>
<td>45/40.2</td>
<td>6/5.4</td>
<td>51/45.5</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>112/22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>5/5.1</td>
<td>23/23.2</td>
<td>15/15.1</td>
<td>51/51.5</td>
<td>5/5.1</td>
<td>99/19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al</td>
<td>35/16.7</td>
<td>64/30.6</td>
<td>13/6.2</td>
<td>86/41.2</td>
<td>11/5.3</td>
<td>209/42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clyde</td>
<td>2/11.8</td>
<td>2/11.8</td>
<td>8/47.0</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>17/3.4</td>
<td>50/10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>11/22.0</td>
<td>7/14.0</td>
<td>9/18.0</td>
<td>20/40.0</td>
<td>3/6.0</td>
<td>50/10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russ</td>
<td>2/18.2</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>5/45.4</td>
<td>4/36.4</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>11/2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td>65/13.1</td>
<td>144/28.9</td>
<td>50/10.0</td>
<td>220/44.2</td>
<td>19/3.8</td>
<td>498/100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AVERAGE</strong></td>
<td>10.8/13.1</td>
<td>24.0/28.9</td>
<td>8.3/10.0</td>
<td>36.7/44.2</td>
<td>3.2/3.8</td>
<td>83/100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
A. Intellectual Development/Career Guidance Choices
B. Developing an International Perspective
C. Change in Perception of Host Country/International Representatives
D. Personal/Family Development
E. Heightened Sense of Community
and accomplishments with SSLP. They also credit Al’s participation in SSLP as a major
guiding force in his selection of his college and career paths. Though they admit that
they are not a family of great material means, they genuinely love hosting international
students, generously allowing them to be part of their family.

Upon analysis of the data gleaned from their interviews, Table 3 indicates that the
association of responses from the Boudreaux family as a whole overwhelmingly clustered
under two main themes: Developing an International Perspective and Personal/ Family
Development. Significant information related by individual family members from the
remaining categories shall also be discussed.

**Intellectual Development/Career Guidance Choices**: Within this theme, Al, who is
presently the college student of the family (and first-ever to do so), provided the most
associations. He was very keen on communicating the benefits that the SSLP experience
provided to him, especially in the area of career guidance. Early into the interview, he
explained that the SSLP experience affected much change within him, helping him to
appreciate the American agricultural system, his desire to continue being a part of that
system, and his willingness to assist agriculturists abroad.

> . . . made me appreciate more our agricultural system. . . . and it kinda also
> encouraged me to go into the field of agriculture; and so, to learn more about
> keeping or bettering our system, so . . . maybe we could even help them . . . better
> themselves. It just made me appreciate my field a lot more (Al Boudreaux
> interview, p. 5).

He also stated that he developed a greater understanding and appreciation for
international agriculture as a whole and wished to pursue a program of graduate studies in
crawfish production and international agriculture. Within a very mature “eureka
moment” in the interview, he made “the leap” or connection that being involved in
agricultural education/FFA activities was indeed a bona-fide and crucial role within the agricultural industry. He admitted that even the local agricultural business and industry tours that were taken while hosting the Russian delegation proved beneficial for him, providing him with additional information and encouragement to become an agricultural entrepreneur. This path, he felt, would ultimately lead him to becoming a successful local agricultural producer as well as having a positive effect on his colleagues abroad.

The biggest change would be my appreciation for international agriculture . . . . Since then, I’ve gotten a lot interested in it . . . and when I do transfer to [another university] for my masters I intend to get a lot more in-depth, cause we don’t really have that much at [my present university] on international agriculture. Like I said, it also made me appreciate our industry in America because all the advances we have and the technology we have - that they didn’t. It’s just changed me a lot too - appreciate what we have and also to learn a lot more about how we can improve our own agriculture . . . . It made me understand that I’m not just in FFA, I’m in agriculture . . . . It made me also want to learn a lot more about my field and give some specific concentrations, like in the crawfish which I intend to do . . . makes me also an entrepreneur, you know, starting my own business. Like I said, I don’t know too many farmers that went to college to be a crawfish farmer. Being if I going to college to do it, I could do a lot with that field - make a lot of improvements - maybe even change the way things are done (Al Boudreaux interview, pp. 6 - 7).

He communicated with some satisfaction that he made real-life career connections through his SSLP and FFA experiences which he felt were a positive effect on his American and Russian colleagues and his own choice of educational path at college.

I think I had a positive effect . . . . I think that I will make even a larger effect, now that I am in college and starting my own businesses in agriculture, and that this experience has helped me with that. I think I’m having more of effect, now than I could of then, besides just gathering information and stuff, but now I’m actually getting to use what I have learned and apply it (Al Boudreaux interview, p. 11).

Al also had recommendations for improvement in SSLP in this area. Not only did he realize that this benefited him in the realm of educational and career choices, he would
also like to have better follow-up with the Russian participants to ascertain whether this program had any effect on them in these same areas. In other words, he is deeply interested as to whether or not our efforts indeed made a difference. As well, he would want to know if they required or desired any long-term assistance from the American participants. He also suggested that the communication could be as simple as using e-mail and/or even making return visits to Russia.

Russ, the youngest member of the family and an elementary school student at the time of their Russian exchange student’s (Sasha) visit, was also affected in the area of educational/career choices. Upon witnessing and cooperating with the SSLP activities in and out of his home, his interest in the agricultural field was piqued.

Like they said, it affected me about being able to trust somebody and it just changed my life, and I was in elementary still, and that kinda made me start thinking about Ag and that ‘cause Ag gives you that experience to be able to do so much and that’s what really motivated me to get into that program. . . ‘cause you get to do all that great stuff. . . and that’s how it affected me (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 17).

All of the family members agreed on several occasions during the interview that the language barrier between them and their international student (whose English-speaking proficiency was low) was a challenge at times. Jim expressed that, prior to their Russian student’s arrival, he was indeed nervous over the fact that the ability to communicate might be a struggle. However, it actually afforded them the opportunity to learn innovative and sometimes amusing ways of communicating with him through sign language, drawing, and various gestures. It also gave them the opportunity to assist the Russian student with developing his own English-speaking skills. In particular, Bill and Sally were very pleased and impressed that he mastered several phrases and habits which expressed the same type of family respect as they teach their own children, such as
making the effort to wish them “good night,” habitually using other phrases such as “yes, sir,” and “no, ma’am”. Conversely, their student also taught the family members several useful Russian words and phrases. While overseas, Al experienced a certain degree of angst over the issue of language but quickly learned common survival phrases in the Russian language and became more comfortable in working with interpreters while overseas. In fact, as a recommendation for SSLP program improvement, the entire family suggested that some type of basic Russian language preparation and support be provided for host families prior to the arrival of their exchange student. This would include tutoring on basic survival phrases and a simple English-Russian translation book of these phrases in order to be able to better communicate.

Developing an International Perspective: Of the family members, Bill, Sally, and Al provided most of the richest information with much fresh enthusiasm within this theme. Their information was heavily accented with references to their understanding and appreciation of the SSLP and similar programs. On numerous occasions, all family members reminded me that the SSLP was a “once in a lifetime thing” and that they were grateful that they were a part of it. When discussing the issue of their expectations of SSLP and their ultimate judgment of it, all family members said without hesitation that it was a very positive experience, even to the point of helping them with their decision to host a FLEX exchange student two years later.

Sally: It was what I say I expected. It was good, it was real good. I didn’t know really what to expect, but it was all good. He was a good kid - he was well mannered, you know . . . . and I mean we just really enjoyed having him. It helped us decide on our second exchange student. You know, it turned out so good that when we were offered a second one we took it, because it was a good experience (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 12).
A deepened understanding and tolerance of and appreciation for cultural differences was also evident during the interviews. She also insisted that although there may be many differences between cultures, there are many common traits that cut across the human race. Sally expounded on this theme and the merits of participating in SSLP and similar programs:

I know they are learning a lot. They are learning about the way we live. We learn about the way they live. Just differences, difference between us and them, in which it’s, say, material things . . . but just our cultures and our foods and our clothes - stuff like that is different. That’s all. They are all still kids, they are all still the same. They get in arguments, they fight, they are kids, but it mostly all good. They are good kids (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 24).

Bill also found other lifestyle similarities between his family and that of their Russian student. He was pleased to learn that, for instance, both families raised livestock. He also came to the conclusion that both cultures are basically the same and that all must work hard to survive. He firmly believes that people of all nations must build constructive relationships and learn about the other. Being reared during the Cold War era, he was keenly aware of the prevailing attitude that Americans had toward Russians (and vice-versa) for so many decades and the strained relations between the two countries. Thus, he also appreciates the value of SSLP.

When I was going to school when I was in FFA, they didn’t have this kind of program; and now that I see that it’s going on, it is giving the kids more things to learn about . . . [not about] material things but in people’s lives, you know; learning about them: what is their style of life and stuff like that, what they think about the Americans and what we think about Russia. It’s more like a big history thing that is improved a lot. People trying to get along with each other different bunch of other things, you know; I think it is just real great that different countries could swap their kids around and learn about each other - things that we didn’t know when we were younger, and then doing it at so much of a young age - gives them a better outlook on life and this world will become something better in the future (Boudreaux Family interview, pp. 24-25).
The concept of promoting world peace through positive international relations permeated much of the Bill’s underlying thoughts, making reference to his displeasure with America’s ongoing conflict in Iraq. He stressed the importance of developing constructive, respectful relationships between cultures.

One most important thing I think about it: anybody could live with anybody - don’t matter where he is from, what color he is - I think anybody can get along with anybody. As far as all this war that is going on - I think it’s a bunch of crap; but the world really needs to open its eyes and realize that we are all humans. I think it would be a lot better if it was just all peace (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 18). “. . . because really, we are all the same. . . . We are all human beings” (Boudreaux interview, p. 25).

He also strongly felt that there was much mutual benefit between nations through this type of program. The entire family was aware of the fact that the interest of many community members and those of the surrounding area was stimulated during the entire SSLP experience, particularly when the Russian visitors were present.

Bill: And believe me, they - the ones that came around - there was pretty much of them too. And we just couldn’t keep our doors closed from them. They were knocking, asking for them and just wanting to be around them so they could learn about them; and I didn’t see nothing wrong with that at all. It just makes people want to learn about other people. They get interested in it and then to me it was exciting. It excited them to be around them - and vice-versa. I think it’s just a real good program (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 27).

Sally added that

A lot of our friends never had exchange students and so like they would come and they would ask them kids fifty million questions. They were interested. They liked it, I think. I think people want to learn. They want to know about other countries and other lifestyles - the way they live and how different it is from ours. Stuff like that. I think it was good. I think they liked it (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 27).

Clyde felt that it got many people interested in the whole process, even to the point of other local families perhaps desiring to host international students themselves in the future. As a whole, the family stressed without hesitation that they would be willing to
participate in this type of program again because of its value. To support this thought, Jim was especially in favor since he felt that it gave one a chance to learn new things on a daily basis and it brings families as well as nations closer together. While hosting their international student, he was in high school and a member of the Prairie FFA Chapter, so he had a unique opportunity to see even more of the details and execution of the program. He thus expressed a strong desire to have the opportunity to travel to Russia just as his older brother did so that he could have the same type of experiences.

. . . since Al went, that’s always been my dream is to go down there – ‘cause I feel I have those capabilities to be down there. I want to learn what Al learned. I want to see what Al seen. I would like to go a little bit longer than three weeks, because I could learn more (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 33).

Al expressed appreciation for the fact that he was able to participate in SSLP. He also expressed satisfaction for the quality of the program agendas in both countries: tours of schools, farms, business and industry (agricultural and non-agricultural), interviews with news media, family time with their host families, and one-on-one time with their Russian peers. He was also very appreciative of the fact that students played a major role in the whole SSLP experience because it afforded them, as future leaders, great career-development experiences.

Al’s interview also revealed a heightened understanding of the agricultural, economic, and governmental situations in Russia. This is quite understandable since he previously traveled to Russia and witnessed the situation first-hand. While in Russia, he had the opportunity to learn about the curriculum taught at the Agricultural Lyceum, to tour their laboratories and farm, tour businesses and industries, and visit with governmental officials, eagerly asking questions at all locations. He admitted that he learned more than he had anticipated. In the agricultural area, he noted that Russia’s
technology was far behind that of America’s such as in farm equipment, research methodology, and biotechnology. Legal woes because of a slow and often-times confusing transition time were also evident. He also realized that Russia’s overall resources and infrastructure were lacking to fulfill the needs of its population. All of these challenges were cause of great concern for Al, prompting his desire to try to make a difference by lending assistance.

A bunch of the farmers . . . weren’t too happy out there. They were switching over to democratic government. They liked their Communist government, but they still gave us tours, you know. They still let us see their operation and their farm. I think the main reason they were worried about it is cause they didn’t know what was going to happen; but being the fact that it was happening and they didn’t have no control over it, I think they let us come so maybe we could help them, maybe give them some ideas to where they could deal with it (Al Boudreaux interview, p. 15).

We could read about it all we want, and do studies on it but being there and actually seeing it and talking to the people that are involved in it - that was the experience itself. I mean, ‘cause I’ve heard about how they are not as developed as us in their ag industry and all; but seeing it yourself was just - I don’t know. It kinda made me realize this is really going on - and we need to help them out (Al Boudreaux interview, p. 16).

. . . they have to work so hard to get ahead, to get, if they want to – like a lot of them come down here for their education and a lot of them want to start a business, cause it’s a lot easier over here. . . . if they had the resources and the government we had they would go a lot farther (Al Boudreaux interview, p. 7).

He did seem to have a firm grasp on the overall mission of the SSLP, which was to educate his Russian colleagues on how to organize and maintain small agricultural entrepreneurships based on the Supervised Agricultural Experience Program model used in United States’ Agricultural Education/FFA programs. He was hopeful that the exposure that they had to United States agricultural production, business, and education techniques would be beneficial to them.
Boudreaux family members also commented on the value of programs such as the SSLP for both Americans and international students. Bill was particularly eloquent in his assessment of their effectiveness in the improvement of international relations, personal development, and educational/career opportunities:

I would say support them one hundred percent. To me, what it is doing for the kids is educating them and it’s getting them interested in their lives - their lifestyles. It’s also teaching the world to be smarter and teaching them a lot of different cultures - what is going on around the world. It’s just teaching them a whole bunch of things. It’s opening up doors for them and it’s making their lives better than what we had when we were younger. Me, I would say support them more than a hundred percent. Give them what the kids need today. Don’t hold back, ‘cause that’s the future for our world. Make these kids real smart and bright and that way when the future does come, this world is going to be better. Always I figure if you educate the children the world is going to come to be a better place to live (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 33).

Change in Perception of Host Country/International Representatives: The Boudreaux family did not seem to have too many pre-conceived negative perceptions about citizens of the Former Soviet Union and their culture. Overall, they seemed to be very open and accepting to whatever the experience would bring them. Throughout this entire program, I was struck by the fact that the members of this entire family were novices in international experience, yet there was a wonderful freshness and openness about their willingness to learn about and from other cultures. In fact, this interview revealed the greatest number of associations with the sub-theme of openness to new experiences/ideas/cultures, especially between Sally and her son Al. None had ever traveled abroad before and neither had they hosted an international student prior to SSLP. On numerous occasions, they expressed great satisfaction that they were able to host a student as well as Al having the opportunity to travel abroad and have new experiences.

In reference to himself and his wife, Bill explained that it motivated both of them. They
wanted to learn all that they could and enjoyed the entire experience. Russ agreed with his father:

Just like Dad had said, I really wanted to, like, gain knowing how they were like and meet somebody from a different place; and like, I wanted him to learn so when he went over there, so he could come back and tell me how it was; and just basically I wanted to learn about them - a lot about them. That’s what I wanted to gain (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 10).

Russ went further in expressing with great enthusiasm about his willingness to have been part of this type of experience since it gave him and his family the opportunity to experience something totally new and to be able to extend courtesy and hospitality to a person from a totally different culture. He also expressed that this experience opened his eyes to many new ideas.

It changed me a lot because everybody would think anything could happen . . . ‘cause to have a chance for another guy to come live with you for three weeks to have, you know, like another brother to adapt to . . . I already had three of them and to have another one, you know, anything is possible. My brother had the experience to go to Russia, so that’s how it changed me to open my eyes to the world to say anything could happen. You just gotta put your mind to it and good things will come; such as when you have an experience as that, we had that opportunity because we were a great family and we could give care to others. So, we had the chance to get that experience . . . and it really opened my eyes to show me to try hard to see if I could have a chance to do it (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 16).

Russ had more to express about the profoundly human component of developing a relationship with a person of a different culture, thus gaining deeper insights into the inherent dignity and equality of humanity:

It made me realize that, you know, people from different countries ain’t what everybody says they are - like they are different people. I mean he was real polite. He was one of the most polite people I had met. Everything was yes sir, and no ma’am - once he learned it; but it made me realize that he was a well - mannered person. Just because he was from a different country don’t mean he is not a human being - and that he can’t be like we are. He was a real polite gentleman. Everything he done, he didn’t do nothing to be bad or nothing. He
didn’t try to do anything bad, he was real polite, real dressed - everything like that. I learned pretty much (Boudreaux Family interview, pp. 16-17).

Sally admitted that she was a bit apprehensive at first about hosting an international student in their home but is happy that they agreed to do so.

It taught me to give people a chance, give it a chance, try something new; and to me, it worked out real good for us. I think we all benefited from it; I really do (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 16).

Jim has a great desire to participate in a program such as SSLP in the future and is particularly interested in traveling to and learning more about Russia.

I still want to go down there. That’s my dream: to go to Russia and see how everybody gets to live, to see what other families do; and I just find it’s a great program and it helps a lot of kids out . . . to be able to go over there, to be able to have those stories for the rest of your life - that’s about it. It’s just a great experience for anybody to have. It changes somebody’s life (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 36).

Al’s main motivation for participating in SSLP was the opportunity to travel and learn new things about the Russian people, their culture, and their agriculture. Being an active FFA member with a firm knowledge of American agriculture appropriate for his age and with extensive travel experience within the state of Louisiana and the United States, he felt that this was a natural next step.

**Personal/Family Development:** This major theme had the highest number of associations of all the themes for the Boudreaux family. This was not surprising to me since they are a close-knit family whose members are highly supportive of each other, value the leadership development aspect of the National FFA Organization, have a sense of compassion for others, and possess a strong work ethic. Of all the family members, Al and his parents were the most vocal in their responses.
Naturally, much of Bill’s and Sally’s responses were associated with parent-type issues. The issue of the anxiety that they felt when Al was selected and ultimately participated in SSLP was one of their highest associations of responses and it was discussed very candidly. It mainly centered around his safety during the journey, his well-being while in a foreign country, and the trust that they had in me as their son’s teacher and chaperone while overseas. It is interesting to note that Sally made almost three times more references to this issue than did her husband while Al had even fewer than his father.

Bill: What I was worried about Al going overseas is the flight. I’m the type of person I don’t like to fly. I like to keep my feet on the ground. I feel a lot more safer and you hear every now and then, flights going down; and the worse to me is that big jumbo flight, you know, jumbo jet taking that long trip across all that water and it had me kinda nervous (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 8).

Sally: I was worried that he wouldn’t be able to come back. You know, you hear stories that they won’t let you leave in different countries, and stuff; but I was a nervous wreck the whole time he was there . . . but Al going over there - it was really, really hard (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 8). . . . You see, Al has asthma and I worried about him getting sick and if he liked their food. Little things like that, you know, I worried about, but, and mostly was his safety - make sure he was able to come back (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 9). I will be honest. I thanked God when he got off that plane. I was glad he was back. I’m glad he had the experience, but I’ll be honest - I was sitting on pins and needles while he was there. You don’t know, but he is a kid going in a strange place - a home of people you never met - you only met their son. That’s why I trusted you a lot (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 30).

Al indicated that he felt some degree of anxiety when it came to safety issues and the ability to communicate while in Russia, although he related that he “was more anxious than scared” to travel (Al Boudreaux interview, p. 4). His only real concern for the safety of the American group occurred during a side-trip to a larger Russian city when our train tickets for the return trip to Moscow were stolen from the purse of our interpreter. However, he remained very calm as we dealt with the situation and felt that
this was merely a growth experience, not deterring him from his wish to return some day to Russia to continue the work that he began. The bulk of his anxiety was prior to and during the time of his family hosting the Russian student. He had many initial concerns about the language barrier and his ability to provide his guest with a proper experience of the American lifestyle and American agriculture. However, he did indicate that he was satisfied with his performance and his feelings of anxiety were alleviated.

I’m glad the programs that we had for them, the tours and everything. I think, you know, beings it was the first time we did it, we couldn’t have done it any better. They told us at the end thank you. They had a good time and everything. We did everything we could for them when they were down here. If they needed something, you know, we did our best to get it for them. I think that’s why Sasha’s family was so nice to me when we went, ‘cause I’m sure he went back and told everything (Al Boudreaux interview, p. 9).

He was also cognizant of the fact that his parents and those of his American team members were experiencing anxiety while we were overseas.

In spite of all of the anxiety that they felt, Bill and Sally always indicated that they were in full support of Al’s decision to participate (as did Al’s siblings) and were pleased with the effect that it has had on his life and that of their entire family. This also focused on the sub-theme of parental life transitions, coming at a time when they were beginning to realize that Al was at a time in his life when he wished to make more of his own decisions.

Bill: I didn’t want him to go at first and then one day he walked up to me and said, “Dad, look this is once in a lifetime. This is something that I want to do in life;” and I asked him if, “this is what you really want?” And he said, “Yeah, Dad, I think I really need to go.” So I said, “Well, if you think you really need to go and you want this part of your life,” I said, “I have to step back and let you go.” I don’t like the idea of you flying;” but he said, “Dad, that’s the only way.” So I said, “Well, that’s your choice.” I give him that choice in life, and he took it (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 8).
Bill was particularly pleased with the opportunity that this afforded his son to experience other cultures and lifestyles and to build his self-esteem, self-confidence, and level of maturity.

The sub-themes of relationship-building within the family and development of parenting skills were the overwhelming responses of Bill and Sally. There were frequent references, for example, to the positive relationship that they quickly built with their Russian guest and how he quickly became a member of the family. Jim felt that it was a very interesting adventure that he deeply enjoyed. He was amazed how quickly they got close to him within the short duration of his stay. As a father, Bill was concerned about what type of food he would like to eat, trying to find activities that would keep him from getting bored, what kind of television programming that he would like to watch, what kind of sports interested him, and other basic needs which would tend to his comfort. He did feel very confident that they provided the best that they could during his stay.

The building of this close relationship was exemplified during the great distress that the whole family experienced upon Sasha’s departure from their home.

Bill: When he went to the airport to leave, everybody got real emotional; it’s like losing a part of your family, letting somebody go and knowing that you probably will never see him again and you had so much of a good time with him. When it really come down to it, it’s like losing part of us, part of the puzzle. We took it hard for a few days. We sat around just thinking that he is gone. It was kinda hard to change back to the way we were, and it was really heartbreaking to see him go. Sometimes I even think about it now, you know, it still messes with me; but he was a real good kid – we enjoyed him a lot (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 9).

Jim was also perceptive as were his parents when it came to the distress that Sasha himself felt upon his departure from their home.

Jim: . . . I find he had a good time and when he left I think he was heartbroken because the love and care he had while he was down, from our family (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 14).
Sally: You know, we got to meet him, just got to know him, understand him and that, and then we lost him. . . . In them three weeks we got attached. We got to know him. You could tell he had a big heart - you could tell his personality. Even though he didn’t know very much English, you could feel something about a person. When he left we all cried. It was hard. We wanted him to stay longer, but he couldn’t. And he felt the same way ’cause he hugged and kisses and tears were coming from his eyes too . . . (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 29).

Russ: Yeah. Mom cried at the airport, but we just had to suck it up. I know it was for the best (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 19).

Jim: The high point is him coming, adrenaline kicking in and knowing he is coming. The low point was when he was leaving and seeing all the other families saying goodbye to the other ones also. It really had everybody in tears. It was a touching moment and that would be my low point. Right there. We enjoyed all of them (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 29).

Concerning specific family-type roles, Clyde made reference, as did other members of his family, to the predicament that Sasha encountered when his luggage was temporarily lost during his flight to the United States and the role that his mother played in dealing with it. He related that his mother immediately took charge of the situation and purchased clothes and other personal items for him until his belongings were found by the airlines and delivered to their home. His father took his role as Sasha’s American father very seriously:

My role was just like give him a father figure - watching over him - making sure he don’t get in any kind of trouble and stuff like that - knowing where he is at all times - just basically being a father to him and watching over him (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 21).

The siblings also willingly played their roles as members of Sasha’s family during his stay, making every attempt to make him feel part of the family, tend to his needs, and provide him with an educational experience.

Jim: The role I played was to be his brother; you know, to show him how it was to have a brother, to tell your problems to, to rough around with . . . to show him that well pretty much all of us, to show him how it is to live with four big boys -
how it is to do farm work - feed the animals and everything. That was my role - to show him that I was a brother to him. I cared for him just like a brother would - to show him a good time - to do whatever he felt like he wanted to do we would try to do. He really enjoyed it . . . that was my role - to make sure he had a good time - that he was never disappointed in what we did (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 21).

Clyde played the role of “big brother” by watching over him at home and on trips if his parents were not present and making “a responsible decision if one needed to be made” (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 22). Russ played the role of younger brother by staying close to Sasha and keeping him busy with requests to do many activities.

Along with building a relationship with their Russian guest, there were clear associations with the theme of strengthening existing family ties. Jim felt that this type of experience brings families closer together, especially since all must pull their resources together, cooperate, and exhibit special care to family members. The Boudreaux parents expressed the same feelings:

Sally: To me it helped. We have always had a close family - me, Bill, and the boys. We were always close; but this helped us - kinda bring us closer, even, together. When this kid was down, like he said, we were really tight. We were always trying to make this kid feel welcomed . . . to me, it helped us . . . . It showed how strong of a family we were. I think it showed Sasha that we . . . loved each other and we was a good family . . . . We don’t have much. We never did have much, but we had each other . . . it made our family stronger. Even though a stranger came into our home . . . we still love each other even more - and we could love somebody else too. It was all for the good. It helped us (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 36).

Bill: What she is trying to say is that, trying to show what kind of people we really was - a family - showing our true colors. Our true colors is love and care . . . and that’s what I try to explain to my kids also. It’s not what you got in material things, it’s that you got your family and health - and that’s the most important thing and you just try to make the best of it. While you are young you try to get all the knowledge that you can, while you are young – ‘cause when you get older the knowledge that you didn’t learn well, that’s a step you should have took a little bit farther in life. What I have to say about this whole experience is there is a lot of love and a lot of care and we succeeded on both ends - us on this end and them on that end; and I just thank God that we got the experience . . .
and I am proud to be able to sit right here and talk about something that I enjoy in life (Boudreaux Family interview, pp. 36-37).

Special stories ranged from Al’s bringing special gifts home to his parents (gifts that they particularly treasure which cause them to reminisce about the positive events associated with SSLP) to the experience of Al’s emotional welcome by numerous immediate and extended family members upon his arrival from Russia at the local airport. As his father related,

. . . he really knew right then and there that he had a real family - that he was coming home to when he got back (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 14).

Family members also expressed pleasure in the fact that through their participation in various activities with their guests such as cultural, educational, and entertainment-type tours, they actually had the opportunity as a family to experience sights and experiences of Louisiana that they themselves had never had before. They found this to be very enjoyable and educational.

It was also clear from the interview that Sally’s social skills were positively affected in her ability to better deal with strangers. She admitted that having such a person enter her household for several weeks gave her the opportunity to learn to communicate better with people with whom she had never met:

I was never very open to strangers, period. I wasn’t one to go, you know, say up to a stranger and I mean. . . but I feel, okay, when this kid come to us, he was a stranger. We did not know really too much about him; but look we fell in love with him in three weeks. I just feel different, I see a person, a stranger on the street - I think, I would say “Hi” - talk to him better now because you just don’t know. I think he taught me a lot. I think he taught me that it’s good, it’s all good. I don’t know how to say it into words. He brought a lot into my house (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 16).

Related to the theme of relationship building was Al’s strong sense of care and concern for his Russian counterparts and his willingness to “make a difference” in the
agricultural/international scene. He felt a very strong sense of mission of helping others even as a student in his SSLP participation. He is confident that, armed with his college education and determination, that he will make a difference in American agriculture and abroad. He is aware of the difficult transition that Russia is experiencing, witnessing a slice of it first-hand, and he wishes to return to the same location to resume the work that he and his colleagues participated in. He also expressed his desire to one day have the ability and resources to conduct international exchanges with this region of Russia and other places in need. This care and concern also exemplified itself with a strong sense of empathy that he felt for his Russian counterparts with the same areas of concern that he had, such as communication barriers, safety, and homesickness.

With this notion of making a difference come the sub-themes of maturity and an increased sense of responsibility. He realized that this SSLP experience placed him in challenging situations which required him to make sometimes difficult decisions, make certain sacrifices, and witnessing difficult situations in a developing country, lessons which are guiding him along his career development path. He had a strong sense that his Russian peers and their adult leaders were pleased that we were interested in assisting them to improve their own situation. Al, as well as his family, sensed such a growth within himself.

Al: It just changed me. It matured me a lot, too. . . . It made me understand that I’m not just in FFA, I’m in agriculture; and that if I want to do something with this field, I need to buckle down. It made me also want to learn a lot more about my field and give some specific concentrations . . . . It’s matured me a lot, made me more open-minded (Al Boudreaux interview, p. 7).

Al also felt that his leadership skills and self-confidence were taken to a higher level because of the SSLP experience. He developed more of a “take-charge” attitude,
placing a high priority on tending to the needs of his Russian peers and being a reliable source of information, all the while urging his fellow Prairie High School students to do the same. His level of confidence also rose in his ability to communicate with Russian agricultural and media professionals in matters of agriculture and education.

As far as when we went over there [to Russia], the main role I was playing was just trying to get as much out of what we saw that I could and asking questions; and then when they interviewed us on TV; me and Kelly, you know, talked a lot because we had just got elected for State offices and stuff and we explained a lot about how that works and the programs that we have. I understand that they wanted to start something like an FFA and me and Kelly were able to go a lot in-depth of how things work and what they need to do . . . I liked talking to the adults also besides the students and explain to them, you know, what our organization is about . . . . I tried to do my best to get done what needed to be done and try to even do a little extra (Al Boudreaux interview, p. 10).

Throughout these experiences, he is firmly convinced that, even at such a young age, he and his colleagues did something very important that will have a lasting impact on Russian society. He also feels that he has been a positive influence on many agricultural education students and adult professionals around the state of Louisiana through his presentations on international agriculture.

Heightened Sense of Community: Of this theme, Sally and her son Al provided the bulk of the insight. Sally recognized the major role that the community played in planning and executing the entire SSLP event, from fund raising to providing educational tour sites, social activities, and transportation of participants. She also expressed her firm conviction that members of a small community such as ours always willingly pull together to make events such as these successful.

I liked it that everybody came together to help these kids and to show them a good time . . . . In time of need everybody pulled together to do this. That’s what I like about our small community: when there is a need, they are there (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 20).
As a parent, she was very satisfied that this experience also gave the participant families an opportunity to work and bond together to successfully carry out the program. She was pleased with and thoroughly enjoyed the time that she spent with them, developing and deepening relationships through the work as well as the social, educational, and cultural events that they attended in common. Jim also was cognizant of the fact that family bonding was occurring between the participant families and that he considered this to be a desirable phenomenon:

... but we got closer to the other families ‘cause we went to get-togethers and everything ... learned a lot the three weeks they were down. We got close to the host families as well as the students (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 20).

Al expressed a deep sense of gratitude concerning the community support that they received. As a deeper insight, though, as with his mother, he also was impressed with the phenomenon of family and non-family community members actually coming together to work toward a common cause. Thus, he came to the realization that community bonds were not only being built and strengthened, but also the bonds between different families.

I think it just brings the community together and stuff, even the families that were involved. The mothers and the parents, while we were gone - I know my mom and Don’s mom would get together all the time and just talk, about to try to help them out with us being gone. It made them become real good friends ... I think they got real excited about it. It makes you really realize that you live in a good community when everybody is willing to pull together like that (Al Boudreaux interview, p. 14).

**Case Study: Landry Family**

**Description of Landry Family Members**

Sue Landry is a 56 year-old mother of three (ages ranging from 23 to 37) and grandmother of five (ages ranging from one year to twenty) and has been divorced for
the past six years. Prior to her divorce, she was married for 29 years and separated for three. She is of French-Acadian extraction, a graduate of Prairie High School and still lives in the same home where she reared her children for most of their lives. Over the last five years, she has furthered her education by taking several adult education courses through the local school board and several computer courses at the local technical college, working toward an Associate Degree. She grew up on a farm in a neighboring community, married immediately after high school graduation, and moved to the same community where she currently resides for a short period of time. Because of transfers with her husband’s job with a department store chain, they lived in several neighboring states as well as another city in Louisiana for the first several years of their marriage. After the birth of her first two children, they returned home in order to be closer to family. This resulted in her husband resigning from the employ of this chain and finding work locally. She thus stated that she has been living in this same home for the past 34 years.

She informed me that for many years as she was raising her children, she had never worked outside of the home for pay, serving as a school volunteer since her first-born child was in kindergarten. She and her husband decided early on in their marriage that she would be a “stay-at-home Mom,” and she reported this to be quite enjoyable. After her husband lost his job in the early 1990’s, their financial situation made it necessary that she join the workforce. Therefore, beginning in 1992, she held a variety of part-time jobs, first as a paid teacher substitute, then working on a temporary basis for various government-funded family assistance programs. When her life underwent a great
change in 1994 with her separation and eventual divorce (with one child still at home), she found it necessary to enter the workforce on a more permanent basis.

Anyway . . . I really needed a job which paid a little more, so I became a teacher’s aide at Prairie High School for a Special Ed self-contained class. I thoroughly love it (if the pay were wonderful!). I also needed a second job and went to the . . . Parish library and still have it - work on Saturdays, after school, during school breaks . . . Don’t make much money at either place, but I love my jobs (Sue Landry interview, pp. 1-2).

Joe Landry is 57 years old, of French-Acadian extraction, and is the ex-husband of Sue. He reported that he was married to Sue for 32 years and has been married to his present wife for 4 years. He is a graduate of Prairie High School. During his elementary school years, he reported that he worked in two of his father’s businesses – first at a restaurant and then at their grocery store. During high school, he worked at a nearby department store chain after school in the afternoons and on Saturdays. He began as a floor sweeper after school, then eventually working on commission in the shoe department on weekends. Upon graduating from high school and marriage soon thereafter, he worked full-time for the same department store, first as a manager trainee, then being promoted to Assistant Manager. This resulted in several transfers in and out of the state of Louisiana for the next four years, moving back to Louisiana in 1968 after the birth of their first two children in order to be closer to family. It was at this point that he entered into a variety of jobs.

. . . actually went to work at [a local] rice dryer; working 7 days a week, 12 hours a day - to make ends meet . . . tried doing a little construction work in Texas for about 90 days and . . . that wasn’t my thing. Then I ended up as a Holsum Bread man for 8 years and at the end of that I bought my own truck and started selling cookies on the road. I done that for another 8 years; and then in 1979, I bought [a local fuel bulk plant] . . . and I had that until August of 1986. At that time I was selling - most of my business was to farmers and farmers were having a bad time that year. I was unable to collect and so what I done is I leased my place out to larger company that come in and rented the place, and I liquidated the inventory
and was able to hold on to the property and still own it at this time; and then in ’86, I went to work for the State of Louisiana and I have been there since (Joe Landry interview, p. 2).

Since 1986, he has held several positions within state government. He concluded the overview of his professional life by wistfully regressing to inform me that during his early years of employment with the department store chain that

I was the youngest employee to ever make manager in the . . . department store chain. They had a policy that no one could make manager until they were 25 years old. And three months before I was 21, I was promoted to store manager in that chain, and really enjoyed working with the public (Joe Landry interview, p. 2).

Jill, the daughter of Joe and Sue, is a single, twenty-three year-old graduate student enrolled at a state university in Louisiana where she also holds a Graduate Assistantship. In 1998, she graduated from Prairie High School and attended a nearby two-year college for one and one-half years before transferring to the same university where she now attends. In 2002, she earned a B. S. degree in agriculture and entered graduate school that same year. She is scheduled to graduate with an M. S. in agriculture in May of 2004. During her undergraduate years, she held a variety of part-time jobs for different lengths of time, ranging from baby-sitting at home for one summer, a student assistant in an administrative office for two years at the local two-year college that she attended, to a student assistant position for two and one-half years between two different education offices at the state university where she presently studies. As part of her graduate program, she interned at a Parish Cooperative Extension Office in Louisiana for one summer, where she worked with a variety of 4-H programs.
Description of Sue Landry Home Setting

The Sue Landry home is located in the quiet, unincorporated rural community of Prairie which has a population of approximately 200 people and is located at the intersection of a state and U.S. highway in Southern Louisiana. The community is physically split in two, found on north and south sides of the U. S. highway and the railroad tracks of a major transportation line and is surrounded by rice fields, crawfish ponds, and pastures. It is an environment of older dilapidated homes (with more of these found on the north side), middle-aged homes, and newer homes, with the newer homes being in the minority. The homes are mostly wood-framed with a very few brick homes. A number of old barns and sheds with tin roofs dot the community. Most residents are of French-Acadian descent (many of whom still speak French), Roman Catholic, and are natives with much intermarriage between families from this community and the surrounding areas. The population is overwhelmingly blue-collar: farm laborers, welders, oilfield workers, small business owners, truck drivers, carpenters, and petrochemical plant workers. However, several education professionals and school support personnel also reside there. Many residents have chickens and other fowl in their yards along with horses, cattle and swine. Hunting, fishing, and trapping are favorite pastimes of the residents. At the time of the clear, cold day in which the interviews of Sue and Jill took place, there were a number of dogs barking in the neighborhood and roaming the streets, some accompanied by several children riding bicycles, motor scooters and all-terrain vehicles. Prairie High School (a consolidated school of an approximate enrollment of 300 with grades 8 – 12) is one mile south of the intersection and clearly visible from the south edge of the Prairie community. Although each home
presently has its own water well and septic system, the community will soon be connected to a newly-developed rural water system. There is one small Catholic church in the community which is a mission of a larger church parish several miles south.

Sue Landry’s home is a white weatherboard exterior wood framed, three-bedroom, one-bath home on raised blocks in the southern half part of the Prairie community. It is located on a northeastern corner lot with a bare-wood, dog-eared privacy fence on the west and south sides. A large hardwood tree figures prominently in the southeast corner of the yard with the frame of a children’s swing set (without swings) next to it. Attached to the house is a two-car, open-sided carport (open on west and south sides and adjoining to house) on concrete slab with an additional covered area with concrete slab adjoining the carport and house on south side (approximately 10' X 15'). On the day of the interview, there were two cars parked under the carport – a four-door sedan which was approximately fifteen years of age (belonging to Sue) and a newer, smaller, compact-type car belonging to Jill, who was visiting her mother for the holidays and to be present for her interview. In front of the additional covered area was a small bare-wood, dog-eared fence, approximately 5' wide and 3' high, serving as a rose trellis. Behind this trellis under the covered area was a bar-b-que pit, wooden picnic table, plastic stackable chairs, and motorcycle (which appeared to be dusty and obviously not driven for some period of time). Two large live green plants framed the door of the utility room entrance and concrete steps. I walked through the carport and knocked at the traditional front door (facing the north) under carport. Sue answered me through a utility room door in another part of the carport (southwest corner), informing me that her front door on which I was knocking and front door entrance to living room on north side of
house were stuck and unable to be opened, probably because of house being out of level, a problem which she stated that she could not tend to at this time. The utility room door from the carport was covered from top to bottom with a paper Christmas poster of heralding angels with trumpets with the word, “Rejoice” on top. The utility room (approximately 10' X 15’) had a washer and dryer on the west wall with two shelves above the washer and dryer running the length of the room and stacked with household items. Shorter shelves which stood on the floor in south wall were stacked with toys and puzzles, presumably for the grandchildren to play with during visits. A small four-burner gas range and white ceramic sink next to it were along the east wall (presumably for frying, cleaning and cooking wild game, etc.) and next to the door entrance to the kitchen.

I entered the kitchen/dining area through the north doorway of the utility room. The home could be generally characterized as very neat, simple, and cozy, with dark brown wood paneling throughout the home. The house smelled warm and pleasant with scented holiday candles burning. Sue was playing black gospel music on a cassette tape player when I arrived (she reported that this is her favorite music). She was very welcoming, offering me coffee and cookies upon my arrival (which I consumed after the interview and during my quiet time of taking field notes).

The combined kitchen/dining areas, which measured approximately 15’ X 18’, had a white linoleum rug and were separated by a white formica-topped island snack bar which had four black upholstered bar stools with backs. Dark bare-wood cabinets were hanging in the kitchen. A dark brown shag carpet overlaid the floor in the 10’ X 15’ adjoining living room which was north of the kitchen/living area. This living room had a
large double window on the north wall with white mini-blinds. A flowered cloth sofa along the north wall with recliners of different colors and styles along the west wall and dividing area between kitchen/living area and living room completed the furniture arrangement in the living room along with a five-foot Christmas tree with lights and ornaments in the southwest corner of living room next to a television set. Christmas decorations adorned the walls around the home in various locations.

Our interview took place at her dining room table which was butted against the east wall lengthwise. The table, which had four sturdy wooden chairs on three sides, was covered with a white table cloth and solid green cloth place mats, two green live plants set on the table, and a short red candle burning. Pictures of family members were placed on a study desk in the dining room on the north wall close to dining room table and on walls around the dining room and adjoining living room. A large framed picture of fruit and several Christmas stockings hung on the east wall next to the dining room table. Sue was very open and talkative throughout the interview.

Jill Landry’s interview also took place at her mother’s home several minutes after her mother’s interview. As with Al, she was also quite comfortable with the notion of sitting through the interview and was very willing to share her knowledge and experiences. As we spoke, I also sensed a heightened level of maturity and confidence within her as compared to her Fall 2001 interview. She seemed to have a deepened understanding of the questions and as well as experiencing a more profound integration of her international experiences into her life. She spoke with as much candor about the challenging aspects of the program as she did with enthusiasm for the positives.
**Description of Joe Landry Home Setting**

The Joe Landry home, located in a city which has a population of approximately 100,000, is situated in an older, upper middle-class neighborhood, with many of the homes approximately thirty years of age, although there are signs of new construction. An elementary school is one block away from the Landry home. According to Joe, the quiet neighborhood is mostly comprised of middle-aged professional couples as well as retired people; however, the neighborhood is attracting some younger families who are attracted to the nearby elementary school which has a good reputation. Thus, he reports, property values are on the rise.

Since I arrived for the interview in the evening and was not able to view most of the neighborhood and home with my own eyes, I relied mostly on descriptions of the neighborhood and the exterior of their home from Joe and his present wife, Pat. Their 30-year, 2200 square foot red brick home is situated on a 3/4 acre lot. As I drove up to the house on its concrete driveway, I was greeted by Joe under the carport. I immediately observed a party barge covered with a tarpaulin and parked in the yard to the right of the driveway as well as a late-model pickup in the driveway and a new white Lincoln Town car parked under the two-car carport. I entered through the carport and directly into the kitchen with the laundry room to the right as I entered. Upon entering the home and engaging in introductory conversation, Joe informed me that when he purchased the home approximately six years ago for $65,000, he gutted the interior and completely remodeled the home. He estimates its current value to be approximately $130,000. It was originally a four-bedroom home, but he converted one of the bedrooms into an office. As I entered the white ceramic-tiled 15' X 15' kitchen, I was greeted by his wife who was
preparing supper. We dined on ribeye steaks, salad, and baked potatoes in the kitchen on a round, light wood grained table which seated four. The conversation was very friendly and much hospitality was offered.

After the meal, the interview took place in the 12' X 15' formal dining room which adjoined the kitchen to the left which had the same type of white ceramic floor tile. Its sheet rock walls were painted a light gray along with white wooden base boards and door frames. The double set of white-framed French doors opened to the outside back yard with a small framed picture of flowers to the right and a white-faced clock with wood trim above the picture. We sat at an oblong, light wood-grained dining room table with six matching chairs and set on top of a large patterned rug with various shades of maroon. A matching china hutch was along a wall with several large green artificial plants set on the floor along a wall and in front of the French doors. In a corner next to the China hutch was a small shelf attached on the wall at eye-level with several religious figures and pictures set on it and attached to the wall immediately above and around the shelf. Accompanying us in the room was a large green parrot living in a 5' cage which provided occasional chatter during the interview.

Analysis of Interviews - Landry Family Members

All members of the Landry family were very gracious and willing to share their experiences through the interviews. They referenced a high association with the themes and sub-themes associated with Developing an International Perspective and Personal/Family Development. However, Jill’s mother, Sue, also referenced a high association with the theme of Heightened Sense of Community and its related sub-
Table 4
The Effects of the 1997-98 International FFA School to School Linkage Program on Selected Prairie High School Participants and Their Families – Data Analysis - Interview Major Response Items Analyzed by Coding Categories Found in Table 2 - Landry Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family/Family Members</th>
<th>A N/%</th>
<th>B N/%</th>
<th>C N/%</th>
<th>D N/%</th>
<th>E N/%</th>
<th>TOTAL N/%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>7/10.1</td>
<td>27/39.1</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>30/43.5</td>
<td>5/ 7.2</td>
<td>69/19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>13/ 9.9</td>
<td>19/14.5</td>
<td>3/2.3</td>
<td>76/58.0</td>
<td>20/15.3</td>
<td>131/36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>25/15.4</td>
<td>64/39.5</td>
<td>1/0.6</td>
<td>60/37.1</td>
<td>12/ 7.4</td>
<td>162/44.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTALS  
AVERAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AVERAGE N/%</th>
<th>B AVERAGE N/%</th>
<th>C AVERAGE N/%</th>
<th>D AVERAGE N/%</th>
<th>E AVERAGE N/%</th>
<th>TOTAL AVERAGE N/%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>15.0/12.4</td>
<td>36.7/30.4</td>
<td>1.3/1.1</td>
<td>55.3/45.9</td>
<td>12.3/10.2</td>
<td>120.6/100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>166/45.9</td>
<td>37/10.2</td>
<td>110/30.4</td>
<td>362/100.0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0/0</td>
<td>166/45.9</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
A. Intellectual Development/Career Guidance Choices
B. Developing an International Perspective
C. Change in Perception of Host Country/International Representatives
D. Personal/Family Development
E. Heightened Sense of Community
themes. Significant information related by individual family members from the remaining categories shall also be discussed.

Sue was quite willing to share information with me and was very animated in her mannerisms and descriptions. Even though I historically had a very positive relationship with all family participants in this study, I felt an even higher level of respect, honor, and gratitude towards me from her during the interview. She reaffirmed my credibility by saying that how much she trusted me with her daughter during the SSLP experience. Several times she expressed that it was because of the trust that she had in me and my fellow chaperone that she allowed Jill to participate, trusting no one else. She also made it clear that she would have not trusted me to this degree had I been a new teacher. During the SSLP experience, Sue was also going through a very difficult time in her life with her recent separation and eventual divorce from her husband of 29 years. Jill, the youngest of her children, was also at the age of graduating from high school and beginning to make many of her own life decisions. Thus, this was a time of great change and transition for Sue – a time of letting go and life changes, many of which were very unsettling and challenging for her. These points will be discussed in the following pages.

Although he was very willing to take part in the research and gave honest responses to the questions, Jill’s father, Joe, was noticeably uneasy throughout the interview, seeming to be self-conscious about the fact that he and Jill’s mother had just separated prior to the SSLP experience and that he was not present as frequently as most of the parents since he lived in a larger city one and one-half hours away. This was obviously causing him to re-live a very painful time in his life. This was reflected in the length of the interview as he was not able to expound as much to and not in tune with
several of the questions because of his limited engagement with the whole process. He reminded me of this prior to our interview. However, I assured him that a large number of the questions would be pertinent to him since he is a parent and that he did attend some of the activities. Thus, I exercised my professional judgment in handling questions that seemed to give him discomfort.

**Intellectual Development/Career Guidance Choices:** Although not one of the highest themes with which they associated, Joe and Sue Landry made several important references within this category. Sue and her daughter Jill made all of the major references to the sub-theme of Appreciation for the American Lifestyle and Agriculture. Sue was particularly moved when she observed pictures and the reports given to her by Jill concerning the hospitality shown to her even amidst economic difficulties when living with her Russian host family.

So, anyway, then when Jill went over there and I saw the pictures . . . when I saw the feast that those people prepared for Jill, and I knew now, I thought that I did not have a lot of resources - I knew now, from what Jill was telling me, how little resources they actually had . . . and they did this for Jill every day. . . . I didn’t picture them to be so impoverished . . . . I really appreciated more what we had, you know (Sue Landry interview, p. 5).

Likewise, Jill concurred with her mother’s thoughts and attitudes about the advantages of American life and her appreciation of it. She admitted that her Russian host family experienced a more difficult existence by American standards. Examples included the fact that more foodstuffs were grown at home out of necessity and not leisure, having to walk relatively long distances on regular basis, having to ride on public transportation because of a lack of a family vehicle, unimproved roads, lack of basic plumbing in some public areas and private homes, unreliable electrical service and the absence of a telephone at her host family’s home.
Jill did speak of the challenges that she faced with the language barrier, causing her more frustration than anxiety, as with Al. Her frustration lay in two major areas: the unwillingness of her Russian student, Lydia, to practice her English-speaking skills (since the Russian students were supposedly English proficient) and our own lack of preparation in knowing at least some basic survival Russian. In fact, Jill recommended that, in order to improve the program, there be some type of Russian language preparation for the American participants to assist with communication.

Jill also stated that the SSLP experience had a profound effect on her in the area of educational and career choices, since it exposed her to different types of agriculture, legal systems, and leadership styles. She has long had an interest in politics and has even worked in a recent Louisiana gubernatorial campaign for one of the major candidates. She feels that she now has some international experience, plus has taken several courses in political science in college (including one in international politics), and has done several internships in agricultural youth development. Thus, she feels that these experiences have reaffirmed her choice to work in some field of agriculture, preferably in a role where she can make a difference in people’s lives.

So, I really do think it had an impact. I don’t know what I’d be doing. Maybe it reaffirmed everything that I thought I wanted in high school. It kind of just “sealed the deal” for me . . . . I was lost for a little while, with majoring in radiology for a year and I decided to come back to agriculture . . . . I think the coolest job to have ever would be to be an ambassador to a foreign country. I just think that would be wonderful. If I wouldn’t have had a good first experience in overseas travels, I may not think that way. I’m still a semester away from graduation with my masters, and I’m still not certain what path my life is going to take, but if I had the opportunity to work with the government in international relations, I would take it. I mean, I definitely would take it. I know that it has had a big impact on my life and my career choices (Jill Landry interview, p. 14).
Jill’s mother also related that she was pleased that this experience did have a major effect on her daughter’s educational and career choices.

Developing an International Perspective: All members of the Landry family appreciated the value of the SSLP and similar programs and their satisfaction in having the opportunity to participate. Sue related that she was very excited and proud of her daughter when she was selected to participate since she was such an active FFA member and good overall student. Joe took a broader perspective when it came to assessing the value of such a program, explaining the effect that they have on students’ behavior in general.

Sue: It’s got to be for the good. It’s got to be for positives. Since your exchange stuff, I’ve really been more aware of just how many there actually are - how if we’re going to have world peace and if we’re going to have understanding, it’s going to have to start with the youth - and the youth of today. We can’t wait for the future. We have to . . . I think it’s helping because these are our leaders of tomorrow. So, I think it’s all for the good. You don’t know how many times I’ve just prayed for whatever group . . . I mean, it’s so strange, because I would have never prayed for that group from Ireland or that group from whatever that you would see on the news that’s in our area much less our own. I think that it’s going to have to help. I don’t know that it will solve all the problems of the world, but I know it’s impacted our kids and it’s impacted their kids surely, so if each little group can do some good, maybe, we have hope . . . I really think it was good for everybody. Our community prospered in a lot of ways by this experience, and I don’t think that we ever told you thank you, Brad! Thank you again (Sue Landry interview, pp. 10-11)!

Joe: . . . I’m a firm believer that if we had more kids involved in those types of activities, we would have less problems in the streets today . . . Any time kids are involved, have projects to work with like this it keeps them off the street and makes better citizens out of them in the long run (Joe Landry interview, p. 6).

Joe even offered his support when it comes to legislation (his present job deals with many issues which deal directly with the Louisiana Legislature). Jill felt that SSLP and similar programs have great value since they may be the only vehicle available for providing the opportunity for people in her community to be exposed to different cultures, either at
home or abroad. She did express concern, in fact, about if indeed the experience abroad was long enough to make a difference in the lives of the Russian participants, wanting more time to develop deeper relationships and to share more of our knowledge. Her father also shared the same sentiments. Jill felt very strongly that most people from her area are not able or willing to take this valuable opportunity either because of economic constraints, poor attitudes, or lack of understanding. In other words, she expressed desire for more people, especially from her community, to take advantage of such an experience.

While this major theme was also one with a high overall number of associations, there was a markedly strong emphasis by this family in one of the sub-themes, that of Awareness/Understanding of Cultural Differences. Both Jill and her mother were immediately struck by the difference in the styles of dress, personal hygiene habits, musical tastes, and preferences for food of their Russian student. Joe was particularly struck by the reactions that their visitor had to some of our American conveniences and technology as well as her own lack of personal resources.

Well, when the girl from Russia come down . . . the first night that we had the gathering at Prairie High School, that I had actually picked them up to get them there to the school, when the little girl sat in my truck . . . I had a club cab truck at the time . . . and she was amazed - like she had never been in an automobile before and I happened to have a cell phone that was connected in the truck, and she looked like she just couldn’t understand what it was I was doing on the cell phone and her English wasn’t very good. The amount of clothes she got here with was just so little, that it was just unbelievable that she had attempted to make the trip with so few clothes; and it looked like all of her clothes were hand-me-downs, you know. And I really felt sorry for her from the beginning when she got here. As I recall she didn’t have that much money when she got here, so we tried as a whole we tried for her not to spend a dime of her own money . . . but she was amazed like at telephones (Joe Landry interview, p. 5).

Based on the spoken word from Jill and the pictures from the overseas trip, Sue and Joe were able to acquire a better understanding of the Russian situation. They were
astounded by the differences in the daily habits of and lack of resources available to the residents of the Zolatoya community. This included styles of dress, lack of private modes of transportation, inefficient energy systems, lack of personal telephones, personal hygiene habits, a crumbling national infrastructure, and diet. Specifically dealing with differences in dress, she made reference to a situation when she and her American colleagues, all dressed in shorts, were riding on a public bus with several Russian students. She reported that they were given stares of disapproval by some of the native passengers. She was told later that Russian women normally wear skirts or full-length pants rather than shorts in public. The issue of basic freedoms was also discussed, with the realization that Russia and all countries of the former Soviet Union are undergoing a painful transition and that the American concept of freedom is not widely understood or appreciated in those countries. In particular, Jill was aware that the Platnaya Region was still highly of a Communist bent, reflected in their styles of government, economy, and education. Yet, she was still disappointed and perplexed with her Russian peers’ and their adult leaders’ seeming lack of understanding of basic leadership skills and economic principles as presented by us throughout the entire SSLP experience.

... and I guess I was hoping that they would have caught on real fast when we got there and be more receptive of the organization because I know they wanted to start a similar program to ours, but they were in more awe and amazement about just some small things about the organization and that kind of caught them off-guard... such as when we talked to them about electing officers or talking in front of a group or... they just couldn’t understand or even imagine themselves doing the same thing at the same age... even their adults didn’t even really understand that, either. We just kind of kept talking about it and talking about it, just kind of hoping that they caught on to it. I’m still not sure what the outcome is (Jill Landry interview, pp. 3-4).

She did concede the fact, though, that they lived a more difficult life and that her Russian counterparts did impart a higher level of maturity than the American youths. She also
related an understanding of the differences between the Russian educational system versus the American system, including grade levels, career tracks, and eligibility and choices for post-secondary education.

Jill admitted that she had a difficult time adjusting to the cultural differences upon our arrival in Russia. Her first few days were filled with moments of anxiety in dealing with such issues as the lack of infrastructure, differences in food, and the intimidating sights and sounds of downtown Moscow as well as moving into her host home.

Whenever I went there, I guess whenever we got to the airport and it was June and there was no air condition and the airport was - you know, Moscow was supposed to be one of the biggest things in the world and most populated - you know, you just see all these romantic visions of Moscow - and you get there and it looked like there was tuna cans on the ceiling, there was no air conditioning, they were rude, they just - they knew we were Americans right away; and then you travel through the worst part of Moscow before getting into the city between the airport and the actual - it was just like crack houses, run-down - and you know people live there, because their laundry is on the balcony and that was just scary. It was very scary. I didn’t know what I got myself into; and then, once I got to Mtsensk, and lived with Tonya, she really didn’t want me - I mean, she wanted me to be there, but she didn’t want to help with anything and she didn’t want to help with the language gap and she knew everything I was saying but she acted like she didn’t. Too, adjusting to her and trying to cope with all of that, you know - and I mean, living with a different family that you can’t communicate with - it’s just hard (Jill Landry interview, p. 6).

She did manage, however, to settle in after a few days and gradually accept the differences in her host country and to deepen her interest in the country. Besides Russian agriculture and their educational system, she also developed a particular fascination in the country’s historical and cultural aspects. As a recommendation for program improvement, Jill suggested that more pre-program preparation be provided in Russian history and culture to participants to perhaps soften some of the culture shock one might experience upon arrival in the country.
Change in Perception of Host Country/International Representatives: There were few associations in this theme. Neither Joe nor Jill verbalized any major pre-conceived negative notions about the people of the former Soviet Union; however, Sue did admit that she did have an epiphany of sorts when she heard Jill’s accounts of touring Red Square and Moscow. It was then that, coupled with her own daughter’s actual presence there, along with the amazement that she had for its interesting history and breathtaking architecture, she no longer felt that she had to fear that society as she did while growing up. Consequently, Sue also exhibited the most openness to learning about new cultures. She seemed delighted to have an international guest in her home and took time to sit with her on several occasions in order to learn about her family and general way of life and what she could do to make her more comfortable. She and Jill also strongly advocated that any person who is considering participating in any type of international exchange program must have an open mind to new cultures/ideas/experiences. Joe’s comments made no major association with this theme.

Personal/Family Development: The overall associations made by the Landry family within this major theme were relatively high in frequency. In the sub-theme of anxiety, Sue exhibited a higher frequency than did Joe. The frequency of associations dealing with development of parenting skills and support of their child were also relatively high.

As stated earlier, Sue and Joe had undergone a marital separation a short time prior to the SSLP experience, coupled with the fact that Jill was the youngest child of the family and the last preparing to leave home and make other important life decisions such as where to attend college and what to study. Thus, it was a period of challenging transition for this family. This was especially a stark reality for Sue who realized that she
was soon to be totally alone in her own home for the first time in her life. This was correspondingly reflected in Sue’s relatively high number of associations within this sub-theme. There was obviously much stress and uncertainty in their lives.

You see, Jill was the baby - I had never been alone. I mean, this house was going to be empty for three weeks, which it had never been empty in all our lives. Tim was born the first year into our marriage; so . . . I had never been alone. So, I felt, well, this is the first step of letting go, you know; so, that was my issue (Sue Landry interview, p. 4).

Whatever Jill felt she could do, she was going to be all right. As a mom, you really worry about those things. I think that was the high point: just seeing her reaction, knowing that we had helped to get her to this stage in her life, because I knew this girl was going to fly and Mom has got to let go anyway (Sue Landry interview, p. 12)!

Sue also had to deal with her anxiety throughout the entire SSLP experience with issues of her safety and well-being, especially during Jill’s travel time to and from Russia and the time that she spent there. She was very animated as she spoke of these challenges as well as the high level of trust that she had in me as Jill’s teacher and chaperone. In fact, she related to me that had it not been for my being the main sponsor of this event, she would have not allowed her child to participate. The challenge associated with the issue of communicating with our delegation on a regular basis while overseas was also a prime source of angst with the parents.

The travel; and I remember one meeting after we had all agreed and then you told us about how the phone conversations may . . . ‘cause we just assumed everybody had telephones . . . not being able to hear from her every day . . . and that was my only concern; and if you would have seen the way us mothers burned up our phone lines in between the times that y’all were gone . . . one of the children called; honey, we all got the message within a half hour! That was really my concern. I never feared for her safety, per se, because I knew . . . that you would give your life to save her or one of those other kids. It was just the distance . . . and not being able to communicate; I mean, my child had never left any length of time that I couldn’t communicate with her (Sue Landry interview, p. 3).
In fact, Sue recommended that, for future trips abroad, a better means of communication could be established so that the students could contact their parents more easily and on a more regular basis. Joe expressed similar sentiments of the issue of safety for his child, though not as pointed. He articulated that he had confidence in my ability to protect his child and the other members of the Prairie High School delegation during our travels.

Jill also experienced her own challenges with her exchange student, causing a certain degree of anxiety besides mentioned in earlier lines. Jill explained that her Russian visitor, Lydia, as well as several of the other female Russian students, were very uninterested and unmotivated about the mission of the SSLP experience. This was exemplified in Lydia’s lack of interest in many of the educational tours organized both in the United States and Russia, unwillingness to practice her English skills (which made communication difficult) or to mix with the American students, and her overall lack of social skills. It came as no surprise, then, that there was very little development of friendship or bonding while Lydia was in the United States. This caused further distress within Jill as the American delegation traveled to Russia with her knowledge that Lydia’s attitude had probably not changed. She was to be correct in her assumption. Although Lydia’s family was very warm and welcoming, Lydia was not, so Jill was very disappointed that she was not able to fully enjoy the home life that her American colleagues were enjoying. In fact, Jill spent several nights in the home of another host family just so there would be someone with which to communicate since no one in Lydia’s family spoke English. Thus, Jill recommends that, for future SSLP experiences, that there be a more stringent process for selecting the Russian participants, especially
concentrating on their attitudes and motivation, knowledge of agriculture, and English
language proficiency. Her father also felt strongly about this topic:

    I think that our students that were picked here in Louisiana to go there was more
understanding and more knowledgeable of what it was that they were going there
to do, than the Russian students when they came to the United States. I think they
more or less came for the excitement of seeing the country and seeing the
modernization that we had down here. I don’t think that they were zeroed in on
the educational part of the trip . . . from what I picked up out of the deal (Joe
Landry interview, pp. 11-12).

However, she reported that she did develop some positive relationships with most
of the other Russian students. She also developed friendships with friends and outside
family of her host family and that of the other host families. One particular exciting and
touching moment for her came when she met two of Lydia’s brother’s friends one day at
the bus stop. These young men were serving in the military and had obviously heard
about Jill’s visit. During this episode, they expressed a desire to meet her. At the end of
their visit, one of them gave her one of his military patches from his uniform.

    Jill, along with the rest of our group, also had the very sobering experience of the
situation dealing with our return train tickets to Moscow being stolen from the purse of
our interpreter/guide, Olga, after spending a recreational day in another major city.
However, as with Al, she admits that even though it was a bit unnerving as we worked
through the situation, she exhibited calmness throughout and treated the experience as a
growth-filled time, increasing her level of maturity.

    In spite of their feelings of anxiety, Joe and Sue indicated that they were quite
satisfied and grateful that Jill participated in the SSLP experience. Among other things,
they felt that the experience gave her more direction and focus in life, exhibiting greater
maturity, spiritual growth, and a deeper appreciation for family. Both Sue and Joe felt
that this experience was a major factor in her choice of college major and career choice of agriculture and her desire to work with youth. Sue also had a profound insight as a female parent when it came to the long-term benefits of this experience for her child. In reference to her own predicament in suddenly becoming a single parent at a relatively older age and with little post-secondary education, she was confident that the SSLP would be another door of opportunity for her daughter to become independently successful in her life.

Oh, God, just seeing the world, to me, was her benefit; you know . . . . I just knew that she was going to gain a lot of knowledge; in whatever areas, I wasn’t sure. It didn’t matter. You were so excited about it, [you] had been before, and so I knew . . . it was going to be very, very, very educational, or you wouldn’t have had anything to do with it, and that’s always been my number one thing for her. As a woman, she will never, hopefully be in a position her mother was in. She will have the education and other resources that she needs (Sue Landry interview, pp. 3–4).

In spite of her challenging experiences, Jill was quick to express that she was very satisfied with the SSLP experience as a whole and that it was a fruitful, growth-filled time in her life. At the outset, she knew that this was a perfect opportunity for her to travel to another country and experience a different culture. She was also aware that our group would be joining Olga, a Russian exchange student who had attended Prairie High School two years before through a similar FFA-associated program and had resided with Jill’s cousin. Jill and Olga had developed a deep friendship and learned much from each other, and Jill wished to see her again to renew their friendship. Olga would be serving as our interpreter during a side trip to another city at the end of our mission. Jill also developed friendships with other Russian students during her stay. Overall, the sub-themes of self-empowerment, increased self-confidence, maturation, and a sense of independence permeated her discussion. She has in fact felt so much self-empowerment
and confidence that she and several friends recently traveled to Europe on their own with no tour company or specific plans. She states that she would even be confident enough in her traveling abilities and travel sense to get in her car and drive to some far-off destination such as New York. In the maturity area, she also felt that, since she was one of the older ones in our group, she assumed the role of leader among her peers in such areas of travel questions (most had never flown in an airplane before) and occasionally providing gentle reminders about the main purpose of our mission when one or more of our members seemed to be losing focus.

In the sub-theme of parenting skills development, Sue’s responses had a much higher occurrence of association than Joe’s, although both had equal marks in the area of supporting their child in her endeavors. This is understandable since Jill was living with her mother at the time and Joe was not present during the SSLP experience as often as Sue. Sue made a number of references to the challenges and pleasures that she experienced with her international student and her colleagues and the Prairie High School delegation. These included her attempts at making her feel welcome in her home by accommodating her with a comfortable room, her attempts at communication and quality one-on-one conversation, preparation of good-quality meals for her and the other students during their visits, taking her shopping, observation of curfews, and transporting her to various scheduled and family events. She seemed to make all attempts to embrace this Russian student and make her feel part of the family.

Oh, the minute they stepped off the plane, I mean, you just had that instant bonding. I didn’t exactly know which one our student was, but any one of them would have been my daughter. I mean, it’s like I said, she really just fit right in (Sue Landry interview, p. 8).

In spite of the anxiety that she felt, she was fully supportive of Jill’s
participation, citing in several instances that she did not want her concerns to overrule what her daughter needed. Instead, she wished to give her full support, no matter what the financial costs would be. She also spoke of the pride that she, Jill’s brothers, and Jill’s maternal grandfather, a retired farmer, had for her.

Joe expressed on several occasions that he supported Jill’s decision to participate in SSLP, citing that his main motivation was affording her the opportunity to understand the cultures and lifestyles in other countries and for her to develop an appreciation for all of the more abundant resources available in this country. He also reminded me about one of his brothers having a Russian exchange student and another brother with a German exchange student in their homes recently and how they were such positive experiences for all involved. He seemed to have a good grasp of our group’s mission when he explained that

. . . I understood that it was going to be a beginning process for the Russian people as far as agriculture was concerned, in schools and what not, and I just felt that it was worthwhile her doing (Joe Landry interview, p. 4).

**Heightened Sense of Community:** This theme also had one of the higher frequencies of association for the Landry family. In particular, Sue had the strongest reaction to this category, especially in the sub-themes of community development and support. She considered the efforts put forth by the members of the community to be a “win-win” situation, bearing fruit for all involved. She was delighted with the fact that the sponsors were impressed with the caliber of the local students involved and the quality of the program. She was also pleased that we were able to express appropriate thanks to the sponsors publicly through an appreciation supper and the news media; all the while building our own credibility and base of support for future endeavors. Thus, she
expressed her own willingness to provide assistance and encouragement for similar upcoming programs. Joe was appreciative of the support received from the community and was impressed that people came together to make this event possible, exposing them to different cultures.

I know what it does for small communities, because everybody knows everybody and everybody invites people over to their house. That doesn’t necessarily happen in city life or you don’t even hear about it; but I think it helps the whole school system understand the difference in the cultures between the different countries (Joe Landry interview, p 9).

Jill also realized the important role that the community played to make the SSLP experience possible. She observed that not only did the community contribute financially, but it also built a groundswell of pride and overall support for Prairie High School’s FFA program.

The community, I think really welcomed them with open arms. Lots of different organizations had given us little donations to go. They were very willing to help us raise money, so I think our community really, really embraced the situation and was very excited that our school had been chosen and they were proud because of our ag program to be chosen from a national level - one of six schools in the country. So, it was a sense of pride for them (Jill Landry interview, p. 8).

She also expressed pleasure that certain members of the local agribusiness community contributed to the cause by accommodating our groups with tours of their facilities as well as donating items for fund raising. She felt that such actions gave them a sense of ownership into our project.

Sue’s responses also gravitated to the sub-theme of bonding between the parents of the American SSLP participants. She found this to be a very desirable consequence of the SSLP experience. She admitted that prior to the program, she did not know all of the parents as well as she would have liked, so this gave her an opportunity to cultivate new friendships and strengthen existing ones. In fact, she indicated a desire to have some type
of reunion in the future with these parents and other parents who supported our endeavors.

**Analysis of Archival Data**

A variety of archival sources were located to document all of the steps and events related to the School to School Linkage Program. This material was examined and each item was labeled with its appropriate name. These items were then assigned to one of two lists. In Table 5 are items which have been analyzed by the coding categories (participants had control/effect) which are found in Table 2. Those items which are not appropriate for analysis (participants and no control/effect – were pre-planned events/procedural items) but are important substantive materials are found in Table 6. The coding categories found in Table 2 were employed for analysis of the archival material to determine their relationship with the information gathered in the individual interviews, completing another phase of the triangulation process.

**Interpretation of Archival Data**

The information presented in Table 5 shows the association of the archival materials with the coding categories. Association scores ranged from five to twelve. Two of the coding category areas were associated more heavily with archival items than the other three category areas. These were, “Heightened Sense of Community” (score of 12) and “Personal/Family Development” (score of 11). The coding categories with the lowest associations were: “Intellectual Development/Career Guidance Choices” (6), “Developing International Perspective” (5), and “Change in Perception of Host Country/International Representatives” (5). This indicates that the archival materials
Table 5
The Effects of the 1997-98 International FFA School to School Linkage Program on Selected Prairie High School Participants and Their Families - Extent of Association of Archival Items with Coding Categories/Themes - Data Analysis - Archival Items Appropriate for Analysis by Coding Categories Found in Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archival Items</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Copies of donation checks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cultural events documents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Funding solicitation letters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Journal (Leger)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Local fund raising advertisements and tickets</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. News articles</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>7. Photographs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Program itinerary</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Receipts of donations</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Scripts for guest introductions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Student Rules of Conduct Agreements</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Thank-you letters to sponsors</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. 1998 follow-up letter from World Link Company</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTALS**

|     | 6 | 5 | 5 | 11 | 12 |

Note:
A. Intellectual Development/Career Guidance Choices
B. Developing International Perspective
C. Change in Perception of Host Country/International Representatives
D. Personal/Family Development
E. Heightened Sense of Community

X – indicates archival item is associated with coding category.
### Table 6
**The Effects of the 1997-98 International FFA School Linkage Program on Prairie High School Participants - Archival Items Appropriate as Substantive Information (Not for Analysis)**

1. Airline ticket receipts
2. American participant passports
3. Copy of brochure of Zolatoya Agricultural Lyceum (Agrotechnical College)
4. Exit interview notes of Russian student participants
5. Financial records (expense ledger, expense logs for American participants, memo letter for Russian participants’ stipend money/stipend record)
6. Invoice from National FFA Organization for program expenses
7. Participant insurance form
8. Report of visit to Prairie High School prepared by Agricultural Lyceum liaison/chaperone
9. Russian participant stipend money memo letter/stipend record
10. Russian visa applications/letters
11. School to School Linkage Program Instructions/Travel Tips Booklet/Items to Pack Memo

document a fairly comprehensive range of the events associated with the School to School Linkage Program.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF STUDY

The National FFA Organization is an agriculturally-based youth organization in the United States which has been providing/facilitating international experiences for its members for a number of years. One of these programs, to which this study is referenced, is the International FFA School to School Linkage Program (SSLP), in which selected American schools which have agricultural education/FFA programs are linked with specialized secondary agricultural schools/lyceums located in one of the countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU). The program’s main mission is for the American students and teachers to share ideas with their FSU counterparts about the initiation and maintenance of small-scale agricultural entrepreneurship based on the United States’ agricultural education Supervised Agricultural Experience Program (SAEP) model. Students and teachers are also exposed to (and preferably participate in) FFA leadership activities. This type of experience benefits not only the individuals from the FSU but also the Americans as they learn to increase their own skills in leadership development and personal growth. The relationship begins with initial contact between the schools via telephone facsimile/e-mail/surface mail/SSLP facilitators to begin exchange of basic information about participants, the schools and their agricultural program, and the communities in which the schools are located. Next, one school visits the partner school with a delegation of six students and two adults for a period of three weeks. The other school then reciprocates for another three week period during the same school term with the same number of participants.

During the 1997-98 school term, six agricultural education students and two adults (myself and a local elementary school administrator) from Prairie High School
located in Prairie, Louisiana (pseudonyms), participated in the SSLP as one of six schools in the United States to be selected. Our school was linked with the Zolatoya Agricultural Lyceum in Zolatoya, Platnaya Region, Russia (pseudonyms). Upon examination of this study, it was evident that the families of the participants were highly involved in the whole experience, from initial planning to fund-raising to hosting the FSU students to living with their own children upon their return, expending much effort and self-investment. Though these programs have been well-received over the years, Stutzman (2001) indicates that there has never been any formal study done on their effects on the American participants and their families.

Thus, the purpose of this multiple-case study was to investigate and document the findings centered around the question, “How have the lives of two Prairie High School, Louisiana graduates and their immediate families been affected by their participation in the 1997-98 International FFA School to School Linkage Program?” This was done, in collaboration with the participants, by identifying themes and significant features. In order to produce valid data, I employed the triangulation process, utilizing appropriate techniques of 1) observation (involving thick description), 2) interviews, and 3) obtaining and analyzing pertinent archival information. Data analysis was conducted as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1985): 1) unitizing, 2) categorizing, 3) filling in patterns, and 4) member checks. Yin (1994) supports my rationale for selecting this type of research because a case study has a “unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations [commonly referred to as ‘triangulation’] – beyond what might be available in the conventional historical study” (p. 8). He deepens the discussion by explaining that
“the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena, [allowing] an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (p. 3). Of high priority to me was the selection of high-quality interviewing methodologies and the organization of appropriately prepared questions. Several references were consulted, including resources from Michael Quinn Patton (1990), David Silverman (2000), Bogdan and Biklen (1992), and Richard A. Krueger (1998). Of these resources, I found Patton’s (1990) guidance to be of most benefit to me in formulating the interview questions, while Krueger (1998) was the most helpful in organizing the focus group process employed in preliminary research with the six student participants in 2001.

In my own research situation, there are several reasons why I chose these particular two families. First was the issue of availability. Of the six families who were involved in the international experience, two of them were no longer available. Of the remaining four who are still intact and live in the area, two piqued my interest, which is where the issue of maximum variation comes into play. The Boudreaux family is an intact family (husband and wife live together) with four sons living at home with their parents in 1997-98, with three of them still living with them. Their son/brother, Al, who was part of the SSLP, also reported in his individual interview that I conducted in 2001 that he had an overall very positive experience with his Russian counterpart in the six weeks that they were together in 1998, both as a host in the United States and a guest in Russia. He still lives at home and commutes to a nearby university. The Landry family has several differences from the Boudreaux family. First, the parents in this family are divorced and had been separated even prior to the 1997-98 SSLP experience. The
student participant, Jill, lived with her mother in 1997-98. She has two older brothers, both of whom have not lived with their parents for a number of years prior to 1997-98 and have their own families. Jill’s father, although living in another part of the state and now re-married, still played an active part in his daughter’s life (and still does) and assisted with the planning and fund-raising for the SSLP experience to the best of his ability. During her individual interview that I conducted with her in 2001, although she reported an overall very positive experience with SSLP, she did, as opposed to Al, experience some challenges with her Russian counterpart during her hosting experience in the United States as well as during the reciprocal exchange in Russia. Jill’s mother still resides in the same community while Jill is a graduate student at a state university. Thus, Jill and her two parents were easily accessible.

Another issue of high priority was the development of a conceptual framework with which to guide this study. Warmbrod (1986) defines a theoretical/conceptual framework as “a systematic ordering of ideas about the phenomena being investigated . . .” (p. 2). Camp (2001) refers to Creswell (1994) in “describing the framework of a study as dependent on the researcher’s worldview and culminating in a selection of either the qualitative or the quantitative paradigm . . .” (p. 11). Thus, the conceptual framework for this study included the following points: the rationale for the case study approach, major features of the study (major research design), and the issues of credibility and ethics involved with this type of research.

In noting the content and context of the standardized open-ended questions found in Appendices A and B used to guide the interviews of the informants, it is evident that they are all a reflection of the major points of the information found in the review of
literature relative to the major themes of the effects of international experiences on students and their immediate families. These themes that ultimately arose from the literature review and during the interviews were: 1) Intellectual Development/Career Choices, 2) Developing an International Perspective, 3) Changes in Perception of Host Country/International Representative, 4) Personal/Family Development, and 5) Heightened Sense of Community.

A variety of archival sources were located to document all of the steps and events related to the School to School Linkage Program. This material was examined and each item was labeled with its appropriate name. These items were then assigned to one of two lists. In Table 5 are items which have been analyzed by the coding categories (participants had control/effect) which are found in Table 2. Those items which are not appropriate for analysis (participants and no control/effect – were pre-planned events/procedural items) but are important substantive materials are found in Table 6.

Overall review and analysis of the data revealed that both the Landry and Boudreaux families referenced a high association with the themes and sub-themes associated with Developing an International Perspective and Personal/Family Development. However, Jill Landry’s mother, Sue, also referenced a high association with the theme of Heightened Sense of Community and its related sub-themes. Significant information related by individual family members to the remaining themes and sub-themes included Career/Educational Choices, Awareness of Cultural Differences, Appreciation for the American Lifestyle, Appreciation of the Value of the International School to School Linkage Program, Openness to New Cultures, Parental Life Transitions, Development of Parenting Skills, Anxiety, Building of Family
Relationships, Support of Child/Sibling, Student Maturation, and Concern for Others/Making a Difference.

As I conducted the interviews of the two families and analysis of the data presented, I kept the main study question in mind: how have the lives of the student participants and their immediate families been affected by their participation in the School to School Linkage Program? The responses of the informants under the five major themes/coding categories and their respective sub-themes which arose during their interviews have provided a framework for answering this question. In this chapter, I shall discuss the similarities and differences between the two families, ending with conclusions, recommendations, and contributions from this study.

It must be stated from the outset that although the experience of conducting the interviews actually confirmed much of what I already generally knew about their feelings and reactions to the SSLP, it actually gave the family members, particularly the parents, an opportunity to communicate to me some of their most profound feelings that occurred and how they still feel, some of which I did not realize were so strong. An example of one of the most intense was the reality of the often high levels of anxiety they often felt throughout the program, including the time that they hosted an international student, but even more so when their own child was overseas. After conducting interviews with both sets of parents, I really began to realize how much parental emotion they went through during the experiences and how much they trusted me and my fellow chaperone. I still have the vision of one of the American fathers, sitting alone and away from the rest of us prior to our departure for Russia from the airport, crying copious yet silent tears. I also remember another mother’s deep concern about our ability to be able to attend Catholic
church services while we were in Russia, a predominantly Orthodox country. Since I am not a parent myself, this really comes to light now with my own increased sensitivity of what they experienced. However, it was evident that even amidst the anxiety that they all experienced to varying degrees, there was also a high degree of trust for me as their adult leader, support for their children/siblings for participation in SSLP, and satisfaction that this was indeed a good experience for all.

**Effects on the Boudreaux Family Members**

Judging from the content of the interview data and from my historical relationship with this family, it is quite evident that they have become strong advocates of international exchanges because of their two very positive experiences in this area: the International FFA School to School Linkage Program (SSLP - of which this study was the focus) and the Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX – hosting a student from the former Soviet Union during the 1999-2000 school term). Although they are by nature a very soft-spoken family (with the exception of the father, Bill), it caused much excitement within their household; thus they were very willing to share their experiences.

Upon analysis of the data gleaned from their interviews, the association of responses from the Boudreaux family as a whole overwhelmingly clustered under two main themes: Developing an International Perspective and Personal/Family Development.

**Intellectual Development/Career Guidance Choices (U. S. Participants)**

Within this theme, Al provided the most insight. The SSLP experience provided many benefits to him, especially in the area of career guidance. It affected much change within him, helping him to appreciate the American agricultural system, his desire to
continue being a part of that system, and his willingness to assist agriculturists abroad. He also developed a greater understanding and appreciation for international agriculture as a whole, thus guiding him in his decision to pursue a program of graduate studies in crawfish production and international agriculture. He ultimately wishes to own his own crawfish production operation in the U. S. and to work in some type of international agricultural development. In particular, he has a deep desire to return to the Russian Platnaya Region to conduct follow-up work from our 1997-98 assignment and to assist agricultural professionals there.

Russ, the youngest member of the family and an elementary school student at the time of Sasha’s visit (Russian participant), was also affected in the area of educational/career choices. Upon witnessing and cooperating with the SSLP activities in and out of his home, his interest in the agricultural field was piqued, stimulating a desire to enroll in agricultural education classes upon entering high school and becoming a member of the FFA. He was impressed and moved by the opportunities that agricultural education has to offer, including activities such as international exchanges such as SSLP.

All of the family members were affected by the challenge of the language barrier between them and their international student (whose English-speaking proficiency was low). This caused them a certain degree of anxiety, but it was soon overcome through innovation and humor. It also gave them the opportunity to assist the Russian student with developing his own English-speaking skills, including learning phrases which expressed respect toward adults and strangers. Conversely, the family was also able to learn several useful Russian words and phrases which assisted Al on his reciprocal visit to Russia and alleviated some of his anxiety.
Developing an International Perspective

Of the family members, Bill, Sally, and Al provided most of the richest information. Through their experiences with SSLP and FLEX, they had a firm grip on understanding the aims and purposes of such programs and have become enthusiastic advocates of these and other similar programs. All family members obtained a deepened understanding and appreciation for cultural differences as well as the many common traits that cut across the human race. Bill took it a step further by expressing his firm belief that people of all nations must learn from history and not repeat the same mistakes. Instead, he feels that we must build constructive, respectful relationships and learn about the other. He has thus become a promoter of world peace in his own right. He expressed this in a particular poignant manner when making reference to America’s ongoing conflict in Iraq. He also learned that there is much mutual benefit between nations through this type of program.

The entire family also learned to deal with members of the community whose interest was stimulated during the entire SSLP experience, particularly when the Russian visitors were present. This included welcoming these visitors into their home and taking the time to share their time and knowledge with them. They all took this in stride and felt that it provided a sense of pride and excitement in their household. They were particularly pleased because they were aware that this experience was stimulating interest among other potential host families.

Jim was particularly touched since he felt that it gave people a chance to learn new things on a daily basis and how it brings families as well as nations closer together.
This also piqued his already strong desire to have the opportunity to travel to Russia just as his older brother did so that he could have the same type of experiences.

Al’s first-hand experience provided him with a heightened understanding of the agricultural, economic, and governmental situations in Russia, thus fueling an appreciation for the value of programs such as SSLP. This was accomplished by learning about the curriculum taught at the Zolatoya Agricultural Lyceum, touring their laboratories and farm, government research facilities, and visiting newly-privatized farmers, existing state farms, and business and industry. All of these experiences have fueled his desire to try to make a difference by lending assistance in the future as a professional international agricultural consultant. Boudreaux family members also developed a heightened appreciation for the value of international programs such as the SSLP for both Americans and international students. Bill gained a particularly deep insight into their effectiveness in the improvement of international relations, personal development, and educational/career opportunities.

**Change in Perception of Host Country/International Representatives**

As reported in Chapter 4, pre-conceived negative perceptions about citizens of the Former Soviet Union and their culture was not a large issue with the Boudreaux family. On the contrary, they became very motivated, open, and willing to learn about and from other cultures. The fact that the members of their entire family were novices in international experience made this even more interesting. Despite Sally’s initial apprehension with the idea of hosting an international student in their home, they felt much satisfaction that they eventually did so as well as Al having the opportunity to travel abroad and have new experiences. Sally deepened her skills in personal
development by learning how “to give people a chance” (Boudreaux Family interview, p. 16), a decision that she has not regretted. The SSLP experience heightened Al’s already intense interest in traveling abroad, especially Russia, to learn new things about their people, culture, and agriculture. As a young person, Russ achieved great insight into the human component of developing a relationship with and accepting a person of a different culture, thus gaining deeper insights into the inherent dignity and equality of humanity.

**Personal/Family Development**

This major theme had the highest number of associations of all the themes for the Boudreaux family. This was not surprising to me since they are a close-knit family whose members are highly supportive of each other, value the leadership development aspect of the National FFA Organization, have a sense of compassion for others, and possess a strong work ethic. Of all the family members, Al and his parents were the most vocal in their responses.

Naturally, much of Bill’s and Sally’s responses were associated with parent-type issues. Every stage of the SSLP experience, both at home and abroad, caused anxiety for the entire family in varying degrees. This was particularly true for the parents, and most profoundly with the mother. The levels were particularly more intense when their son was traveling to and from Russia as well as during his stay there. The feelings did not subside until our delegation stepped from the airplane at the local airport upon our return. They mainly centered around his safety during the journey, his health, and diet. They also cultivated a deeper trust in me as their son’s teacher and protector during the trip. It is interesting to note that Sally made almost three times more references to this issue than
did her husband, while Al had even fewer than his father. Al was, however, cognizant of the fact that his parents and those of his American team members were experiencing anxiety while we were overseas.

Al also experienced anxiety during the experience, although not to the same degree as his parents. The bulk of his anxiety was prior to and during the time of his family hosting the Russian student. Again, he had many initial concerns about the language barrier and his ability to provide his guest with a proper experience of the American lifestyle and American agriculture. However, he was tenacious in his efforts and he was satisfied with his performance, thus lessening his feelings of anxiety. Besides concerns about general safety, he was also anxious about the language issue and his ability to communicate while in Russia. His maturity level rose when he and our group were confronted with the only fairly serious threat to our safety during the trip. This occurred during a side-trip to a larger Russian city when our train tickets for the return trip to Moscow were stolen from the purse of our interpreter. Throughout the ordeal, he remained very calm as we worked to deal with the situation. He approached this challenge as a growth experience, not deterring him from his wish to return some day to Russia to continue the work that he began.

In spite of all of the anxious moments that family members experienced, they were in full support of Al’s decision to participate (as did Al’s siblings) and were pleased with the effect that it has had on his life and that of their entire family. This also focused on the sub-theme of parental life transitions, coming at a time when they were beginning to realize that Al was at a time in his life when he wished to make more of his own decisions. This experience helped them in their struggles of learning to “let go” of their
children as they got older. Bill was pleased with the opportunity that this afforded his son to experience other cultures and lifestyles and to build his self-esteem, self-confidence, and level of maturity.

The sub-themes of relationship-building within the family and development of parenting skills were the overwhelming choice of Bill and Sally. They quickly built a positive relationship with their Russian guest and learned to treat him as one of the family. Jim treated this as a very interesting adventure that he deeply enjoyed. He was amazed how quickly they got close to him within the short duration of his stay. Parenting skills were also honed during this time. As a father, Bill had concerns, as any responsible father would, about his exchange student’s diet, trying to find interesting activities for him, and other basic needs which would tend to his comfort and safety. He did feel very confident that they provided the best that they could during his stay. As a mother, Sally felt that she had to take charge of the situation when, upon Sasha’s arrival in the United States, his luggage was lost for several days, and she took him shopping for clothes and personal essentials.

The siblings also felt a high sense of responsibility in playing their roles as Sasha’s “American brothers” during his stay, making every attempt to make him feel part of the family, tend to his needs, and provide him with an enjoyable and educational experience. In particular, Jim was very focused on ensuring that Sasha would not be disappointed with his stay here. Clyde focused on playing the role of “big brother” by watching over him at home and on trips if his parents were not present and making responsible decisions when needed. Russ played the role of younger brother by staying close to Sasha and keeping him busy. The building of this close relationship had great
bearing, though, on the great distress that the whole family experienced upon Sasha’s departure from their home. This grief still arises from time to time within members of the family as they reminisce, feeling the same type of grief as losing one of their own children. Bill states that they still see this as a very difficult time of adjustment for them, even though almost six years have passed.

It was also clear from the interview that Sally’s social skills were positively affected in her ability to better deal with strangers. The experience of having a young stranger in her home for several weeks gave her the opportunity to learn to communicate better with people whom she had never met. The charge was even more of an educational challenge because of the language and cultural barrier. She now has less difficulty meeting strangers in public and communicating with them. This is obviously a valuable asset in her present employment as a cashier at a local grocery store.

Along with building a relationship with their Russian guest, existing family ties were clearly strengthened. Jim attributed this to the fact that his family pulled their resources together, cooperated, and exhibited special care for each other and Sasha during his stay. While abroad, Al thought enough of his parents to bring them souvenirs so that they could have some mementos of the experience. This touched them greatly, particularly his father. Al’s notion of their family closeness was confirmed by, for example, the experience of his emotional welcome by numerous immediate and extended family members upon his arrival from Russia at the local airport. Family members were also able to have pleasurable, inter-family bonding moments through their participation in various activities within the state with their guests such as cultural, educational, and
entertainment-type tours - experiences which they had never before had the opportunity to experience.

Related to the theme of relationship building was Al’s strong sense of care and concern for his Russian counterparts and his willingness to “make a difference” in the agricultural/international scene. He felt a very strong sense of mission to help others even as a student in his SSLP participation. He is confident that, armed with his college education and determination, that he will make a difference in American agriculture and abroad. He is aware of the difficult transition that Russia is experiencing, witnessing a slice of it first-hand, and he wishes to return to the same location to resume the work that he and his colleagues participated in. It is also his desire to one day have the ability and resources to conduct international exchanges with this region of Russia and other places in need. This care and concern also exemplified itself with a strong sense of empathy that he felt for his Russian counterparts with the same areas of concern that he had, such as communication barriers, safety, and homesickness.

With this notion of making a difference come the sub-themes of maturity and an increased sense of responsibility. He realized that this SSLP experience placed him in challenging situations, which required him to sometimes make difficult decisions and sacrifices, to witness difficult situations in a developing country, lessons which are guiding him along his career development path. He had a strong sense that his Russian peers and their adult leaders were pleased that we were interested in assisting them to improve their own situation. Al, as well as his family, sensed such a growth within himself.
Al also felt that his leadership skills and self-confidence were taken to a higher level because of SSLP. He developed a “take-charge” attitude, placing a high priority on tending to the needs of his Russian peers and being a reliable source of information, all the while urging his fellow Prairie High School students to do the same and remain focused on the objectives of our mission. His level of confidence also rose through his opportunity to communicate with Russian agricultural and media professionals in matters of agriculture and education.

Throughout these experiences, Al is firmly convinced that, even at such a young age, he and his colleagues did something very important that will have a lasting impact on Russian society. He also feels that he has been a positive influence on many agricultural education students and adult professionals around the state of Louisiana through his presentations on international agriculture.

**Heightened Sense of Community**

Of this theme, Sally and her son Al provided the bulk of the insight. They both became even firmer believers in the value of a small community in the way that they readily responded to the call for assistance in planning and executing the entire SSLP experience. As a parent, she has much satisfaction that this experience also gave the participant families an opportunity to work together, build relationships, and actually bond together while working with the program. In particular, Al was impressed with the phenomenon of family and non-family community members actually coming together to work toward a common cause. Jim also made the connection of the phenomenon of cooperation between the host families and the corresponding result of bonding and deepening of relationships.
Effects on the Landry Family Members

Intellectual Development/Career Guidance Choices

Although not one of the highest themes with which they associated, Joe and Sue Landry made slightly more overall references within this category as compared to the Boudreaux family. With the exception of Al Boudreaux, Sue and her daughter Jill made all of the major references to the sub-theme of Appreciation for the American Lifestyle and Agriculture. Sue was particularly moved when she observed pictures and the reports given to her by Jill concerning the hospitality shown to her even amidst economic difficulties when living with her Russian host family. Both Jill and her mother developed a deeper appreciation of the advantages of American life over the Russian situation, such as availability of food, transportation, communications technology, and other personal comforts. The SSLP experience also had a profound effect on Jill in the area of educational and career choices. These experiences have reaffirmed her choice to work in some field of agriculture, preferably in a role where she can make a difference in people’s lives, such as agricultural youth development, politics, or international relations.

Developing an International Perspective

As with the Boudreaux family, all members of the Landry family developed an appreciation of the value of the SSLP and their satisfaction in having the opportunity to participate. Jill also developed a deeper realization in the fact that this and similar programs have great value for local communities by providing an opportunity for them to be exposed to different cultures.
While this major theme was also one with a high overall number of associations, there was a much stronger emphasis by the Landry family in one of the sub-themes, that of Awareness/Understanding of Cultural Differences. Both Jill and her mother were more deeply struck by the cultural differences of their Russian counterparts. Joe was particularly surprised at the reactions that their visitor, Lydia, had to some of our American conveniences and technology as well as her own lack of personal resources. They were equally astounded by Jill’s account of the Russian situation while she was there, which was a reflection of what they experienced with Lydia. Jill herself had a difficult time in her early adjustment to the cultural differences, including the initial shock of downtown Moscow upon our arrival in Russia, requiring several days to settle down. She did so successfully and learned to adapt very well. As people who came of age during the Cold War, Joe and Sue were aware of the lack of basic freedoms in the former Soviet Union, yet they were still disturbed at the ongoing situation with Russia’s painful time of transition, including the subject of their economic system. Jill learned much first-hand about Russia’s government, economy, history, and educational system and was aware that the Platnaya Region was still a strong Communist Party stronghold, even though some reforms had taken place. She also developed a particular fascination in the country’s historical and cultural aspects and learned much. However, she was still disappointed and perplexed with her Russian peers’ and their adult leaders’ seeming lack of understanding of basic leadership skills as presented through FFA leadership practices. As with Bill Boudreaux, Sue Landry’s convictions of the importance of world peace were strengthened through her insistence that such efforts must begin with the proper leadership and social development of today’s youth.
Change in Perception of Host Country/International Representatives

As with the comparatively lower frequencies of associations made by the Boudreaux family with this theme, there were even fewer with the Landry family. Joe had no comments in this area. Similar to the Boudreaux family, the Landry family exhibited no major pre-conceived negative notions about the people of the former Soviet Union with the exception of Sue. Her sense of fear and intimidation of Russian society subsided after learning of Jill’s overall positive experience, especially after visiting Red Square and Moscow. Sue exhibited the most openness in her family to learning about new cultures, showing delight in having an international guest in her home, yet conceding that there were challenges. Thus, she and Jill learned to understand that one must have a very open mind toward new cultures/ideas/experiences if one wishes to become involved in such programs.

Personal/Family Development

The overall associations made by the Landry family within this major theme as compared to the Boudreaux’s were very similar. For instance, both of the mothers in this study exhibited relatively high levels of anxiety levels during the SSLP experience, particularly while their children were traveling to and residing in Russia. Both mothers also, especially Sue, had to continue developing their trust in me as Jill’s teacher and guardian during the trip. In addition, the parents of all participants learned to rely on each other for support and networking of news as each child would call back home for updates on our experiences. Conversely, the fathers made fewer references to anxiety, although they most certainly experienced those feelings. In matters of trust in me, Joe developed more of a calm assurance that I had the ability to protect his child and the
other members of the Prairie High School delegation during our travels. The further development of their parenting skills, both with their own children and that of an international student, was evident as well as their deep willingness to support their children in this endeavor and those of the future.

As stated earlier, Sue and Joe were experiencing their own type of stress during the SSLP in reference to their recent marital separation (as opposed to the Boudreaux family being intact), coupled with the fact that Jill was the youngest child of the family and the last preparing to leave home and make other important life decisions such as college and career choices. Thus, it was a period of challenging transition for this family. This was especially a stark reality for Sue who realized that she was soon to be totally alone in her own home for the first time in her life. This was correspondingly reflected in Sue’s relatively high number of associations within this sub-theme. Thus, there was obviously much stress and uncertainty in their lives during this time.

Jill also experienced her own challenges with her exchange student which differed greatly from Al’s counterpart, causing a certain degree of anxiety besides what was mentioned in earlier lines. While Al and his family had a very positive experience with their Russian student and became very close to him, Jill felt disappointment that her Russian guest, Lydia, was very uninterested and unmotivated about the mission of the SSLP experience as well as being unwilling to practice and improve her English-speaking skills. Thus, very little development of friendship or bonding occurred while Lydia was in the United States nor when Jill traveled to Russia on our reciprocal visit. Besides Lydia, Jill also felt that several other members of the Russian delegation were equally unmotivated. It is interesting to note that Al Boudreaux perceived the situation in a
totally opposite manner, feeling very positive about the entire Russian group. This was probably due to the fact that he had such a positive experience with Sasha. However, Jill learned to cope and grow through this experience and chose to forge other friendships with other Russian students and their friends and relatives. She also was motivated by the fact that, during our stay in Russia, she would be able to rendezvous and renew a friendship with Olga, a Russian exchange student who had attended Prairie High School two years earlier. Jill learned much about Russian life from Olga, particularly in the area of women’s roles in her society.

In spite of their feelings of anxiety, as with the Boudreaux parents, Joe and Sue felt much satisfaction and gratitude that their daughter participated in the SSLP experience. Among other things, they felt that the experience gave her more direction and focus in life, exhibiting greater maturity, spiritual growth, and a deeper appreciation for family. Both Sue and Joe agreed that this experience was a major factor in her choice of college major and career choice of agriculture and her desire to work with youth. In spite of her challenging experiences, Jill was very satisfied with the SSLP experience as a whole and that it was a fruitful, growth-filled time in her life. She feels that her sense of self-empowerment, increased self-confidence, maturation, and independence have increased.

In the sub-theme of parenting skills development, Sue’s responses had a much higher occurrence of association than Joe’s, although both had equal marks in the area of supporting their child in her endeavors. This is understandable since Jill was living with her mother at the time and Joe was not present during the SSLP experience as often as Sue was. Sue undertook the challenge of taking in another young adult into her home as
a single parent who was holding down two jobs and made every attempt at making her feel welcome in her home as she would any of her children. This included communication, quality meals, shopping, transportation, and including her in family events. She also had to rely on Jill on a whole new plane in areas such as assisting with the care of Lydia. This included developing more trust in her when she was transporting her to events and observation of curfews.

**Heightened Sense of Community**

This theme had one of the higher frequencies of association for the Landry family than did for the Boudreaux family. In particular, Sue had the strongest reaction to this category, especially in the sub-themes of community development and support. She deepened an already strong faith in the community for their efforts in supporting this program. Thus, she expressed her own willingness to provide assistance and encouragement for similar upcoming programs. Joe was appreciative of the support received from the community and was impressed that people came together to make this event possible, exposing them to different cultures.

Jill also realized the important role that the community played to make the SSLP experience possible. She observed that not only did the community contribute financially, but it also built a groundswell of pride and overall support for Prairie High School’s FFA program. She was also pleased that certain members of the local agribusiness community contributed to the cause by accommodating our groups with tours of their facilities as well as donating items for fund raising. She felt that such actions gave them a sense of ownership into our project.
Sue’s responses also gravitated to the sub-theme of bonding between the parents of the American SSLP participants. In a similar frequency of responses to Sally Boudreaux (neither of the fathers made any direct reference), Sue found this to be a very desirable consequence of the SSLP experience. She admitted that prior to the program, she did not know all of the parents as well as she would have liked, so this gave her an opportunity to cultivate new friendships and strengthen existing ones. In fact, she indicated a desire to have some type of reunion in the future with these parents and other parents who supported our endeavors.

Conclusions

**Overall Effects of SSLP**

Therefore, how indeed has the SSLP affected its participants and the members of their immediate families? In reference to the proposition presented in Chapter 3 that this program would be an overall positive experience, the findings of this study reveal that it was. Overall review and analysis of the data revealed that both the Landry and Boudreaux families benefited greatly with reference to two main themes and various sub-themes associated with them, as indicated by the highest frequencies of reference to them: Developing an International Perspective and Personal/Family Development. Under the theme of Developing an International Perspective, first and foremost, they developed a deep appreciation for the role that SSLP played within this entire experience. Specifically, they developed a deeper appreciation for cultural differences, became promoters of world peace and cooperation between nations, learned to deal with a curious local community which wished to learn more about SSLP, developed a heightened understanding of the agricultural economic, and governmental situations in Russia,
gained a deeper insight into the effectiveness of positive international relations, personal
development, and career/educational opportunities, and changed, at least for Sue Landry,
a fearful image of the old Soviet-style system. Under Personal/Family Development, all
members of the families, particularly the mothers, experienced various levels of anxiety.
However, through this, they also cultivated a deeper trust in me as their child’s teacher
and protector during the program. This also provided a segue for experiencing parental
transitions where they continued with the process of “letting go” of their young adult
children. Furthermore, it helped the parents to improve their parenting skills; and for the
children, it increased their sense of responsibility. For most participants, particularly
Sally Boudreaux, the experience improved their social skills. For Sally, it helped her to
learn to deal with strangers. For the student participants, they gained skills in learning to
cope with and adjust to living in different cultural settings. All members learned to deal
with language barriers and learned several Russian words and phrases. Existing family
ties were strengthened. Student participants developed a strong sense of mission for the
entire program and gained a higher sense of maturity, responsibility, and confidence in
themselves. Jill Landry’s mother, Sue, also referenced a high association with the theme
of Heightened Sense of Community and its related sub-themes. She deepened an already
strong faith in the community for their efforts in making the program successful. Sue
also was particularly affected by the bonding that occurred between the parents of the
participating families, assisting her in cultivating new friendships and strengthening
existing ones.

Significant information related by individual family members to the remaining
themes and sub-themes included an increased appreciation for the American lifestyle,
openness to new and different cultures, an increased concern for others and wishing to make a difference in the lives of others.

Thus, it is evident that all participants gained much from this experience in the many references to the learning that they experienced in many ways, which not only included technical knowledge of Russian agriculture and government and learning to embrace their customs, language, and culture; but they also learned much about themselves and how they can teach and relate to others, especially those from a different country. They all agreed that they gained much appreciation for the comforts, conveniences, and resources that American life has to offer. One very important response which they all related to me was that they learned to respect other cultures and have a higher tolerance for those who are different. I sensed a heightened degree of compassion in their statements, coupled with a desire to have another opportunity to repeat this type of experience. Even amidst the challenges, hard work, and various levels of angst, they found this to be a worthwhile and life-changing experience.

Recommendations and Contributions of Study

The information gained from this qualitative study of two families has contributed to a greater body of knowledge in the fields of social sciences and agriculture. The major themes discovered in the review of literature have evolved and been expanded through the information gathered from the interviews of the informants. For instance, the major theme of Change in Perception of Host Country added more specificity by evolving into Change of Perception of Host Country/International Representatives. The Personal Development theme broadened into Personal/Family Development. The theme of Heightened Sense of Community was added to this list. In addition, numerous sub-
themes were discovered. They included Appreciation for the American Lifestyle, Empathy with International Students, Adapting to Cultural Differences, Life Transitions, and Community Development.

Next, I must address the question of the motivation behind conducting this study. It was obvious through the review of literature that much writing has been done on various types of international student exchanges over the years and their benefits and challenges. The National FFA Organization has been a leader in promoting and facilitating such programs over the years, naturally concentrating in the agricultural experience-type ventures. One need only review the organization’s history to observe its evolution in the number and types of activities offered, all reflecting the changing times of world events. Much effort and resources have gone into the planning and execution of one of its more popular and innovative ones, the International FFA School to School Linkage Program. Although most of those involved in various capacities over the years can provide anecdotal information and commentary as to the effects of these programs on the participants and our respective societies, Curtis Stutzman (2001), SSLP coordinator, indicates that there has never been any formal study done on the effects of this specific program on its American participants and their families. In light of increasing demands for accountability of the effectiveness and feasibility of these types of programs made by legislators and various administrators of agricultural and educational programs, I felt that a study was necessary to begin building a case for the continuation of such programs, especially under the auspices of the National FFA Organization. Again, it is obvious by observing this study’s literature review that the international programs sponsored and facilitated by this organization have evolved over the years. As of late, due to different
reasons, the National FFA’s direct involvement with international exchanges has decreased, preferring rather to play indirect roles in exposing students to international experiences. I strongly feel that their direct involvement should be increased to its former levels, and that the results from this study are a first step in building a case for this cause. As well, in light of the national wave of the demand for increased accountability in schools, an increasing number of educational administrators are questioning the value of any type of non-academic/non-traditional methods of education, with international exchanges being one of them. Again, this study was a good starting point, and further studies of this type and other methodologies which prove the value of such experiences would be in proper order to expand on this body of knowledge. In reference to this study’s proposition of and ultimate finding that this experience was a positive one for participants, for instance, I feel that further quantitative studies could include hypothesis testing in this same area. Not only should they, for instance, study the effect that these programs have on a student’s academic ability, but also the development of important skills such as social and communication skills, leadership abilities, attitudes toward learning, work ethic, and their ability to build community. This information must also be shared with legislators and other government officials who formulate budgets and laws which affect the ultimate existence of such programs.

Personally speaking, I invested much of myself and my community in this experience, and I wished to know with some degree of assurance its effects on the participants and our local community. I am satisfied that this study has done so. Professionally speaking, it is evident that I have a strong interest in working with the educational/agricultural youth leadership development systems of post-communist
countries. This study also reveals that several of our original participants still have a high level of interest in continuing their participation in such experiences as well. As this research reveals, much effort and resources have been invested into this particular project with obvious fruit borne from it. However, this particular SSLP experience was only of a relatively short duration, providing us with only preliminary establishment of relationships and building of knowledge. From my experience of working with my colleagues in countries of the former Soviet Union, it takes much time to build trusting relationships and to learn about each other’s culture, economic and educational systems, political structure, and history. All of these factors affect the long-term progress that can be made which would be compatible and feasible within their own situations; thus, a renewal of our working relationships with our Russian colleagues is in order. I also wish to continue similar work that I began in Ukraine (Crimea) in the late 1990’s. As well, I am also open to working with leaders of other former Soviet Republics, Eastern European countries, and, when the time is appropriate, the country of Cuba.

The informants in this study also reveal that there are issues on the domestic side which need to be addressed before proceeding with this type of activity in the future, such as challenges with language, dealing with cultural differences, duration of stay, follow-ups and reliable means of communication with international colleagues upon return to home, and anxiety. More specifically, the Boudreaux family and Jill Landry suggest that there be some type of basic Russian language preparation and support. To follow in the same vein, Jill recommends better Russian history and culture preparation. Jill and her father feel that more time than three weeks should be allotted for the experience abroad and that a better system of selecting the Russian participants be instituted. As a mother,
Sue Landry desires a better means and more regular opportunities of communicating with the American students while they are abroad. Al Boudreaux strongly feels that arrangements for follow-up with their Russian counterparts should be standard procedure so as to have the ability to monitor their progress, be available for assistance, and to maintain relationships.

The knowledge gained from this study will be of great assistance to me for improvement in planning and execution of future programs. It is also my hope that this knowledge will also be of assistance to others who are considering taking part in similar ventures as well as those who wish to pursue similar studies.
REFERENCES


This is USAID. Retrieved August 14, 2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.usaid.gov/about/.


Zhai, L. (2000). The influence of study abroad programs on college student development in the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences at the Ohio State University. (Doctoral dissertation. The Ohio State University. 2000).
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS
(Standardized Open-Ended)

*Thoughts/reflections prior to participating in the International FFA School Linkage Program (SSLP):*

1) What was your main motivation in applying to participate in the SSLP? What part(s) of the program really appealed to you?

2) Could you describe your experiences, if any, with international students/adults prior to SSLP?

3) Thinking back prior to your participating (hosting a Russian student and traveling to Russia), what particular issues concerned you? What were your feelings?

4) What did you hope to gain/learn from the SSLP experience?

*Thoughts/reflections during/after SSLP:*

1) To what extent was SSLP
   A) what you expected it to be?
   B) different from what you expected?

2) To what extent did the issues you were concerned about before the program come true?

3) Let’s discuss how the program affected you personally.
   A) What changes in yourself do you see or feel as a result of the program?
   B) Could you describe one of the most positive things that you got out of the experience?
   C) Could you describe one of the most challenging things that you experienced during the program? How did you deal with it?

4) For a total of six weeks in 1998 (three weeks at home and three in Russia), you were either a host to or a guest of and Russian student and cooperated with their Russian adult chaperones. You also spent much time with your fellow Prairie FFA members who were also part of this experience. Let’s discuss your feelings about having been a part of those groups for that time.
A) What feelings do you have about both groups?

B) What role do you feel you played in the groups?

C) How did the groups affect you?

D) How do you feel you affected the groups?

E) In what ways did you relate differently (if any) to the Russian participants as compared to your Prairie colleagues?

5) What effect do you think that programs such as SSLP have on:

A) American participants?

B) Russian participants?

C) your local school/community?

D) the Mtsensk Agricultural Lyceum and its surrounding communities?

6) What was the

A) high point of SSLP for you?

B) low point of SSLP for you?

7) How do you think SSLP affected you

A) upon your immediate return from Russia to home?

B) the time between your return and the present time?

C) at the present time?

D) for your choice of college major/career choice?

8) Suppose you were asked by a government agency/local school system/State or National FFA Organization whether or not it should support an experience similar to this one. What would be your response?

9) What characteristics/attributes should a person possess to participate in such a program? What characteristics/attributes would you find problematic/challenging?
10) What changes would you recommend in the SSLP?

11) Are there any other thoughts or feelings that you might want to share to help me to understand your feelings about this experience and how it affected you?

You’ve been very helpful and cooperative. Thanks so much for your input.

Selected Reference

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FAMILIES OF STUDENT PARTICIPANTS
(Standardized Open-Ended)

*Thoughts/reflections prior to participating in the International FFA School Linkage Program (SSLP):*

1) What was your main motivation in supporting your child/sibling and family to participate in the SSLP? What part(s) of the program really appealed to you?

2) Could you describe your family’s experiences, if any, with international students/adults prior to SSLP?

3) Thinking back prior to your family’s participation (hosting a Russian student and your child/sibling traveling to Russia), what particular issues concerned you? What were your feelings?

4) What did you hope for your child/sibling to gain/learn from the SSLP experience? What did you hope to gain/learn?

*Thoughts/reflections during/after SSLP:*

1) To what extent was SSLP (total experience for you and your family: child/sibling being selected for participation, preparation for hosting and overseas travel, actual travel of your child/sibling overseas, your child’s/sibling’s experience since returning)

   A) what you expected it to be?

   B) different from what you expected?

2) To what extent did the issues you were concerned about before the program come true?

3) Let’s discuss how did the program affected all of you personally.

   A) What changes in yourself do you see or feel as a result of the program?

   B) Could you describe one of the most positive things that you got out of the experience?

   C) Could you describe one of the most challenging things that you experienced during the program? How did you deal with it?

4) For a total of three weeks in 1998, you were a host to a Russian student. You also spent
much time with the other host Prairie FFA families and their Russian students and adult chaperones who were also part of this experience. Let’s discuss the feelings that you have about having been a part of those groups for that time.

A) What feelings do you have about both groups?

B) What role do you feel you played in the groups?

C) How did the groups affect you?

D) How do you feel you affected the groups?

E) In what ways did you relate differently (if any) to the Russian participants as compared to your Prairie colleagues?

5) What effect do you think that programs such as SSLP have on:

A) American participants?

B) Russian participants?

C) your local school/community?

D) the Mtsensk Agricultural Lyceum and its surrounding communities (as related to you by your child/sibling)?

6) What was the

A) high point of SSLP for you?

B) low point of SSLP for you?

7) How do you think SSLP affected you

A) upon your child’s/sibling’s immediate return from Russia to home?

B) the time between your child’s/sibling’s return and the present time?

C) at the present time?

D) for your child’s/sibling’s choice of college major/career choice? The choice of college major/career choice for the siblings of the participants?

8) Suppose you were asked by a government agency/local school system/State or National
FFA Organization whether or not it should support an experience similar to this one. What would be your response?

9) What characteristics/attributes should a person possess to participate in such a program? What characteristics/attributes would you find problematic/challenging?

10) What changes would you recommend in the SSLP?

11) Are there any other thoughts or feelings that you might want to share to help me to understand your feelings about this experience and how it affected you?

You’ve been very helpful and cooperative. Thanks so much for your input.

Selected Reference

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW RELEASE FORM
2001 INTERVIEWS OF PARTICIPANTS
Perceptions of the Effects
of
FFA International School Linkage Program

INTERVIEWEE RELEASE FORM
Tapes and Transcripts
Study done by Bradley A. Leger
Louisiana State University

I, ________________________________, do hereby give permission to Bradley A. Leger to conduct tape-recorded individual interviews and focus groups as a graduate student in the LSU School of Human Resource, Education, and Workforce Development (SHREWD) within the College of Agriculture/LSU Agricultural Center (under the guidance of Dr. Cathy Hamilton) beginning on __________________ (date) and any necessary subsequent dates thereafter to serve the following purposes:

1. to determine the perceived effects of the 1997-98 FFA International School Linkage Program on the six participants who were students at Prairie High School
2. fulfill the partial requirements of the interviewer for VED 7805 (Qualitative Research Methodology) for the Fall 2001 Session.

Role and Responsibility of the Informant:

1. to agree to attend mutually agreed-upon meeting times with interviewer
2. share honest assessments of international experiences

The researcher guarantees anonymity on all written transcripts by using a special coding system known only to the researcher. The interviewee also has full right of access and review of any written or recorded material resulting from the interviews/focus groups.

___________________________________________________
Signature of Interviewee                                     Date

___________________________________________________
Address

___________________________________________________
Phone number (H)                                 Phone number (W)

___________________________________________________
Signature of Interviewer                                  Date
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW RELEASE FORM
2003-2004 INTERVIEWS OF STUDENT PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL TO SCHOOL LINKAGE PROGRAM:
CASE STUDIES OF TWO FAMILIES

Tapes and Transcripts
Study done by Bradley A. Leger
Louisiana State University

I, ________________________________, do hereby give permission to Bradley A. Leger to conduct tape-recorded individual interviews as a graduate student in the LSU School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development (SHREWD) within the College of Agriculture (under the guidance of Dr. Michael Burnett and Dr. Satish Verma) beginning on __________________ (date) and any necessary subsequent dates thereafter to serve the following purposes:

1) To determine the effects of the 1997-98 FFA International School Linkage Program on the two selected participants who were students at Prairie High School and their families (maximum of nine participants).
2) Fulfill the partial requirements of the interviewer for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Role and Responsibility of the Informant:

1) I agree to attend mutually agreed-upon meeting times and location with interviewer. Failure to do so will result in my removal from the study.
2) Share honest assessments of international experiences.

The researcher guarantees anonymity on all written transcripts by using a special coding system known only to the researcher. The interviewee also has full right of access and review of any written or recorded material resulting from the interviews. The results of this research will be beneficial in the planning and execution of future similar programs. There is no known risk to the participants since the questions being asked are not of a highly personal nature and that all interviews will be done in a family group setting with parents present. I also understand that participation in this study is voluntary with no form of compensation and that I may change my mind and withdraw from this study at any time with no consequences.
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, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225)578-8692. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the researchers’ obligation to provide me with a copy of this consent form if signed by me.

___________________________________________________
Signature of Interviewee                                     Date

___________________________________________________
Address

City                                  State                                  Zip

___________________________________________________
Phone number (H)                  Phone number (W)

___________________________________________________
Signature of Interviewer                                  Date

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Phone number (H)                  Phone number (W)
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APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW RELEASE FORM
2003-2004 INTERVIEWS OF MINOR-AGED FAMILY PARTICIPANT

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL TO SCHOOL LINKAGE PROGRAM:
CASE STUDIES OF TWO FAMILIES

Tapes and Transcripts
Study done by Bradley A. Leger
Louisiana State University

I, _______________________________________, do hereby give permission to Bradley A. Leger to conduct tape-recorded individual interviews of my minor-aged child, ____________________________________, as a graduate student in the LSU School of Human Resource, Education, and Workforce Development (SHREWD) within the College of Agriculture (under the guidance of Dr. Michael Burnett and Dr. Satish Verma) beginning on ________________ (date) and any necessary subsequent dates thereafter to serve the following purposes:

1) To determine the effects of the 1997-98 FFA International School Linkage Program on the two selected participants who were students at Prairie High School and their families (maximum of nine participants).
2) Fulfill the partial requirements of the interviewer for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Role and Responsibility of the Informant:

1) To agree to attend mutually agreed-upon meeting times and location with interviewer. Failure to do so will result in our child’s removal from the study.
2) Share honest assessments of international experiences.

The researcher guarantees anonymity on all written transcripts by using a special coding system known only to the researcher. Interviewee also has full right of access and review of any written or recorded material resulting from the interviews. Any interviews of this minor child by the researcher will be done only in the presence of his/her parents. The results of this research will be beneficial in the planning and execution of future similar programs. There is no known risk to the participants since the questions being asked are not of a highly personal nature and that all interviews will be done in a family group setting with parents present. Interviewee also understands that participation in this study is voluntary with no form of compensation and that the interviewee we may change his/her mind and withdraw from this study at any time with no consequences.
The study has been discussed with me and all our 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, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225)578-8692. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the researchers’ obligation to provide me with a copy of this consent form if signed by me.

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LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
APPLICATION: APPROVAL OF PROJECTS WHICH USE HUMAN SUBJECTS

LSU INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

p.1

IRB APPLICATION: APPROVAL OF PROJECTS WHICH USE HUMAN SUBJECTS

The IRB uses this form to obtain succinct answers to questions it must consider. If incomplete, your application will be returned! You can download this form and all other IRB documents from http://appl022.lsu.edu/osp/osp.nsf/$Content/LSU%20IRB%20Documents) & complete it with your word processor. Call Robert Mathews for assistance, 225-578-8692, or e-mail him at: irb@lsu.edu.

When this application is submitted to the IRB please include:

• Two copies of this completed form.
• A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects)
• Copies of all instruments to be used. If this proposal is a part of a grant application include a copy of the grant proposal, the investigative brochure (if one exists) and any recruitment materials including advertisements intended to be seen or heard by potential subjects.
• The consent form that you will be using.
• Copies of your IRB stamped consent form must be used in obtaining consent.

=================================================================

(IRB Use: IRB# _______ Review Type: Expedited___ Full ___)

=================================================================

Part 1: General Information

1. Principal Investigator: __Dr. Michael Burnett_____ Rank: _Professor__
   (PI Must be an LSU Faculty member)
   Dept.: ___SHREWD________________________________________ Ph: _578-5748__
   E-mail: _vocbur@lsu.edu________

Co-investigators*: __Bradley A.
Leger__________________________
2. **Project Title:** International School to School Linkage Program: Case Studies of Two Families

3. **Proposed duration** (months): 3  **Start date:** December 2003

4. **Funding sought from:**  
   NA

5. **LSU Proposal #:**

6. **Number of subjects requested:** 9

A. **ASSURANCE: PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR** (named above)

I accept personal responsibility for the conduct of this study (including ensuring compliance of co-investigators/co-workers in accordance with the documents submitted herewith and the following guidelines for human subject protection: The Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with OPRR, and 45 CFR 46 (Available from OSP or at [http://appl022.lsu.edu/osp/osp.nsf/$Content/LSU%20IRB%20Documents](http://appl022.lsu.edu/osp/osp.nsf/$Content/LSU%20IRB%20Documents))

Signature of PI _______________ Date ________________

B. **ASSURANCE OF STUDENT/PROJECT COORDINATOR** named above

I agree to adhere to the terms of this document and am familiar with the documents referenced above.

Signature _______________ Date ________________

---

**Part 2: Project Abstract** - provide a brief abstract of the project.

**ABSTRACT OF STUDY**
Study Title: International School to School Linkage Program: Case Studies of Two Families

Investigator:

Bradley A. Leger
P.O. Box 124
Estherwood, LA 70534
225/578-5789 (W)
337/788-0544 (H)

Description of Study:

Purpose of Study: Many new questions and situations are arising from great advances in our world’s technology, such as the sources and quality of the food being consumed on the tables in homes around the world, the economics involved in its production, processing, and marketing; and international trade regulations (or lack thereof), just to name a few. To go further, with the ease of travel and communication, faces and voices from foreign lands are now more easily being connected with these questions, which lead even further and deeper into other questions/debates with issues such as differences in politics, government, culture, relationships, trust, standards of living, and religion. The National FFA Organization is one agriculturally-based youth organization in the United States which has been providing/facilitating international experiences for its members for a number of years. One of these programs is the International School to School Linkage Program (SSLP) in which American schools which have agricultural education/FFA programs are linked with specialized secondary agricultural schools/lyceums located in one of the countries located in one of the countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU). The program’s main mission is for the American students and teachers to share ideas with their FSU counterparts about the initiation and maintenance of small-scale agricultural entrepreneurship based on the United States’ agricultural education Supervised Agricultural Experience Program (SAEP) model. FSU students and teachers are also exposed to (and preferably participate in) FFA leadership activities. Of course, this type of experience benefits not only the individuals from the FSU but also the Americans as they learn to increase their own skills in leadership development and personal growth. The relationship begins with initial contact between the schools via telephone
facsimile/e-mail/surface mail/SSSLP facilitators to begin exchange of basic information about participants, the schools and their agricultural program, and the communities in which the schools are located. Next, one school visits the partner school with a delegation of six students and two adults for a period of three weeks. The other school then reciprocates for another three week period during the same school term with the same number of participants.

During the 1997-98 school term, six agricultural education students and two adults (myself and a local elementary school administrator) from Prairie High School located in Prairie, Louisiana (pseudonyms), participated in the SSLP. Our school was linked with the Zolatoya Agricultural Lyceum in Zolatoya, Platnaya Region (pseudonym), Russia. The families of the participants were highly involved in the whole experience, from initial planning to fund-raising to hosting the FSU students to living with their own children upon their return. This qualitative study seeks to investigate "How have the lives of two Prairie High School, Louisiana 1999 graduates and their immediate families been affected by their participation in the 1997-98 International School to School Linkage Program?" This will be done by, in collaboration with the participants, identifying themes and significant features.

**Subjects:** The participants/informants will be two 1999 Prairie High School graduates and their immediate family members with whom they resided during the 1997-98 school term. One of the family members to be interviewed is a "vulnerable person" (under 18 years of age).

**Part 3: Research Protocol**

**A: Describe study procedures**

Describe study procedures with emphasis on those procedures affecting subjects and safety measure. Also provide script for telephone surveys.

**Procedures for Selection of Participants:** As is common and appropriate for a qualitative study, *minimum sampling* and *purposeful sampling* will be utilized. Such sampling procedures focus on choosing information-rich cases which will hopefully yield answers to the questions under study. I will also employ *convenience sampling* (two families which are most accessible)
and maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling which seek to capture and describe the central themes that cut through much variation.

Data Collection: I will employ the triangulation process, utilizing appropriate techniques of 1) observation (involving thick description), 2) interviews using appropriately prepared questions, and 3) obtaining and analyzing pertinent archival information.

Credibility and Ethics: From 1979 – 2000, I served in the capacity of Agriscience Instructor/FFA Advisor at Prairie High School located in south Louisiana, including having taught all of the student informants in the study. During this tenure, much of our school-based activities were also integrated into numerous grassroots community development activities. My normal teaching activities also involved extensive travel within the state, nation, and overseas. Also, several support groups and key community leaders with whom I worked very closely assisted me in the evolution of my program. Members of these same groups also provided guidance and assistance in hosting and educating several international agriculture representatives (students and adult professionals) over several years as well as planning the SSLP experience. These people also included the families of the students who participated in the SSLP. Thus, a high degree of trust and credibility was necessarily developed through these relationships. I feel that the trust and credibility that I have developed with these selected families will spill over into the proper execution of this study.

Concerning the issue of ethics in research dealing with human subjects, I will be mindful in following proper guidelines which ensure that there is informed consent and protecting the subjects from harm. I will have each informant sign consent forms, plus I will conceal the true identities of the informants by using pseudonyms.

Potential Risks: There are none. It should be noted that there will be only one “vulnerable person” (under 18 years of age) who will be interviewed. At the time of his interview, his parents will be present and will also provide a written informed consent.

B: Answer each of the following questions.
1. Why is the use of human subjects necessary? (v.s. animals/in vitro)

Interviews will be necessary to obtain information about their experiences with SSLP.

2. Specify sites of data collection.

The families will be interviewed as a group in their homes or the location of their choice. The original two student participants (who are both presently enrolled at two separate universities) will be interviewed separately from their families at a mutually agreed-upon location.

3. If surgical or invasive procedures are used, give name, address, and telephone number of supervising physician and the qualifications of the person(s) performing the procedures. Comparable information when qualified participation or supervision is required or appropriate.

NA

4. Provide the names, dosage, and actions of any drugs or other materials administered to the subjects and the qualifications of the person(s) administering the drugs.

NA

   a. Detail all the physical, psychological, and social risks to which the subjects may be exposed.

There are none. The identities of all participants and the location of their communities will be protected by using pseudonyms. All of the family interviews will be done in a group setting with parents present. The interview questions being used are not requesting inappropriate personal information.

6. What steps will be taken to minimize risks to subjects?

The identities of all participants and the location of their communities will be protected by
using pseudonyms. All of the family interviews will be done in a group setting with parents present. The interview questions being used are not requesting inappropriate personal information.

7. Describe the recruitment pool (community, institution, group) and the criteria used to select and exclude subjects.

Former participants of SSLP and their families. In my own research situation, there are several reasons why I wish to choose these particular two families. First is the issue of availability. Of the six families who were involved in the international experience, two of them are no longer available. This is due to a divorce and split family situation where most of them no longer live in the area. The other situation deals with one of the students who now lives out of state to attend school, thus is inaccessible. Of the remaining four who still live in the area, two have piqued my interest, which is where the issue of maximum variation comes into play. As is common and appropriate for a qualitative study, minimum sampling and purposeful sampling will be utilized. Such sampling procedures focus on choosing information-rich cases which will hopefully yield answers to the questions under study. I will also employ convenience sampling (two families which are most accessible) and maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling which seek to capture and describe the central themes that cut through much variation.

8. List any vulnerable population whose members are included in this project (e.g., children under the age of 18; mentally impaired persons; pregnant women; prisoners; the aged.)

There will be one family member which is under 18 years of age. He is presently 17 years old.

9. Describe the process through which informed consent will be obtained. (Informed consent usually requires an oral explanation, discussion, and
opportunity for questions before seeking consent form signature.)

I will request preliminary oral consent from the participants and provide oral explanation of the study. I will then request that they sign a written consent form prior to the interviews (see attached forms).

10. (A) Is this study anonymous or confidential? (Anonymous means that the identity of the subjects is never linked to the data, directly, or indirectly through a code system.)

It is confidential (pseudonyms will be used). The special coding system for analysis will only be known to the researcher. Copies of interviews and results of analysis will be made available to the participants for their approval prior to final submission.

(B) If a confidential study, detail how will the privacy of the subjects and security of their data will be protected.

Same as 10 A.

Part 4: Consent Form (including Assent Form and Parental Permission Form if minors are involved)

Please note: The consent form must be written in non-technical language which can be understood by the subjects. It should be free of any exculpatory language through which the participant is made to waive, or appears to be made to waive any legal rights, including any release of the investigator, sponsor, institution or its agents from liability for negligence? (Note: the consent form is not a contract.)

Be sure to include the following items in your consent form:

1. Study Title:
   Name of the study.

2. Performance Sites:
   Where the study will be conducted.
3. **Contacts:**
The names and telephone numbers of
Investigators and hours available.

4. **Purpose of the Study:**
State in lay language that the study is research and
what the investigator wishes to accomplish.

5. **Subjects:**
   A. **Inclusion Criteria**
   All criteria for participation in the
   study are specified. (Examples: >18 years old, left or right-handed, diagnosed with a specified condition; Subject pool, e.g. psychology undergraduate students, senior citizens, etc.)

   B. **Exclusion Criteria**
   Specify any subset of those meeting the inclusion criteria to be excluded from the study.

   C. **Maximum number of subjects:** (including controls)

6. **Study Procedures:**
Provide a succinct, complete, specific, non-technical explanation of what the subject will experience or be required to do. Use non-technical and specific language (e.g. 1 tsp. blood, rather than 5 cc. blood). If questionnaires are used, a description of types of questions is included, especially when the questions are of a personal or sensitive nature. The number and duration of sessions, and the overall time commitment are stated.

   **If blood is to be withdrawn,** the following is provided: (1) number of times, amount, period of time covered, minimal risk of bruising, inflammation of vein and infection; (2) qualifications of personnel collecting blood.

   **If investigational drugs or devices are to be used,** or if approved drugs or devices are to be used in a manner for which they have not been approved, the consent form identifies the drugs or devices as experimental.

7. **Benefits:**
State study benefits to subjects or to others (societal benefits) which may reasonably be expected.
8. **Risks/Discomforts:**

Any potential for **physical harm** (e.g. risks associated with having blood drawn, potential, **psychological harm** (e.g. distress at being asked sensitive questions of a very personal nature; and **social harm** (e.g. collection of information such as drug or alcohol use or abuse, which if inadvertently released, could be damaging) must be explained. **You must, at a minimum, state there is no known risk!**

9. **Measures taken to reduce risk**

(e.g. use of trained personnel, safety procedures, measures to assure confidentiality).

10. **Right to Refuse:**

State that participation in the study is voluntary and that subjects may change their mind and withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they may otherwise be entitled.

11. **Privacy:**

Specify whether the study is **anonymous or confidential** (An anonymous study is one in which the data cannot be linked to the identity of the subject directly or indirectly - either because the name/identity of the subject is never obtained by the investigator, or because there is no code linking data to the subject's identity.)

**If the study is not anonymous,** i.e., if there is a code linking data to identity, describe the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained. Confidentiality cannot be absolute: always state ‘data will be kept confidential unless release is legally compelled’.

12. **Financial Information:**

Any compensation for participating and any uncompensated costs incurred by subjects are specified. (State when incentives will be delivered).

13. **Withdrawal:**

Specify the consequences of a subject's unilateral decision to withdraw from the research, and explain the procedures for orderly termination of participation.

14. **Removal:**
List/explain the conditions or situations under which the investigator will remove the individual from the study without his/her consent.

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Items 15-19 MUST BE INCLUDED IN A CONSENT FORM WHEN A SUBJECT ENTERS AN EXPERIMENTAL MEDICAL OR BEHAVIORAL TREATMENT PROGRAM TO EXPLORE THE POTENTIAL TO REMEDY A CONDITION FROM WHICH HE/SHE SUFFERS.

15. Alternatives:

   It is specified whether there are proven, established treatment options available that may be advantageous to the subject (in lieu of the study treatment).

16. Unforeseeable Risks:

   It is specified that the treatment or procedure may involve unforeseeable risks to the subject (or the embryo or fetus, if the subject is or may become pregnant).

17. Study-associated injury or illness:

   Any compensation or medical care which will be arranged for or provided by the investigators is described.

18. Study-related illness or injury:

   Subjects are informed what to do and whom they are to notify in the event of a study-related illness or injury.

19. New Findings:

   Significant new findings developed from the study data or independent sources during the course of the research which may relate to the subjects' willingness to continue participation (e.g., adverse response to the treatment) will be explained to the subjects.

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Part 5: Signatures:

1. Include the following statement:
'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, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225)578-8692. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the researchers' obligation to provide me with a copy of this consent form if signed by me.'

Subject Signature Date

2. **Illiterate subjects:** When ANY subjects are likely to be illiterate, the "reader statement" and signature line below are included.

'The study subject has indicated to me that he/she is unable to read. I certify that I have read this consent form to the subject and explained that by completing the signature line above, the subject has agreed to participate.'

Signature of Reader Date

3. **Assent of minors and consent of parents:**

If minors (individuals who have not reached the legal age of consent, age 18 in LA) are included as study subjects provision must be included for:

(a) securing and documenting the assent of the minors?

(b) securing and documenting parental permission?

**Note:** Signature of the Investigator is not required, and leads to the false impression the Consent Form is a contract.

**Attachments:**

1. Attach copies of All Instruments and questionnaires used.
2. Any Relevant Grant Applications.
3. The investigative brochure (if one exists) and any recruitment materials, including advertisements intended to be seen or heard by potential subjects.
4. Attach documentation of application to IRB of collaborating institutions: (Documentation of application to the IRB of collaborating institution is required by LSU IRB before work begins on the study.)

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Send original and 2 copies of application form & all attachments to IRB Office at 203 B-1 David Boyd Hall, (225) 578-8692, FAX 578-6792.

Expedited review usually takes 1-2 weeks. Full reviews are held at the bimonthly IRB meetings 2nd week of Feb. Apr, June, Aug, Oct, Dec. Carefully completed applications should be submitted 2 weeks before a meeting to ensure a prompt decision.

Contact Dr. Robert Mathews, 225-578-8692, irb@lsu.edu if you need assistance. Additional important guidance and documents are at http://appl022.lsu.edu/osp/osp.nsf/$Content/LSU%20IRB%20Documents

irbapp.wpd 06/11/2003
VITA

Bradley Allen Leger was born near the community of Iota in Acadia Parish, Louisiana, in 1957 as one of eight children and was reared on a sweet potato, rice, soybean, hay, and cattle farm. He is a graduate of Iota High School and received the Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in vocational agricultural education from Louisiana State University in 1979 and 1982, respectively. He also received a Master of Pastoral Studies degree from Loyola University in 1993.

From 1979 – 1999, he was an instructor of Agriscience/Agribusiness/FFA Advisor at a rural school in south Louisiana. In 1988-89, he served as President of the Louisiana Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association. From 1996 – 1998, he ventured to Russia and Ukraine on three different occasions to collaborate with secondary schools, university, and government representatives to develop agricultural youth leadership organizations based on the National FFA Organization’s model. He also had the opportunity to confer with newly-privatized agricultural producers in these countries.

Since 2000, he has been serving as Executive Secretary of the Louisiana Association of FFA. In addition, he serves his local Catholic Community of St. Margaret as Choir Director and Eucharistic Minister. He also serves as a reader for the Spiritual Directors Training Program in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lake Charles, Louisiana. At the May, 2004 Commencement, he received the Doctor of Philosophy in vocational education from Louisiana State University.