

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF NATIVE LOUISIANA FRENCH SPEAKERS
IN LOWER BAYOU LAFOURCHE ENTERING
ENGLISH-ONLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

Jo-Lynda Hunter Strandberg

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to investigate the lived experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools in lower Bayou Lafourche, Louisiana. Native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary school was defined as those whose home language was Louisiana French prior to entering elementary school. While language attrition for non-English speakers and Louisiana French culture had been explored, the in depth, lived experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English elementary schools were unexplored (Blyth, 1997; Ryon, 2002; Sexton, 2000). Understanding how entering English-only schools affects student perceptions and identity was important in determining school policy as it relates to minority populations (DeJong, 2006; Halic, Greenberg, & Paulus, 2009; Wang, 2009). The eight persons participating in the study were native Louisiana French speakers who entered English-only elementary schools in lower Bayou Lafourche, LA, utilizing purposeful sampling and snowball method. The data collection methods included interview, questionnaire, focus groups, and audio journal. Data analysis was carried out according to hermeneutic phenomenological approach guidelines and processes. Thematic analysis revealed four themes: confusion and fear the first days of school, physical punishment for speaking French in school, humble early lives and reflective wish for bi-literacy and language transmission.

Keywords: Louisiana French native speakers, Cajun culture, cultural capital, language attrition, English language learners, hermeneutic phenomenology, qualitative research

Dedication

This work of heart is dedicated to my two grandparents and my two children; they are Cajun generations oldest and youngest. My study actually began almost 19 years ago when, for a Cajun folklore course at Nicholls State University, I was required to record the stories of older Cajuns. Naturally, I recorded the stories of my paternal grandmother and maternal grandfather. I consider the day I interviewed them the day I began to realize they are more than loving grandparents, they are the generation with which Louisiana French began to die. My Paw Paw, Walton J. Eymard has been the epitome of a hard working Cajun family man. He is honest and one of the best men I have the honor to know. I thank him for teaching me to be family centered, tolerant, and hard working.

If there were one word to describe my Granny, Mary Gisclair Hunter, I would say breathtaking. My Granny has been the strength in our family, despite her petite stature. She is all the love, all the strength, and all the commitment I hope to become one day. While she has had more than her fair share of life challenges, she has remained the keeper of Hunter family solidarity.

My amazing son, Justin A. Vining, is the person I wish I were at 19 years old. He is dedicated to his studies, but also to his deep faith. He has always stood for what is right and good in the world. I couldn't be more proud of him, and he will forever be closest to my heart.

Jo-Ella Olivia Strandberg is best part of me and her Daddy. She has brought more joy and pride than I thought possible to the lives of her Daddy, Mommy and big Brother. Thank you for making me smile every day, Sweetness.

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My study was most profoundly a family effort. My husband so graciously supported me and helped me beyond what was asked, making me one truly blessed wife and student. My hope is he will be proud of the work put forth. My mom and dad gave me a wonderful childhood full of security and love, without which I would be lost.

I shared personal attachments to the persons participating in this study. I acknowledge it is through their experience and sharing I was able to learn about their lives. Each person has a remarkable life, to which an entire book should be dedicated. Thank you, Alsace, Walton, Walter, Liza, Beatrice, Beau, Johnness, and Gaston for your wisdom and for sharing your life experiences with me. My hope is this study brings the justice and reverence to your life which is more than deserved.

My first grade teacher, Ms. Jerrie Tyler, who is an accomplished educator, helped me through this process as a peer reviewer. Her knowledge and wisdom was greatly appreciated. It was lovely to work with her.

I had a wonderful committee who helped me through this rewarding process. My chair, Dr. Sandra Battige, was the model of attentiveness and support through this process. She was my constant encourager, without which this study may not have happened. Dr. Jose Puga and Dr. Dennis Scheck, thank you for the time and support you blessed me with during this entire process. Dr. Lucinda Spaulding has been my role model and has been a constant source of enlightenment during not only my dissertation, but also through my coursework.

I acknowledge I could not complete this endeavor on my own. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all ways acknowledge Him and he shall direct your paths.”- Proverbs 3: 5-6. These verses were prophetic in many ways during the course of my work.

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List of Abbreviations

Council of the Development of French in Louisiana- CODOFIL

English language learners- ELL

First or primary language- L1

Second language- L2

No Child Left Behind Act- NCLB

Socioeconomic status- SES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The United States doubled in size in 1803; the Louisiana Purchase is one of the more significant real estate transactions in American history. This acquisition of the Louisiana territory made all of the territory's inhabitants American. Louisiana has remained a unique part of the United States in several regards. It is unique in structure and code; the state of Louisiana is the only state to utilize Napoleonic code and divides its local geographical communities into parishes, rather than counties. The culture and language of South Louisiana have also remained unique, since South Louisiana encompasses the Francophone culture of the Cajuns. Despite uniqueness, Louisiana French has experienced attrition (Bernard, 2003; Brasseaux, 1978; Sexton, 2000). Researchers believed Louisiana French experienced attrition for a number of reasons. The experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only schools are highlighted in research as a contributing factor to attrition (Bernard, 2003; Brasseaux, 1978; Sexton, 2000). This hermeneutic phenomenological study sought to find the meaning of the experience of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools in lower Bayou Lafourche.

Background

The history of south Louisiana's Cajuns began with rejection. Rejection was a recurring theme in the history of Louisiana's Cajuns. During *Le Grand Dérangement* from 1763-1780s, Acadians were physically forced from Nova Scotia after refusing an oath of allegiance to the British monarchy (Ancelet, Edwards, & Pitre, 1991; Brasseaux, 1987). The devote French Catholics of Nova Scotia then experienced a tumultuous period of relocation, and eventually they settled in south Louisiana. The Acadians

eventually settled in south Louisiana starting in 1785; the terrain of south Louisiana was difficult to colonize, but the Acadians' resiliency shone forth (Brasseaux, 1987). Despite the transition of the Louisiana territory from Spain to France and eventually to the United States, the population of Acadians retained a strong cultural independence. It is not until an influx of Anglo-Americans in the 1800s when mostly urban areas began to witness a decrease of French language usage in Louisiana (Sexton, 2000).

An influx of Anglo-Americans affected the Cajuns culturally; Americanization began to occur. The United States' entrance into World War II was a significant event, which enveloped Cajuns into widespread Americanization (Bernard, 2003). This Americanization resulted with the attrition of Louisiana French; an estimated 30% of Cajuns used Louisiana French in 1990, and limited numbers of youth spoke any Louisiana French (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992). Americanization amounted to the rejection of Louisiana French, which implied rejection of the Cajun culture.

The Acadians were not the only people to settle in Louisiana. Descendants from Europe also settled in parts of Louisiana. Historically, Creole referred to non-Acadian Francophones (Dominguez, 1986; Sexton, 2009). Because the terms Cajun and Creole may be confusing, it is important to operationally define Cajun. For the purpose of this study, Cajun refers to the Francophone culture of south Louisiana. The French language spoken in south Louisiana can be referred to as Cajun French, Creole, or Louisiana French. Cajun French and Creole can be confusing terms since it distinguishes ancestry. For the purposes of this study, Louisiana French will describe the French spoken throughout south Louisiana.

While Louisiana French is similar to standard French, the dialect is different. It is

documented Cajun servicemen during World War II were able to converse with French service members (Bernard, 2003; Kube, 1994). In one instance a Cajun serviceman was explained the dialect he used was a seventeenth century French dialect (Kube, 1994). This dialect coincides with the Acadian settlement in Nova Scotia.

Geographically, there are 22 parishes designated as Acadiana in south Louisiana (see Appendix A). Most of Acadiana can be found in southwest Louisiana; most historical studies and perspectives focused on this geographical location of Acadiana. Eastern parishes designated as Acadiana include Lafourche parish, the site of this study. These southeastern parishes of Louisiana were less focused on in Cajun historical narratives and Cajun case study (Brasseaux, 1987; Sexton, 2000). Bayou Lafourche was settled by the Acadians in the 1760s; as the population quickly grew, they moved further south down the bayou towards the Gulf of Mexico (Ancelet et al., 1991). Settlement along Bayou Lafourche followed the rural strip village pattern. The land settlements ran perpendicular to the bayou; the land extended away from the bayou in lengthy strips (Ancelet et al., 1991). Those living along Bayou Lafourche in strip villages, communicated mostly by way of the bayou (Ancelet et al., 1991). In 1932, it was estimated there were 30 homes per mile along Bayou Lafourche south of Thibodaux (Ancelet et al., 1991).

Louisiana French attrition is a well documented phenomenon. Brasseaux (1978) suggested mandatory English education enacted in 1916 had a significant effect on language attrition for native Louisiana French speakers. Additionally, the removal of French as an official language, the integration of Cajun population into Anglo-American dominated sectors, and the erosion of close knit neighborhoods may have also

contributed to the gradual decline of Louisiana French (Sexton, 2000). While language attrition for non-English speakers and Louisiana French culture has been explored, the lived experiences of specifically native Louisiana French speakers entering English elementary schools were unexplored in depth (Bernard, 2003; Blyth, 1997; Ryon, 2002; Sexton, 2000).

Some historical research had identified a gradual decline in Louisiana French since the nineteenth century (Sexton, 2000). In 1916, mandatory education forced native Louisiana French speakers to attend English-only schools (Sexton, 2000). The Louisiana State Constitution of 1921 excluded French status (Sexton, 2000). This forced many Louisiana French speakers to assimilate to English, often under threat of corporal punishment at school. Sexton's (2000) study indicated elderly Cajuns related instruction in English-only schools was often a traumatic experience due to scolding and physical punishment.

Situation to Self

The role of the researcher in a qualitative study is one of human instrument. All data was interpreted by the researcher; therefore, it is important to outline personal paradigm, philosophical assumptions, and personal experiences. My study was based on ontological assumptions; the philosophical foundation being all people are uniquely valuable. The values of each participant as it relates to their experience entering elementary school as a native Louisiana French speaker was explored and shaped the content of this study.

I utilized a social constructivist paradigm when interpreting data. The research relied on the participants' views of their experience (Burr, 2003). The subjectivity of the

study was shaped not only by interaction with others but also by common cultural traditions. Value on intangible assets is considered cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973; Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Historically cultural capital possessed by native Cajuns was low. However, in recent decades this capital has increased, and the culture is often appreciated for its language and its uniqueness.

A secondary worldview in my study included a biblical worldview. My biblical worldview manifested in all aspects of the study. Christianity cannot be separated from any aspect of a believer's life; it is all encompassing. I am a practicing, active Catholic and take my Christianity very seriously. The call to Christianity is a powerful one. Bonhoeffer (1959) described it as unyielding. He wrote, "It is no choice of their own that makes them individuals: it is Christ who makes them individuals by calling them" (Bonhoeffer, 1959, p. 21). For practicing Christians, Christ is the center of faith from which all comes. This Christ-centered focus most definitely affects all aspects of my life.

From my Christian perspective, education supports the development of each child, enabling them to grow as unique creations. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus is often ministering to those considered by Jewish society to be unworthy: the woman at the well, Zaccheus, and the prostitute. Human beings are made in the image of God is my Christian precept, supporting the example of Christ's ministry to the perceived unworthy. In the Gospel of John (21:15-19), Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him; when Peter replies in the affirmative, Jesus tells him, "Feed My Lambs." Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves Him. Each time Peter repeats his answer, and the Lord repeatedly replies as he did the first instance. Just like Peter, educators are called to feed His lambs. Educational leaders are called to serve others, despite the challenges of culture and language.

Lower Bayou Lafourche was the location of this study. The site consisted of an area in lower Lafourche Parish and included the towns: Galliano, Larose, Cut Off, Golden Meadow, and Lockport. The primary reason for choosing this site was its lack of representation in previous research (Sexton, 2000). Lower Bayou Lafourche also has unique geography and until recently had remained isolated, unlike other parts of Acadiana. Lower Bayou Lafourche had limited access by transport. There were simply two roads which ran on either side of the bayou. From these roads, residential streets ran perpendicular. Recent commerce considerations have dictated the construction of additional transport roads. The area is considered rural. Industry in the area consists of related oilfield businesses, shrimping, and fishing. This coastal area lies on the Gulf of Mexico and is approximately 60 miles southwest of New Orleans.

Bayou Lafourche has been an integral part of my life. I was born and raised in lower Lafourche Parish, and I attended university in Lafourche Parish. However, I moved from the area 17 years ago. I am not a native Louisiana French speaker, nor has the language been passed to me by my parents. My father, maternal grandfather, and paternal grandparents were native Louisiana French speakers and did not speak English until entering elementary school.

My experience with Louisiana French is intrinsic to my cultural identity. Growing up I used Louisiana French words in everyday language, and I did not realize this until studying French at university. I frequently heard French spoken among my older family members, but the language was never spoken to me.

My interest in the experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering elementary school began while I was studying at Nicholls State University pursuing my

bachelor's degree. I took a Louisiana folklore course for degree requirements. As part of the folklore course requirements, we were to interview native Cajuns who were older and ask them about stories they heard as a child. I chose to interview two of my grandparents: my mother's father and my father's mother. In both instances, my grandparents described their experiences entering elementary school. Both grandparents had similar experiences in different schools; they described physical punishment for speaking French and shame in speaking French. I immediately wanted to know more, since it seemed to me their experiences entering school truly shaped their lives. Even though decades had passed, they spoke of this experience with clarity and with emotion, which related to me their experiences were deeply personal and formative.

Since I have spent the majority of my adult life outside of the area, I was, in some respects, considered an outsider to the community (Clifton, 2003). It is not uncommon for residents of the area to refer to me as a "Yankee" now, which illustrates my confusing insider/outsider status. However, my lack of physical presence has afforded me the opportunity to yearn for my cultural roots, and both the people and the area are very much alive in how I engage my life.

I am fluent in French. My B.A. is in French, so I can read and write the language. This enabled me to understand Louisiana French to a large degree. Although language structure and integration of Creole and Indian vocabulary are unique marks of Louisiana French, fluency in French is very valuable in communicating with Louisiana French speakers. Because of my upbringing, I am also very familiar with local slang and terminology in the area. I am also able to understand the heavy Cajun accent of the area.

Problem Statement

The problem was researchers were unaware of the impact attending English-only elementary schools had on native Louisiana French speakers' perceptions of education, personal identity, and overall life choices. Understanding how entering English-only schools affected student perceptions and identity was important because it may help determine school policy as it relates to minority populations today (DeJong, 2006; Halic et al., 2009; Wang, 2009). Today as the current English language learner population increases, native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools presented researchers with a unique opportunity to find the meaning in the educational experiences of non-native English speakers in the classroom, enabling researchers to grasp the full impact of English immersion with no native language support. In order to find the true life meaning of English-only education on the life of students, it was necessary to study students who lived out their life choices and had established mature identities. Native Louisiana French speakers afforded me the opportunity to study this phenomenon.

While language attrition for non-English speakers and Louisiana French culture has been explored separately, the lived experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English Elementary schools were unexplored in depth (Blyth, 1997; Ryon, 2002; Sexton, 2000). Based on the 1990 U.S. census, Bernard (2003) suggested Cajuns who still spoke Louisiana French were middle aged to elderly. Given this description, it was estimated the population had rapidly constricted due to aging and death. Therefore, it was imperative to capture the meaning of lived experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools, in order to hear their voice while it is

still possible. By studying adults who experienced rapid English immersion with no native language support who are capable of retrospective reflection on the experience, the true impact of early educational experiences of the persons was related in meaningful and holistic data.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to discover the meaning of the lived educational experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools in lower Bayou Lafourche, Louisiana. Native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools were defined as those whose primary language was Louisiana French prior to entering elementary school.

Significance of the Study

This study provided a rich perspective of the effects of English-only education on English language learners. The school population of English language learners in the United States is increasing (Meyer, Madden, & McGrath, 2005). Hence, today it is paramount policy makers understand how entering English-only schools affects student perceptions and identity when determining school policy as it relates to non-English speaking minority language populations (DeJong, 2006), Halic, Greenberg, & Paulus, 2009; Wang, 2009). Further contributing to the significance of gaining a student perspective on the effects of English-only education is the lack of diversity among teachers (Snyder, 2008). The enactment of No Child Left Behind Act (2002) dictates outcome based measures in education; No Child Left Behind Act also focuses on English literacy (No Child Left Behind, 2002). NCLB (2002) allows English language learners one year to achieve proficiency. Therefore, it was paramount to investigate the impacts

of rapid English immersion for English language learners. Despite the assimilative nature of NCLB, educators are still engaged in providing quality education which encourages student growth and potential, which may include native language skills. A current trend in education is heritage language courses in order to address the needs of non-native English speakers (Beaudrie, Ducar, & Relano-Pastor, 2009; Coles-Ritchie & Lugo, 2010). Furthermore, literacy in native language is a concern for both students and parents (Guardado, 2006; Wang, 2009).

Cultural capital, the intangible value attributed to personal culture and tradition, can influence the effectiveness of minority language programs (Lucero, 2010). Minority language is considered cultural capital. The value of minority language can be viewed as devalued by public education policy with NCLB (2002), which focuses on English literacy; therefore, this can affect the cultural capital of minority language populations.

Research Questions

I used the following questions to guide the investigation of the lived experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools:

1. What is the meaning of the experience of native Louisiana French speakers entering elementary school? In order to identify the essence of the experience studied, understanding the experience is essential (Van Manen, 1990).
2. What was the impact of school experiences on language transmission? Wang's (2009) case study suggested the lack of native language utilization in schools concerned parents in terms of language transmission and maintenance for their children. The population of Louisiana French speakers transmitting the language to their children has declined since the early 1900s (Bernard, 2003; Sexton, 2000). Addressing the

influences of school on language attrition can help find the meaning of English only school experiences.

3. What was the experience like to acculturate to Anglo-American culture? Anglo Americans often held seats of authority in government from the 1800s (Sexton, 2000). Literature often marked strong Anglo-American influences beginning in the post-Civil War era and heightening after World War II (Bernard, 2003; Brasseaux, 1987; Sexton, 2000).
4. What was the impact of school experience for native Louisiana French speakers on school performance? A common stereotype of Cajuns is one of uneducated, country folk (Sexton, 2009). There may be many circumstances contributing to lack of education. Interestingly, Sexton (2000) related many of the elderly Cajuns he interviewed had traumatic school experiences.
5. What was the impact of school experience for native Louisiana French speakers on future endeavors? Traumatic school experiences related by Sexton (2000) and Bernard (2003) can contribute to the overall life choices and endeavors made by native Louisiana French speakers in adulthood.
6. Why do native Louisiana French speakers think language transmission declined? Language transmission decline is well documented (Landry, Allard, & Henry, 1996; Ryon, 2002; Sexton, 2000; St. Hilaire, 2005). However, reflective insight by those who have lived the history of language transmission decline provided practical insight into the core of the problem.

Research Plan

The focus of qualitative research is to understand the experiences of the persons as it centers on a human problem or phenomenon; the design was emergent (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research can also be described as an inductive process of discovery through collected data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The lived experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools required in depth data collection and data analysis. The goal of my study was to discover the meaning of early educational experiences of native Louisiana French speakers. Previous research had not addressed the in depth experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English elementary schools. Because I sought to relate the meaning of the participants' lived experiences, phenomenological design worked best (Van Manen, 1990). A hermeneutic phenomenology study was used to find the meaning in the persons' school experiences as a native Louisiana French speaker. The retrospective interpretation, an emphasis on existential meaning, and the deliberate sources of data pointedly described hermeneutic phenomenology (Annells, 2006). Since I am an ethnic Cajun who is very familiar with the area and with the culture, the meaning of the collected data was processed hermeneutically, which utilized my perceptions, my culture, and my beliefs about the phenomenon studied. This made hermeneutic phenomenology the best approach for my study. My experiences and culture directly impacted analysis, revealing the meaning of the lived experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools.

Delimitations

Delimitations defined the scope of this phenomenological study. Persons

participating in the study were native Louisiana French speakers from lower Bayou Lafourche and entered an English-only elementary school; an English-only school was their first school experience. Persons participating in the study were also of sound mind, since it was expected a majority of the persons eligible for participation would be over 65. To determine sound mind, persons in the study were not known to have symptoms of dementia or Alzheimer's disease. The Alzheimer's Association (2009) recommended a simple checklist to determine the early warning signs of Alzheimer's disease. This checklist was available to me during each interview (See Appendix D).

There were potential limitations associated with this study. The persons participating in the study were ethnic Cajuns. Therefore, they only related their personal experiences within this paradigm. The language of the persons participating included both English and French; persons switched from English to French and vice versa in conversation. This language switching, at times, caused some difficulty in following the dialogue while gathering data. The persons' language switching could not be controlled in any way. The age of the persons participating was also considered a limitation of the study; however, all of the persons remembered their past experiences in childhood with great clarity and detail.

Because the community of lower Bayou Lafourche is small and had been somewhat isolated for many years, I did know some of the participants. In all cases I knew some of their family members; this was unavoidable. It is important to note no blood relations were included in the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to discover the meaning of the lived experiences of Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools. The situation of minority language speakers in the current educational climate is one of plight and of struggle. Language attrition for Louisiana French was documented; research on the language and culture of South Louisiana through ethnography, history, and sociology disciplines has been carried out (Bernard, 2003; Blyth, 1997; Ryon, 2002; Sexton, 2000). However, the experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary school had not been researched in the field of education. By researching the lived experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English schools, the effects of educational policy and pedagogy were described, which may have impact on current educational policy and practices. This review of literature explored research on the related subjects of Louisiana French, language attrition, cultural considerations, and current educational trends. Specifically, this review of related literature addressed cultural implications of language attrition and the cultural impacts on education; current research does not specifically address reflective student perspectives on education for minority language speakers.

Theoretical Framework

This study emphasized meaning of experiences considering the cultural identity and language of the Cajun people of south Louisiana. Since Cajuns are a recognized minority, the social position of Cajuns has played a role in cultural value and language value for Louisiana French. These values are considered cultural capital. Cultural capital

is considered to be the knowledge, skills, and power of people within an environment (Bourdieu, 1973; Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Cultural capital helped frame this study's theoretical foundation.

Cultural Capital

Bourdieu (1973, 1986), a French sociologist, began to use the term cultural capital to describe intangible assets, such as inherited and entitled properties in a person.

Cultural capital is directly tied to societal value. Those who possess the commodities society values then possess power. These intangible assets are difficult to acquire and difficult to transfer (Kim & Kim, 2009). Bourdieu (1973, 1986) highlighted the capitalist class not only needed economic capital to reproduce its class, but additionally it needed cultural capital. Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital was substantiated by research, specifically in educational systems. Bourdieu (1973, 1986) found cultural capital as a main variable in education systems; the upper class determined success for their children in school. In modern capitalist society, the capitalist class was portrayed as a locked structure (Kim & Kim, 2009).

Because of the continued reproduction of the capitalist class, the cultural capital valued by the class can devalue and marginalize minority cultures. While the marginalization of minority culture may not be intentional, cultural value belongs to the class in power. Hence, cultural capital, determined by class structure, can devalue minority identity and minority language. The Cajun culture was historically devalued. The often poor, country people, who did not speak English, found prejudice in Anglo-American society (Bernard, 2003; Sexton, 2009). Henry and Bankston (1999) analyzed the 1990 US census and determined the geographic area populated by Cajuns indicated

low income and low education. In recent years, however, Cajun culture found value culturally in terms of diversity and uniqueness.

Since cultural capital is determined by dominant and upper class groups, exclusion may become a component of cultural capital (Lucero, 2010). Minority groups may find less valued cultural capital (Lareau, 1987). As English-only education was instituted throughout Louisiana, native Louisiana French speakers found the dominant Anglo-American policymakers to exclude cultural considerations and devalue their culture (Bernard, 2003; Sexton, 2009). Research has found evidence in the role of the dominant outsider group in the self identification of today's Cajuns (Henry & Bankston, 2001).

The theory of cultural capital provided a strong theoretical foundation for this study. As native Louisiana French speakers recollected and reflected on their experiences entering English-only schools, which were imposed by upper class and by dominant groups, cultural capital framed the study in two very distinct ways. First, it framed the experience itself. While Louisiana French was the dominant language of the area, those in positions of authority, i.e. government, were Anglo-Americans. This affected acceptable language perceptions. Second, cultural capital framed the reflective data collected from the persons in the study; this gave insight on the effects and meaning of cultural capital for the persons.

The theory of cultural capital provided a framework for previous studies. Kim and Kim (2009) measured how cultural capital can affect quality of life. This survey research indicated higher life satisfaction for those described as culturally experienced (Kim & Kim, 2009). Researchers also indicated variety in cultural experiences helped to

describe satisfaction in terms of health and human relations (Kim & Kim, 2009). In other research Lucero (2010) found when a marginalized cultural minority paraeducator was strategically placed within a school, enabling the paraeducator to draw on “funds of knowledge” and implement a bi-literacy program. The use of cultural capital as a theoretical framework was found when studying minority cultures, as this study did.

Review of the Literature

Specific research on the experiences of Louisiana French speakers was limited. In historical and ethnographic studies, the experiences of Louisiana French speakers entering English-only schools have been touched on; however, studies had not been designed to qualitatively address the phenomenon of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only schools (Bernard, 2003; Sexton, 2000). The review of related literature identified the gap in literature, focusing on this study’s relevance to current educational policy and current educational practices.

Language Attrition

Language is often intimately tied to culture. Therefore, the loss of language can affect cultural identity. Exploring language attrition was helpful to determine the current state of research in the field of cultural education and to help place the significance of the study with a unique perspective on Louisiana French. Research on Louisiana French was by no means exhaustive; it was limited to the disciplines of ethnography, history, and sociology. In addition to exploring related research on Louisiana French attrition, indigenous language attrition was also reviewed in order to broaden research reviewed on language attrition.

Louisiana French. Louisiana French had experienced attrition, bordering on

extinction (Rottet, 2001). While the rate of attrition is debatable, the 1990 U.S. census reported 30% of ethnic Cajuns spoke French; this reported population was middle aged or elderly (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992). Bernard (2003) paralleled Louisiana French language attrition with the Americanization of the Cajun people, and revealed entrance into World War II increased national unity which pervaded life for all Americans. Consequently, the use of French as a primary language dropped by 17% for Cajuns born during World War II (Bernard, 2003). However, U.S. involvement in the conflict, which marked national unity, may not have been the only trigger for language attrition. Students also experienced corporal punishment for speaking French at school (Bernard, 2003).

The practice of punishing students who spoke French at school was perpetrated by teachers, principals, and school boards, but was not found to be supported by the state (Bernard, 2003). However, by banning French from classrooms in 1916, language policy in Louisiana in regards to education was determined; banning French in classrooms was included in the 1921 state constitution, and it clearly supported the sole use of English in the classroom (Bernard, 2003; Sexton, 2000). Bernard (2003) reported students experienced harsh punishments for using French in the classroom, which continued until the 1950s: name calling, kneeling on corn kernels, writing lines, swats with the ruler, and whippings. Sexton (2000) also reported the physical punishments Cajuns received for speaking French in school were traumatic; therefore, Cajuns became hesitant about socializing their own children in French.

In more recent decades, Louisiana French attrition accelerated. For Cajun children born between 1966 and 1970, a recorded 12% spoke Louisiana French as their

native language (Bernard, 2003). For Cajun children born just a few years later, 1971-1975, 8% spoke Louisiana French as their native language (Bernard, 2003). Given these statistics from 40 years ago, native Louisiana French speakers faced extinction.

A qualitative study on the description of aging Louisiana French speakers residing in a nursing facility highlighted the aging participants used Louisiana French with their peers and older generations, but not the with younger Cajuns (Muller, 2008). The study related French usage in the nursing home. The participants communicated with staff in English, despite a majority of bilingual residents (Muller, 2008). This study gave a unique description of language use for Louisiana French speakers. It did not address intergenerational language transmission and only briefly mentioned the early experiences of Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary school.

Through primary document analysis and census data for southwest Louisiana, Sexton (2000) maintained urban areas experienced a decline in the usage of French where Anglo-Americans outnumbered Cajuns. Native Louisiana French speakers gradually declined due to the removal of French as an official language of Louisiana; other contributors to the decline were the stigmatization of Cajun culture in general and the integration of Anglo-Americans into rural populations (Picone, 1997; Sexton, 2000). While historical research was specific to southwest Louisiana, Sexton (2000) indicated trends in language shift for other parishes, like Lafourche parish, would yield similar data, since the 1970 census indicated similar numbers of native Louisiana French speakers for Lafourche parish and parishes in southwest Louisiana. However, studies have not confirmed this assertion.

Seeking to address Louisiana French attrition, the state of Louisiana is the only

state to utilize state funds for a language revitalization program (d'Entremont, 2002). In 1968, the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) was established, and its intent was to teach French in the elementary and secondary schools of Louisiana (d'Entremont, 2002). The CODOFIL has supported immersion programs throughout the state (CODOFIL, 2012). Despite this revitalization program, the number of new Louisiana French speakers declined. The program supported standard French for some time, and the Louisiana French dialect was not taught in early CODOFIL language programs (Bernard, 2003). Furthermore, CODOFIL imported teachers from France, Belgium, and Canada to teach French in Louisiana; this changed when Louisiana French began to be taught through CODOFIL programs, making utilization of local teachers necessary (Bernard, 2003). Despite legislative support at the state level, Louisiana French continued to attrite.

Revitalization efforts concerning Louisiana French have also affected linguistic change. Historically, Louisiana French had no literary tradition; therefore native Louisiana French speakers did not have the opportunity to learn to read and to write Louisiana French (Ancelet, 2003). Revitalization encouraged the writing of Louisiana French; this once oral language, now had an audience (Brown, 1993). The social change of valuing Louisiana French caused linguistic change through the writing of the language (Brown, 1993). Ryan (1979) indicated in order for language to survive, it must have value and bring unity. True to Ryan's (1979) indication, revitalization efforts increased the value of the language and fostered unity among ethnic Cajuns.

Bernard (2003) utilized interviews with Cajuns and documentation analysis in his historical study. This historical study was important, because it laid the foundation in

which more in depth research on the experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only schools was built. Bernard (2003) highlighted the sometimes traumatic experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only schools, but did not solely focus on this experience. Instead Bernard (2003) provided a global snapshot into how a once culturally independent people experienced Americanization. My study sought to build on his previous research by providing a detailed study on the meaning of the collective experiences of Louisiana French speakers entering school.

Indigenous languages. The isolated use of Louisiana French geographically has some commonalities with Indigenous languages of native peoples. Therefore, research related to Indigenous languages was helpful in placing this study in the broader field of multicultural education. Louisiana French is a seventeenth century French dialect (Kube, 1994). Louisiana French was isolated to southern Louisiana, contributing to usage limitation similar to Indigenous languages.

The *Meriam Report*, in 1928, officially shed light on deficiencies in education for Indigenous peoples, which adversely affected the entire tribal community at large (Meriam et al., 1928). The report called for change by suggesting programs to support culture and language to be implemented in schools (Meriam et al., 1928). While the report called for a change, culturally based education was not immediately implemented; in 1969, the senate report on Indian education led to increased awareness about Indian culture and language in education (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). This shift focusing on awareness of Indian education in 1969 coincided with an increased awareness in Cajun culture and Louisiana French. In 1968, the Council of the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) was founded, and this council sought to preserve Louisiana

French (Ancelet et al., 1991; Bernard, 2003; Sexton, 2000). Through qualitative research St. Hilaire (2005) outlined the role of cultural identity and grassroots activism on the establishment of Louisiana French immersion education.

Culturally responsive education began to take shape from federal government reports in the 1960s and has progressed in the last several decades. Preservation of tribal language for Indian nations is promoted and protected by executive order (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Despite preservation and promotion of Indigenous languages in the United States, it is reported 84% of Indigenous languages in the United States have no new speakers; this statistic painted a dire portrait for Indigenous language attrition (Hill, 2002). McCarty (2002) related the personal loss of language loss by relating the words of a Navajo elder, “If a child learns only English, you have lost your child” (p. 181). Similar situations concerning tribal languages exist in Canada (Wiltse, 2011).

Through retrospective inquiry, Wiltse (2011) explored the ethical issues associated with researching aboriginal dialects of English in Canada. It is noted that punishment for speaking native language did not “eradicate their language” (p. 58). However, those natives who did experience punishment for speaking an aboriginal language at school did not want their own children experiencing similar punishment; therefore, the aboriginal language was not passed down (Wiltse, 2011). The negative effects of punishment for not speaking English at school for Canadian natives is similar to experiences related through historical narratives and research on native Louisiana French speakers in English schools (Ancelet et al., 1991; Bernard, 2003; Brasseaux, 1987; Muller, 2009; Sexton, 2000).

Parallel connections can be made between Native languages and Louisiana

French. Native languages in the United States and Canada have experienced language attrition (Hill, 2002; McCarty, 2002). Language attrition has also been documented for Louisiana French (Ancelet et al., 1991; Bernard, 2003; Brasseaux, 1987; Rottet, 2001; Sexton, 2000). In both the cases of Indigenous language and Louisiana French, strong cultural ties existed between language, minority ethnicity, and race. Relating the voice of experience for native Louisiana French speakers entering English elementary schools presented a collective phenomenon in educational research which was relatively unexplored.

Cultural Considerations

When reviewing previous research on language attrition and non-native language schooling, four cultural considerations are naturally birthed: language and cultural ties, native language literacy, native language maintenance, and second language acquisition (Cummins, 2000; Guardado, 2006; McCarty, Romero, & Zepeda, 2006; Murphy, 2003; Rothman, 2009; Wang, 2009). Exploring the ties between language and culture was an important consideration; this helped explore the significance of language loss as culturally relevant. Instruction in English may have had a negative effect on native language literacy (Proctor et al., 2010); lack of instruction in native language failed to develop the native language of the student (Keijzer, 2010). Therefore, if native language literacy is neglected and language is tied to culture, then native language maintenance can become a concern for native speakers.

Language and cultural ties. It has been generally accepted language is intimately tied to culture. Speaking the language of a cultural group can generally identify ethnicity. However, today, Native and Indigenous languages experience

attrition; people may identify themselves as minority ethnicities despite the inability to speak the mother tongue. Research findings on the ties between language and culture were mixed.

In qualitative research McCarty, Romero, and Zepeda (2006) utilized interviews and youth counter-narratives to study Native language loss and revitalization. The findings indicated young people valued their Native language and viewed the language as core to their identity as a Native American (McCarty et al., 2006). The perspective portrayed in this study was the perspective of Native American youth; given this dimension, it was important not to discount the perspective, since value was added to culture by younger generations. Similarly, it was reported revitalization efforts for Louisiana French was often supported and promoted by young, educated Cajuns, who were not native Louisiana French speakers (St. Hilaire, 2005). Today identifiable Cajuns do not necessarily speak Louisiana French (Bankston & Henry, 1998). Bankston and Henry (1998) also found language may not be closely tied to self-identification as Cajun.

Using phenomenological design research with eight participants, Halic, Greenberg and Paulus (2009) described the collective experiences of non-native English speakers entering graduate studies in English instruction. The study found culture and language were core to the experiences of the participants in higher education. This study was closely related to my study since it studied the experiences of non-native English speakers in an academic setting. My study differed in several aspects. Many of the persons in the research did not achieve native language literacy; the early educational experiences of the persons studied involved Louisiana French and the native language of the persons was Louisiana French.

Bankston and Henry's (1998) study explored how economic disadvantage may be associated with language transmission for Cajuns. Using both qualitative and quantitative data, the study found evidence of this association. Census data from 1990 was used to compare data concerning Louisiana French speakers within the Acadiana core, within the fringe of Acadiana, and the rest of Louisiana. The data indicated low socioeconomic indicators for French households within the core; French speaking household heads were found to have less education and less likely to hold managerial or professional positions (Bankston & Henry, 1998). Qualitative evidence suggested lack of language transmission because of the language's association with disadvantage (Bankston & Henry, 1998). While this study touched the surface of the relationship between culture and language, Bankston and Henry (1998) called for more investigation. Researching the effects of early educational experiences on native Louisiana French speakers can provide insight into minority ethnic identity. The complexity of the relationship between language and ethnicity eluded definitive analysis; it was unclear whether or not fluency in an ethnicity's language equates with ethnic membership.

Henry and Bankston (1999) suggested Cajun ethnicity moved towards Acadian roots in recent decades. The resurgence of pride in Cajun ethnicity and language was supported by a cultural foundation and adaptable identity (Henry & Bankston, 1999). Despite Louisiana French attrition, Cajun ethnicity is strong.

Native language literacy. Students who entered schools where instruction was in English may have missed the opportunity to acquire native language literacy skills (Rothman, 2009). This may be problematic since it is unknown if literacy in native language is correlated with English language literacy. Should students learn to read and

write in their native language prior to learning to read and write in English?

In case study research on a monolingual international school, Murphy (2003) noted entering school was difficult for children, as it was the first separation from home, but this difficulty may be magnified for non- English speaking students entering an English only school, since the experience was incomprehensible. Some students experienced failure when immersed in a second language only school; those who developed both first language and second language had positive school outcomes (Cummins, 2000).

Literacy in native language can accentuate second language acquisition. A single case studied a seven year old Chinese student who showed limited literacy in Mandarin and who was found to have trouble with English acquisition (Palmer, Zhang, Taylor, & Leclere, 2010). Intervention included bilingual tutoring; however, it cannot be determined which practice contributed most to his literacy growth after the intervention (Palmer et al., 2010). This study's implications included a need for native language instruction for English language learners (Palmer et al., 2010).

Native language literacy was a relative issue for native Louisiana French speakers. It was not until the 1960s schools in Louisiana began to offer French courses; however, these courses were courses in standard French and not Louisiana French (Sexton, 2000). Given this data, a very small percentage of native Louisiana French speakers were estimated to have native language literacy. It is generally considered Louisiana French is an oral language (Brown, 1993).

Native language maintenance. America is a nation of immigrants. When arriving to the United States immigrant families often lost their heritage language by the

third generation (Alba, Logan, Lutz, & Stults, 2002). This heritage language shift for immigrants is similar for immigrant families today. Maintaining native language must be a conscious effort for non-native English speakers today.

In a study of 101 Latino/Latina students comparing English-only instruction, Spanish- only instruction, and bilingual instruction, instruction language was found to have a measureable effect on Spanish literacy (Proctor et al., 2010). Over time, students receiving Spanish- only and bilingual instruction were found to increasingly outperform English-only instructed students (Proctor et al., 2010). The study did not find that Spanish instruction negated English literacy, which was significant.

Bilingual instruction and bi-literacy programs can help promote native language at school and at home. In a telling case study, Lucero (2010) presented the case of a bilingual paraeducator who ran a bi-literacy class to promote Spanish language literacy in an elementary school. Utilizing cultural capital, the paraeducator was able to reach families and students with the support of school leadership (Lucero, 2010). Incorporating native speakers to promote native language proficiency helped to achieve the school's goal of promoting native language proficiency and multicultural competence.

Studies have also highlighted the concern of parents on native language maintenance (Guardado, 2006; Wang, 2009; Wang & Phillion, 2007). When immigrant children are rapidly forced to learn and develop the dominant language, native language attrition can occur. This is a concern for parents when cultural identity is perceived to be tied to language. In a case study of four Latin American families in Vancouver, four themes emerged from the data: father tongue, creating intimate space for cultural practice, living in between spaces, and lonely struggle (Guardado, 2006). The cultural

awareness of the parents was found to impact native language maintenance, and the respect for the culture influenced native language maintenance (Guardado, 2006).

Case study and survey research on the plight of Chinese parents indicated parents are concerned about the loss of Chinese culture for their children (Wang, 2009; Wang & Phillion, 2007). Expressing concern about native language maintenance, parents and students lobbied the school to offer a Chinese heritage course for native speakers (Wang, 2009; Wang & Phillion, 2007). Parental concern for language maintenance and language loss was present, and identity maintenance was important for culturally diverse students.

Native Louisiana French speakers have documented both language attrition and native language illiteracy (Bernard, 2003; Brown, 1993; Sexton, 2000). Unlike contemporary immigrants, Louisiana French remained the native tongue of Cajun immigrants for many generations. However, recent decades have been witness to accelerated language attrition for Louisiana French (Bernard, 2003). A phenomenological study on the experiences of the most recent generation to experience Louisiana French as their native language provided sight into possible effects of native language illiteracy.

Second language acquisition and proficiency. Second language acquisition is relevant to all non-English speakers entering schools where instruction is in English. Language immersion at school takes place at a very rapid rate for students. Meta-analysis on internationally adopted children revealed inconsistency in language outcomes for children adopted internationally (Scott, Roberts, & Glennen, 2011). However, the study did reveal an increased chance for language problems for children adopted internationally when compared with non-adopted children (Scott et al., 2011). While

children in the study seemed to acquire language similar to their peers, findings revealed the possibility of lower language skills later for students instructed in only English (Scott et al., 2011).

Second language acquisition had affects on native language. Regression hypothesis maintained native language and second language acquisition mirror attrition; the first language learned was the first language to attrite (Keijzer, 2010). Keijzer's (2010) study found Dutch immigrants in English speaking Canada confirmed regression theory hypothesis. It was surmised since native language and second language mirror acquisition and attrition, language proficiency develops for longer periods of time than once thought (Keijzer, 2010). Regression hypothesis may also be applicable to native Louisiana French speakers immersed in English-only schools.

Acquisition of English proficiency is a dynamic process for immigrant students. In a study of adolescent immigrants, Carhill, Suarez-Orozco, and Paez (2008) increased the understanding of English proficiency. The researchers found positive correlation between the amount of time spent in the United States and English proficiency; the more time students spent in the United States, their proficiency increased (Carhill, Suarez-Orozco, & Paez, 2008). Additionally, the study indicated use of English in informal situations was predictive of English language proficiency (Carhill et al., 2008). The dynamic process of English language proficiency in social context was an interesting aspect relating to the meaning of the lived experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English only classroom. Determining the social informal language of the persons in the study was an important consideration.

If native language attrition is related to second language acquisition, the effects of

second language acquisition on native language literacy are related. Native Louisiana French speakers were primarily socialized in Louisiana French prior to entering elementary school. At this time, approximately age six or seven, English immersion occurred. Many native Louisiana French speakers did not attain literacy in Louisiana French, since the use of French in school was prohibited.

Studies have found native language literacy and second language acquisition may be related (Cummins & Mulcahy, 1978; Droop & Verhoeven, 2003; Proctor, August, Carlo, & Snow, 2006). Sparks, Patton, Ganschow, & Humbach (2009) studied the effects of first language, or L1, skills on second language, or L2 proficiency by grouping as high, average, and low proficiency L2 learners. The study found high proficiency L2 learners demonstrated high L1 skills; this study found evidence to support long-term cross-linguistic skills from L1 to L2 (Sparks, Patton, Ganschow, & Humbach, 2009). More recent research has indicated early L1 skills, which were measured in elementary school, factored into L2 acquisition in high school (Sparks et al., 2011). Using factor analysis of four factors, which included language analysis, phonology, memory, and self-perception, researchers were able to account for 72% of the variance in L2 literacy (Sparks et al., 2011). This empirical evidence suggested L2 acquisition is influenced by early educational experiences and skills. Rapid English immersion at a young educational age can be worrisome, since students are not allowed to build native language literacy, which affects L2 acquisition. This is the very case native Louisiana French speakers experienced, as their first school experience was rapid immersion.

Louisiana French has unique nuances. Since native speakers were not taught to read or write in their native language, native language illiteracy occurred. When studying

the effects of English-only education on non-native English speakers, L1 literacy must be incorporated in the process, since L2 acquisition has been found to relate to L1 language skills. For instance, reading achievement was found to contribute to L2 comprehension, reading and word decoding in high school (Sparks et al., 2012). Further analysis indicated exposure to L1 print contributed to L2 reading, writing, and comprehension (Sparks et al., 2012). Since many native Louisiana French speakers experienced native language illiteracy, the findings of this study were not applicable; however, it made an important contribution to the usefulness of native language literacy.

Bilingualism and education. Bilingual education contrasts the educational experiences of native Louisiana French speakers, whose home language was French prior to entering elementary school. Native Louisiana French speakers were primarily socialized at home with Louisiana French and learned English upon entering elementary school (Bernard, 2003). However, bilingualism and bi-literacy among Louisiana French speakers was not encouraged, since schooling was English-only (Bernard, 2003; Sexton, 2000). Research on how bilingualism influences education can support native language literary and native language maintenance. To clarify the experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering school, their experiences were reflective of rapid English immersion.

Recent research has highlighted the positive effects of bilingualism for students (August & Shanahan, 2008; Golash-Boaz, 2005; Portes & Hao, 2004). Cultural capital also played a part in the positive effects of bilingualism; when bilingualism was valued in school and home, positive effects in bilingual students were found (Stanton-Salazar, & Dornbusch, 1995). These findings relate to native Louisiana French speakers who

historically found low cultural capital outside of the Cajun community.

In a longitudinal, cohort study, Han (2012) studied the academic progress of bilingual students beginning in kindergarten with focus on school environment. Findings indicated initially lower scores for the bilingual students in kindergarten; however, the gap between the bilingual students and monolingual students was closed by fifth grade (Han, 2012). Halle, Hair, Wanderer, McNamara, and Chien (2009) also indicated closing gaps in achievement between native English speakers and non-native English speakers over time. The researcher indicated school services offered to families of ELL students influenced the academic outcomes for the students (Han, 2012). A key factor in Han's (2012) study was the support students and their families received from schools. Native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools received no native language support, since English was the only language allowed in school (Bernard, 2003; Brasseaux, 1987; Sexton, 2000). While support services for students and families have increased in recent decades, students entering English-only schools sixty to eighty years ago experienced low cultural capital and no native language support in public schools.

English proficiency is a dynamic process for students. Proficiency in English takes several years. In a mixed methods study of immigrant students were grouped according to national origin, findings indicated students age 10 to 16 scored low on English proficiency, despite being in the United States on average of four years (Paez, 2009). Other research indicated English language proficiency can take five or more years for proficiency (Collier, 1987; Cummins, 1981; Klesmer, 1994). Given the number of years to gain English proficiency, bilingual students may not always experience academic success.

Meta-analysis of bilingual and English-only reading programs found a significant effect size favoring bilingual approaches (Slavin & Cheung, 2005). A total of 17 programs were studied, with 12 positive effects on bilingual education and five studies found no difference (Slavin & Cheung, 2005). An additional study of school age children indicated English acquisition was faster for students in a bilingual program, as opposed to an English-only program (MacSwan & Pray, 2005). Based on this study's findings, instructional support, language support, and educational support services was found to aid bilingual students in the classroom; these were support structures native Louisiana French speakers did not receive.

Current Trends in Education

The population of minority language children has increased in recent decades. Schools are struggling to meet the needs of diverse populations. The lack of teacher diversity has been problematic; 83% of teachers are white and may have limited background or language skills which would enable them to connect with diverse students (Snyder, 2008). The increasing population of minority language speakers is affected by several current trends in education: heritage language programs, bilingual programs, and language policy.

Heritage language programs. Minority language speakers bring different characteristics and needs into the classroom than do foreign language learners. To address these differences, heritage language courses and heritage programs offered native speakers native language and cultural opportunities, like revitalization, maintenance and development (Beaudrie et al., 2009; Wang & Phillion, 2007; Wang, 2009).

Survey research assessing a university Spanish heritage program indicated

respondents stressed the importance of incorporating culture in the heritage language courses (Beaudrie et al., 2009). Bringing the students' voices to the forefront, the study assessed the identity and curricular aspects of university heritage language programs (Beaudrie et al., 2009). Calling for a clear cultural incorporation, heritage language programs can accommodate the needs of a growing Latino/Latina population.

Action research on the process of developing a heritage language program in a secondary school indicated parents, families, staff, administration, and the school district played important roles when successfully implementing a heritage language course (Coles-Ritchie & Lugo, 2010). The study suggested teacher education instruction needs to develop and take into account methods and practices when teaching a heritage language course (Coles-Ritchie & Lugo, 2010). Heritage language courses can help support native language literacy and maintenance; the abilities and the goals of native speakers are innately contrary to those foreign language students.

Heritage language courses must aid and support cultural identification through language. Heritage programs supporting formal language without emphasis on culture may have mixed results. An ethnographic study on conflicting attitudes of returning Japanese students towards heritage language learning found two types of heritage language learning: the formal learning within the school and the informal learning outside of the school (Yamasaki, 2010). Despite formal education in Japanese, students spoke very little Japanese, with the exception of those returning back to Peru from Japan (Yamasaki, 2010). Adolescents returning from Japan, who learned informal Japanese through family and peers were often told unless they learned formal Japanese, they would be less likely to successfully return to Japan for college; this encouraged students to

disinherit some of the cultural practices they learned outside of school (Yamasaki, 2010).

Motivated by the concern for native language maintenance and cultural identity, parents and students sought to implement a Chinese heritage course (Wang, 2009; Wang & Phillion, 2007). The failure of implementing a heritage language course found discrimination to be part of the participants' experience and found participants to perceive school policy as oppressive (Wang, 2009). Learning native language in school is important in maintaining cultural identity and maintaining native language skills.

Heritage language programs can help preserve language skills and inculcate cultural values and traditions. Concerns for native language maintenance and attrition can be quelled by implementation of heritage language courses (Beaudrie et al., 2009; Coles-Ritchie & Lugo, 2010; St. Hilaire, 2005; Wang, 2009; Wang and Phillion, 2007; Yamasaki, 2010). Louisiana French revitalization is a community supported effort, intent on cultural identification and cultural values (St. Hilaire, 2005). Ancelet (1988) suggested Louisiana French must be incorporated into school curriculum as more than enrichment activity.

Education language policy. Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) mandates non-native English speakers' scores reported after one year of entrance into the public schooling system. With the enactment of Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), language policy for public education can be viewed as increasingly monolingual. The No Child Left Behind Act (2002), or NCLB, is concerned with English language acquisition for non-native English speakers, which expresses an assimilative nature. For instance, Title III of NCLB replaced Title VII of the Bilingual Education Act (1994); in this process a policy shift was witnessed when "bilingual" was

replaced with “language.” There is cause for concern today for English language learners. English language learners may be more at risk for poor academic performance and dropping out (August & Hakuta, 1997; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, Christian, 2005; Menken, 2008; Snow & Biancarosa, 2003).

While federal policy outlines policy in education, implementation of federal policy occurs in public schools at local levels. English language learners make up almost 20% of the public school population; this population is expected to increase (Meyer, Madden, & McGrath, 2005). Looking at two urban area elementary schools, Theoharis and O’Toole (2011) related necessary social justice leadership in schools with successful English language learner (ELL) populations. Inclusion of English language learners and valuing diversity were key leadership principles found in schools with successful ELL populations (Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). Connections with home language and collaboration allowed the two leaders of the studied schools to transform their schools (Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011).

Teacher, parent, and student perception about school environment can help contribute to an overarching perception of the learning process of ELL students. Investigating student perceptions in a rural North Carolina school, Rodriguez, Ringler, O’Neal, and Bunn (2011) found similar perceptions for students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. The students related mostly positive perceptions of the school (Rodriguez, Ringler, O’Neal, & Bunn, 2011). Utilizing informal interview with the participants, it was found the ELL students were learning English without support for native language; however, the students did not relate this as a shortcoming (Rodriguez et al., 2009). Monolingual participants had a less positive perception of the school than

ELL students, and overall the monolingual students seemed to have lower self-esteem (Rodriguez et al., 2009). Future research on social adaptation and performance of ELL students is suggested by the researchers (Rodriguez et al., 2009). The participants were asked perceptions about their present school experience; it is unclear if elementary school students can truly understand the educational impacts of their experiences at such a young age. This study on native Louisiana French speakers guided persons to reflect and examine their English-only school experiences through a mature, adult lens.

Native Louisiana French speakers entering English elementary schools were ELL students with no home language support. This cultural and educational phenomenon has relative implications for American public education today. As the American education system struggles to utilize best methods, policy, and practices as it relates to an increasing ELL population, past experiences of ELL students can provide a rich descriptive essence of ELL students, with relative importance for education today.

The effects of No Child Left Behind Act on English language learners. NCLB (2002) has provided some challenges when educating ELL students. With an assimilative stress on English language acquisition, native language skills were not addressed. However, native language skills have been linked to English language acquisition skills (August, Calderon, & Carlo, 2002). NCLB (2002) allows for ELL students with enrollment for less than a year to be excluded from the reading tests; therefore, immigrant and minority language students are expected to achieve English competence in one year. Furthermore, NCLB directs all ELL students be included in Math assessments, with no regard to enrollment, accommodation, or language skills (Wright & Li, 2008).

The enactment of No Child Left Behind (2002) has brought attention to the struggles of ELL students in public education. Studies have found the policy to be unreasonable and possibly harmful (Menken, 2006; Solorzano, 2008; Wright & Choi, 2006). Through case study of Cambodian immigrants in Texas, the participants were found not to have ample time or opportunity to learn content prior to the state math assessment, despite aptitude, motivation, and staff support (Wright & Li, 2008). English language learners must be given sufficient and ample time to learn proficiency in English prior to any high stakes testing (Wright & Li, 2008). Scores on math assessment are influenced by the English language learner's proficiency, or lack of proficiency, in English (Gandara & Baca, 2008; Menken, 2009; Solorzano, 2008; Wright & Li, 2008).

Since the enactment of NCLB, studies have indicated poor performance for ELL students. ELL students performed 20-50 percentage points below native English speakers on tests (Abedi & Dietal, 2004; Sullivan, Yeager, Chudowsky, Kober, O'Brien, & Gayler, 2005). Through the lens of complexity theory, which asserts "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" (p. 134), Pappamihel and Walser (2009,), made the case high stakes testing does not capture the complexity of immigrant students who are learning English. English language learning takes longer than a year for proficiency (Cummins, 2000). English proficiency has also been found to require a long period of time to achieve (Carhill, Suarez-Orozco, & Paez, 2008). Since NCLB expects English proficiency in one year for English language learners, it may not take into account the complexity of English language acquisition (No Child Left Behind, 2002). While empirical data may portray part of the picture of the impact of NCLB on ELL students, it does not reveal the entire picture.

When professional development interventions were incorporated, ELL students were found to have performed well on high stakes testing situations (Lee, Maerten, Penfield, LeRoy, & Secada, (2008). The study found students also attained thinking and reasoning skills while performing well on the state math and science tests (Lee et al., 2008). The professional development intervention in the study consisted of teachers in the treatment group attending workshops focused on subject matter and linguistic diversity (Lee et al., 2008). While the quantitative data can help describe success, it does not entirely describe success for ELL students in the study.

Qualitative data can help relate the impacts of NCLB on ELL students through a broader, more complete, perspective. Specifically, ethnographic studies can examine “why and how” NCLB impacts education regarding minority youth (Sloan, 2005). Empirical data fails to examine the context of student performance as it relates to NCLB. A call for qualitative research on the issue can provide valuable insight to success and challenges of NCLB implementation.

Methodology

A rich, detailed description of the experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only schools was needed. With current concern over the language policy of United States public education, this study provided insight into the effects of language policy on students. Because the persons participating in the study have lived out most of their life, they were able to reflect on how and if English-only policy affected their continued education, self-esteem, and life choices. This study provided a meaningful opportunity for educators to respect the perspective of the non-native English speaker. Rodriguez et al. (2009) found mostly positive perceptions of

elementary school ELLs in regards to school. However, the study cannot predict whether or not these positive perceptions would remain as students mature. It is unclear whether the student really understands the ramifications of language policy between kindergarten and fifth grade. This study utilized qualitative inquiry to describe the shared experiences of the participants.

Phenomenology. Phenomenology has philosophical roots in the work of Husserl and is the study of lived experiences in the world (Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenology studies experiences within an attached paradigm; the person is not separate from the world. For instance, Halic et al. (2009) conducted a phenomenological study on the experiences of non-native English speakers attending university. The study is related to my study in that it sought to describe the experience of minority language speakers in English-only educational institutions. Phenomenology allowed the author to garner themes from the collected data: mastering the language, meaning of language proficiency, language and academic identity, and joining a new community (Halic et al., 2009). Since my study sought to describe a like experience, within a different context, phenomenology design was congruent with the goals of this study.

The German philosopher Husserl (1971) developed phenomenology as a method of scientific inquiry. Phenomenology requires researchers to bracket and set aside existing ideas and bias about the study (Laverty, 2003). Interestingly, Husserl's philosophy was built upon by a colleague, Heidegger, who developed hermeneutic phenomenology; Heidegger's work was then further developed by Gadamer (Laverty, 2003).

Hermeneutical phenomenology. Hermeneutics, which is the practice of

interpretation, is a modern philosophy (Lavery, 2003). Heidegger and Gadamer are the prominent philosophers associated with hermeneutics (Lavery, 2003). Gadamer (2004) explained how human understanding works in *Truth and Method*. He presented a fusion of horizons concept when interpreting (2004). Gadamer (2004) describes this as:

Every finite present has its limitations. We define the concept of “situation” by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence essential part of the concept of situation is the concept of “*horizon*.” The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point... A person who has no horizon is a man who does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him. On the other hand, "to have a horizon" means not being limited to what is nearby, but to being able to see beyond it... Working out of the hermeneutical situation means the achievement of the right horizon of inquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition (p.302).

The “horizon” is the interpreter’s vision, which is built on experience and culture.

Hermeneutic phenomenology was very appealing to me as a study design because my proximity to the culture and area studied were brought forth by my insider perspective when interpreting the data.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with the interpreting of person’s experience of a phenomenon, interpreting what it means to experience the phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). All of the persons shared a common phenomenon in this study. Hermeneutic analysis required multiple readings and contemplations of the collected data. Experience and situation affected understanding of the data. This method of

reading and reflecting is the hermeneutic circle (Laverty, 2003). My experience and heritage were in close proximity to the persons studied and aided my analysis. Because I delved deeply into this experience, hermeneutic phenomenology design was justifiably utilized (Lundgren & Wahlberg, 1999). While I utilized a hermeneutic phenomenological study in the discipline of education, hermeneutic phenomenology is also common design in nursing science (Dowling, 2005).

My study on native Louisiana French speakers sampled eight persons. This sample size was comparable to Lundgren and Wahlberg's (1999) hermeneutic phenomenological study describing the experiences of women experiencing childbirth; the study utilized personal diary entries of 12 women. The close proximity of the researchers to the experience and location were also similar to my proximity to the culture and location of native Louisiana French speakers. My study cannot claim to be representative of all native Louisiana French speakers, but it presented perspectives of the persons studied.

Summary

Research on the lived experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools had not previously been explored in detail. The effects of this phenomenon had been alluded to in previous research, but in depth qualitative research on the phenomenon in the field of education had not been carried out (Bernard, 2004; Sexton, 2000). While research in sociolinguistics, anthropology, and historical narrative has been carried out, the educational experiences and impacts of the phenomenon, which may yield important information on policy and practices, had not been studied.

The theory of cultural capital was conceptualized by French sociologist Bourdieu. He described cultural capital as the intangible values of society which are inherited or acquired personally (Bourdieu, 1973; Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital is determined by the dominant group, and sometimes this can result in marginalization and exclusion of minority groups. Using cultural capital as the theoretical framework of this study, cultural capital as it relates to both the experiences of the participants and the reflection on the experiences of entering English-only schools provided insight into lived experiences.

Research on Louisiana French was carried out through historical narrative, ethnography, and sociolinguistics. Researchers agreed Louisiana has experienced language attrition (Bernard, 2003; Rottet, 2001; Sexton, 2000). Findings were mixed on the rate of attrition. Revitalization of the language began in the 1960s with the establishment of the CODOFIL (d'Entremont, 2002). Since then grassroots efforts have supported and have valued revitalization efforts (St. Hilaire, 2003).

Louisiana French and Indigenous languages share commonalities due to isolated usage. Research on indigenous languages found Indigenous language speakers experienced physical punishment for speaking English at school (Wiltse, 2011). Today, native languages are promoted and protected by executive order (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008).

The cultural considerations of language usage are important topics. The ties between language and culture, language maintenance, and native language literacy provided context for non-English speakers and education. Indigenous language speakers were found to value their culture (McCarty et al., 2006). Similarly, young Cajuns who do

not speak Louisiana French were found to promote the revitalization efforts of the language (St. Hilaire, 2003). Cummins (2000) found students who developed both first and second language literacy skills to be successful.

Current trends in education as it relates to English language learners are heritage language programs, language policy, and NCLB. Heritage language programs have been successful (Beaudrie et al., 2009; Coles-Ritchie & Lugo, 2010). Heritage language programs provide native speakers the opportunity for native language literacy, native language maintenance, and cultural expression. Language policy in United States public education is determined by Title III of NCLB (2002). The language in the act is increasingly monolingualistic, which is cause for concern for ELL students. With the enactment of NCLB in 2001, non-English speakers have struggled (Menken, 2006; Solorzano, 2008; Wright & Choi, 2006; Wright & Li, 2008). This study addressed the effects of rapid English immersion for ELLs. Research on the effects of language immersion without native language support was limited. Furthermore the meaning of English-only schools in the lives of native Louisiana French speakers was unexplored in depth.

CHAPER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

By researching native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary school, I learned the meaning of the lived experiences of the persons participating in the study. My study was framed by a cultural capital theory, with social constructivism and ontological philosophical assumptions guiding data analysis. The value placed on intangible assets like culture is considered cultural capital, which include the knowledge, skills, and power of persons (Bourdieu, 1973; Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Ontological assumptions of being in the world and perception of reality focused on experiential meaning; these assumptions aligned with Heideggarian hermeneutic phenomenology (Lavery, 2003). Social construction took into account the ways in which persons understand and make meaning of experiences, including cultural points of view (Burr, 2003). My topic of inquiry dictated a qualitative phenomenological research design. My data collection and data analysis adhered to guidelines set forth by the research design. As a human instrument, my role was outlined and all ethical considerations were related.

Design

My topic of inquiry was studied through qualitative methods, adhering to the hermeneutic phenomenology approach. The hermeneutic phenomenological approach studied persons while remaining considerate to the particular experience (Van Manen, 1990). Through this approach, I was able to honor each person's life and experience; persons shared intimate details of their childhood, which may have been intrinsic to their personal development into adulthood. Hermeneutic phenomenology is pursued when the

research intends to understand the meaning of the experience of the persons (Crist & Tanner, 2003).

Hermeneutic phenomenology allowed for in depth interpretive analysis of the persons' experiences; my experience and culture allowed for unique analysis of the studied phenomenon. Similar to biblical hermeneutics, the experiences I brought to the data affected analysis, and the more deeply I understood the culture and experiences, the more pure the interpreted meaning of the experiences of native Louisiana French speakers in lower Bayou Lafourche entering English-only schools evolved. Gadamer (1998) highlighted the researcher's bond with what is studied, as this was certainly the case between this study and me. Hermeneutic phenomenology, contrasting transcendental phenomenology, is non-foundationalist, because it centers on the interpreted meaning of the experience by the researcher (Lavery, 2003). Therefore, my own paradigms, beliefs, and culture played a significant role. Because I shared the same culture as the persons studied, hermeneutic analysis of the data generated a shared perspective of the persons.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the meaning of the experience of native Louisiana French speakers entering elementary school?

Research Question 2: What was the impact of school experiences on language transmission?

Research Question 3: What was the experience like to acculturate to Anglo-American culture?

Research Question 4: What was the impact of school experience for non-native English speakers on school performance?

Research Question 5: What was the impact of school experience for non-native English speakers on future endeavors?

Research Question 6: Why do native Louisiana French speakers think language transmission declined?

Participants

I referred to those participating in the study as “persons.” Van Manen (1990) suggested it is essential to recognize the unique human element of research by honoring the humanness of those participating in research. Native Louisiana French speakers, who entered English-only elementary school with no or limited English language skills, were studied. Purposeful sampling was utilized to select persons by contacting acquaintances, incorporating snowball method where persons recommended others to participate in the study until thematic saturation was observed (Seidman, 2006). Twelve persons were recruited; however, four of the persons’ data was not used in analysis. In one case, the person’s spouse answered most of the open-ended questions because he could not remember. In two other instances, persons were fluent in English prior to entering elementary school. It was decided not to use the data from a person for technical reasons; he spoke very low and was very emotional during the interview, making it difficult to understand and decode the data. The final sample size was within the recommendations for phenomenological studies from Moustakas (1994), seven to 25 persons. The very small percentage of the population meeting participation requirements was also taken into

account. In depth interviews were used to enable me to understand the experience of entering English elementary school as a native Louisiana French speaker.

After Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I engaged people I already knew to recommend persons to participate in the study who are native Louisiana French speakers and entered elementary school with limited or no English proficiency. I took recommendations from people I had established relationships with and from acquaintances. Those I had established relationships with were asked to recommend persons to participate using the criteria. In the case of recommendations from acquaintances, I issued a blanket facebook message to all acquaintances native to lower Bayou Lafourche asking for recommendations; my acquaintances recommended grandparents or relatives. Once recommendations were made, I asked the recommender to make contact with the possible person participating for permission for me to contact them. I received four recommendations from acquaintances. Two of the recommended persons passed away before the interviews could be conducted. The other two recommendations were not available during the two weeks the interviews were conducted.

Given the very limited population from which persons were drawn, additional sampling was pursued. Personal recommendations from known acquaintances did not yield enough persons, so additional venues were utilized. A letter to the editor of the local newspaper, The Lafourche Gazette, was submitted. This method was borrowed from a previous study, in which the method was successful (Bernard, 2003). The letter explained the study, who I am, and asked for persons to participate in the study. Half of the persons for this study were recommended by one gentleman. He contacted all of his

friends asking for participation. Many of his friends recognized my maiden name and knew my family, so they agreed to participate. Once I was conducting interviews several people came in to the location where most of the interviews were conducted offering their time to participate in the study.

I explained informed consent and read the consent form to each person participating in the study. Because some persons had limited English language proficiency, orally reading the consent form was most appropriate. The consent form was also presented in French when needed. A very small percent of Louisiana French speakers can read French (Brown, 1993; Sexton, 2000). Persons were also able to ask me any questions about the study or my background at this time.

Honoring the dignity of all persons, those participating in the study were fully capable, both mentally and physically, to engage in interviews and focus groups. Pseudonyms were assigned for all participants. Female pseudonyms such as Liza and Beatrice were used for female persons. Male pseudonyms such as Walton, Walter, Beau, Johness, Alsace, and Gaston were used for male persons.

I compensated each person with a typical Cajun offering of hospitality; I gave each person homemade pepper jelly. Persons were presented the hospitality offerings at the end of the interview process; they were not told ahead of time. In addition, follow up communications were conducted with all participants after data was collected to inquire about their welfare and situation. Follow up communication also afforded me the opportunity to conduct member checks.

Table 1

Age, Education, Aged learned English, Gender of Persons and Data Collected.

	Age	Education	Age learned English	Gender	Interview	Focus Group	Audio Journal
Beatrice	83	8 th grade	11 years	Female	x		
Liza	78	College	6 or 7	Female	x		
Beau	64	College	6 or 7	Male	x		x
Johness	86	High School	6 or 7	Male	x	x	
Gaston	80	7 th grade	7	Male	x	x	
Walton	78	High School	6 or 7	Male	x		x
Alsace	76	Some college	5	Male	x	x	x
Walter	74	High School	6 or 7	Male	x		

Setting

My study focused on native Louisiana French speakers in lower Bayou Lafourche; therefore, the setting for my study was located in Lafourche Parish, Louisiana. This location was chosen because it was often not included in research on Cajun culture and because it was a more culturally isolated area than other Cajun localities. This location's lack of inclusion in previous research was not directly related. The lower Bayou Lafourche community required deliberate navigation; it was not an area someone would stumble across. Lower Bayou Lafourche is surrounded by water on three sides, with barrier islands off the coast. Central to the area is Bayou Lafourche, which

had transport roads running along either side of the bayou. Recently “back” roads were laid to facilitate quicker transport to the coast. I conducted research in lower Lafourche Parish to include: Galliano, Larose, Cut Off, Golden Meadow, and Lockport.

Honoring the situation and life stage of the persons participating in this study was important. Therefore, as invited, I conducted research in persons’ residences. I also reserved a room at the local library; this was a location known to all and provided privacy. Four of the interviews took place at the library. Until recently, this geographical area had limited access by transport. There were simply two roads which ran on either side of the bayou (Bernard, 2003). From these roads, residential streets ran perpendicular. Geographically, this area runs along Bayou Lafourche. This coastal area lies on the Gulf of Mexico and is approximately 60 miles southwest of New Orleans. The area is considered rural.

Procedures

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was secured prior to collecting any data. Informed consent from all persons participating in the study was obtained prior to data collection (see Appendix B). Once IRB approval was obtained, recommendations from known people were sought for possible participation in my study. A letter to the editor of the local paper was submitted and ran for one day. Data collection was recorded through audio and video, with persons’ consent. Consent forms were read to all persons participating in the study. A copy of the consent form in English and in French was given to each person. I then answered questions of the persons regarding participation in the study.

Personal Biography

My role as the researcher was one of human instrument, since I was personally collecting and interpreting the data. My personal experiences and philosophies did influence my interpretation. Hermeneutical phenomenology is an interpretive research design, relying on my experiences and my culture, as it relates in particular to those which pertain to this study.

I received a B.A. from Nicholls State University in French, an M.S. in elementary education from SUNY Potsdam, and an Ed.S. in teaching and learning from Liberty University. I have held two professional positions: a Catholic school teacher and a director of religious education. I have served as a US Army director of religious education at Ft. Drum, NY, in Belgium, and at Ft. Lee, VA, for the past 16 years. I am a practicing, active Roman Catholic.

I was born and raised in lower Bayou Lafourche in Cut Off, LA. My families, on both sides, are ethnically Cajun. Growing up, I did not learn Louisiana French, and the language was not spoken to either me or my sister at home. However, I was exposed to Louisiana French. I often witnessed older members of my family converse in Louisiana French. Many words used daily as part of my vocabulary were Louisiana French words. I did not realize this until learning standard French in high school and at university. An example of this is the French word for wasp. Growing up I understood the definition of a wasp, but I never heard the word used in conversation. While attending university, I discovered *guepe* and wasp were the same. *Guepe* was always used to denote a wasp in my home and at school.

My father owned a tugboat company and was a tugboat captain, so were my father's father and my mother's father. Oilfield related businesses are common in lower Bayou Lafourche and my family's experiences related to work were no exception. My sister and I grew up in a middle class home, frequently enjoying outdoor activities like fishing, horseback riding, and catching crawfish. My experience of Cajun culture is my own experience of childhood. We enjoyed Mardi Gras, boiled crawfish, fried alligator, close family relationships, and the outdoors a great deal. I cannot separate what it means to be Cajun from myself; it is who I consider myself to be. Consistent with Cajun settlement trends, my father's family were the original settlers of the residential street where I grew up. Most of the residents living on this street were family relations, to include my paternal grandparents, paternal great grandparents, and several cousins.

I frequently recall being told I spoke funny by outsiders of the community while growing up. When attending camps or 4-H livestock shows, my peers would often ask me to speak and then laugh. I did not understand why my speech was funny. I apparently had a heavy accent. My accent began to change when I entered university.

The university I attended is located on upper Bayou Lafourche. Despite its close proximity to my hometown, the Cajun accent is less pronounced in the area. In my very first English course, I can remember the professor indicated *mais* was not a word, although it is a common start to Cajun conversation. She then told us *dat*, *dis*, and *dey* are not proper speech. My accent eventually faded as moved from the area.

Today, my accent is not detectable in my every day speech, in part due to my experiences in college and my life outside of the area. Most people are surprised to learn I am Cajun and often ask me to say something "Cajun." I cannot turn the accent on and

off. However, when visiting my family, my husband usually comments my accent returns.

My father, maternal grandfather, and paternal grandparents were all native Louisiana French speakers. Those still living speak with heavy accents and typically speak Louisiana French to their peers. I am often inspired by their accomplishments. They have owned successful businesses and succeeded despite less formal education, others' perceived ignorance, and social prejudices outside of Bayou Lafourche. Only one of my grandparents completed high school; my maternal grandmother lived and grew up in New Orleans. Three of my grandparents did not receive education past eighth grade; they were business owners despite their lack of schooling.

This topic began to interest me 17 years ago when I worked on a Cajun folklore project for an English course at Nicholls State University. I interviewed my maternal grandfather and paternal grandmother asking them to tell me stories about when they were young. Much to my surprise they related their experiences of entering elementary school not understanding English. They both related corporal punishment for speaking Louisiana French on school grounds. During this project, I stopped short of asking how it made them feel or how this may have affected their education, since both only finished the eighth grade. Perhaps, I did not have ears to hear at the time. In my adulthood I have always wished the language would have been passed to me. At least to me, it feels there is a part of my identity which is missing. This study is cathartic for me in some respects, since I want to understand the meaning of the early educational experiences of the persons, who will demographically describe my grandparents.

My aunt related to me a story, which placed this study in perspective. After my maternal grandmother passed away, my maternal grandfather did not feel able to write checks and keep his finances. My aunt took on this responsibility for him. He said to her, “Me, I’m not educated. Your mama was smart.” He is now 86 and still feels inferior, despite owning his own business and being successful. Over the years, I’ve found many Cajuns my grandfather’s age are self deprecating. They apologize for their handwriting and reading skills, and they often mention their lack of education. It is my solemn belief this study found meaning in their experiences and gave voice to a marginalized people often overlooked in both Louisiana history and American history.

From 2005-2011, my family and I resided in the Walloon region of Belgium. The Walloon region is French speaking. This experience gave me insight into non-native speakers living, going to school, and working in a foreign country. This insight was valuable, because it afforded me the opportunity to perceive the American standard concerning language policy. In the U.S. immigrants are expected to rapidly assimilate and immerse in American culture, including learning English. However, Americans living abroad rarely learn the language of the native people. The expectation is host country populations will speak English. I was very fortunate in that I was fluent in French and was able to communicate with Belgian nationals rather easily. However, I did experience frustration and incompetence when placed in rare situations, like hospitalization, car accidents, or burglary. There was a pervasive sense of helplessness when hospitalized, because I could not comprehend all medical terms in French. While most doctors did speak English, nurses typically only spoke French. This feeling of helplessness changed my paradigm on English language learners. It brought forth the

unique needs of learners whose native language is not English. My perspective changed from one of English proficiency expectation to one of native language literacy and native language support.

Because of my heritage and experiences, I have natural bias to the Cajun people, culture, and language. This bias also afforded me the ability to identify with the experiences of the persons participating in the study to a degree, which aided in hermeneutical analysis. While our experiences differ, our culture is constant. Hermeneutical phenomenology utilized an insider perspective; therefore, my background and ethnicity enabled me to interpret data and analyze the voice of the persons in the study intimately and cohesively.

Data Collection

Four forms of data were collected to include interviews, audio journals, questionnaires, and focus groups. All data helped provide a rich, detailed experience of Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools in lower Bayou Lafourche. Data collection methods also honored and considered the life situation of the persons.

Questionnaires

An oral questionnaire was administered to gain data on demographics. The questionnaire described age, gender, and language identities. It was also used as a criteria checklist for persons. In the case of two interviews not included in the study, the criteria for participation was not met. However, because persons were willing and accommodated me, I completed the first interview.

Table 2

Questionnaire Data

1. Male/ Female
 2. Age _____
 3. What language did you grow up speaking at home?
 4. What language did you speak at school?
 5. Did you teach French to your children?
 6. What was your profession?
 7. What grade did you complete?
 8. Did your parents speak French?
 9. What school did you attend?
 10. What was your teacher's name?
-

Interviews

The primary method of data collection was in the form of interview. It was important to consider the education and age of persons participating in the study. Phenomenologically based interviews were conducted utilizing a three interview structure (Seidman, 2006). The first interview focused on life history, the second interview focused on the experience, and the third interview focused on reflecting on the meaning of the experience (Seidman, 2006). This interview structure allowed persons to reconstruct the experience studied. This three interview structure guided persons into intentional and purposeful reflection. Seidman (2006) recommended three interviews,

but notes the first and second interview can be combined. This was the case for the persons participating in my study. Persons completed two interviews.

After the interview questions were decided, I conducted a test interview on my grandfather. It was especially helpful in highlighting technique considerations for me as a researcher. Following the test interview, I did not change any of the interview questions. The data from the test interview was reflective of the data desired for the study. I did notice during the test interview I would have to be considerate of the persons interviewed, as my test person often took the interview in terms of content to where he wanted. I also learned I would have to be prepared to be patient. Overall, the test interview was very helpful as it related what I would come to expect from the interviews. During the interviews, I also took field notes in order to provide inaudible details during the process.

Table 3

Standardized Open Ended Interview Questions for Interview 1-Life History (Seidman, 2006)

Early Childhood

1. What is the earliest memory you have of yourself?
2. What was life like for you as a child?
3. Tell me about your mom and dad.
4. Tell me about where you grew up.

Childhood

5. Tell me about your friends.
6. What sorts of “fun” did you have as a child?
7. What do you remember your family doing together?

8. Tell me about your family outside of your home.

Adolescence

9. When did you start working? What did you do?

10. When did you stop going to school? Why?

11. What did you go for fun?

Adulthood

12. Did you marry? When?

13. How did you meet your significant other?

14. What have been your most significant challenges as an adult?

15. Did you have children? Tell me about them.

Vocation

16. What type of work did you do? How long?

17. Tell me about how you got into your work.

18. (Stay at home moms) What types of things did you do after your children were grown?

19. Did you belong to any organizations? Church groups?

Family

20. What are your proudest moments of your life?

21. What are your children like now?

22. How often do you engage in family activity?

Individual interviews were videotaped and transcribed. The purpose of questions one through 22 was to gather in depth data about individual's life history. Persons were asked to recall early childhood experiences and were then guided through childhood,

adolescence, and into adulthood. Reconstructing early experiences allowed persons to place the experience studied in context (Seidman, 2006).

Table 4

Standardized Open Ended Questions for Interview 2 -Studied Experience (Seidman, 2006)

School experiences

1. Tell me about your first teacher.
2. Tell me about your friends at school.
3. Tell me about your experience entering elementary school.
4. What do you remember most about going to school for the first time?
5. How did your parents feel about you going to school?
6. Did school support your native language? How or how not?

Persons were then guided through the specific experience of entering English-only school as a Louisiana French speaker. Persons were asked to recall school experience by focusing on the teacher and their friends. Questions three and four also guided the person in recalling a specific age and time in the past. Questions three and four focused on the sometimes traumatic experience related in previous research by Cajuns entering school (Sexton, 2000). Question five and question six focused on perceived parental perceptions of instruction language and the effects on home language. Research suggested parental concerns about language maintenance and attrition when instruction language differs from home language (Guardado, 2006; Wang, 2009).

Table 5

Standardized Open Ended Questions for Interview 3-Making Meaning of the Experience

(Seidman, 2006)

Meaning

1. What were your feelings about school?
 2. Looking back, how did you feel about your native language after entering school?
 3. Did you pass your native language to your children? Why? Why not?
 4. Do you feel less people are using French?
 5. Why do you think people have not passed on the French language to their children?
 6. How has life changed for you over the years in regards to using French?
 7. How do you feel about your heritage? Your native language?
-

Question one allowed the person to reflect on the lived experience on entering an English elementary school. Van Manen (1990) states, “A person cannot reflect on lived experience while living through the experience ... phenomenological reflection is not introspective, but retrospective” (p. 10). The purpose of questions two through six focused on language transmission. Questions two and three linked experiences at school to language transmission. Literature suggested the experiences of entering school may affect language transmission; Wiltse (2011) relates the experiences of Cree native’s refusal to pass on the language due to the physical punishment received for speaking the language. Questions three, four and five sought to gain the person’s perspective on language attrition for Louisiana French. Literature suggested Louisiana French has

experienced attrition (Ryon, 2002; Sexton, 2000). Question six and question seven focused on the possible change in language usage over time for the person. Historical narratives and historical research point toward increased Anglicized cultural influences (Bernard, 2003; Brasseaux, 1987; Sexton, 2000).

Focus Group

To garner additional data about the lived experiences of Louisiana French native speakers entering English-only elementary schools, a focus group was conducted with persons who wished to participate. Persons were allowed to interact with peers in the hope support and camaraderie would allow for even richer data. The focus group took place at the end of a monthly meeting of *La Table Française*. The group is a French language support group where members are teaching themselves French literacy, with the help of those already literate in French. The end of the meeting was turned over to me and we discussed the following questions. Not all persons in the study were present, but three were able to attend. The focus group was videotaped. During the focus group, participants changed languages frequently, from French to English and vice versa. The focus group developed into suggestions on language preservation. This development was born out of the open ended questions below.

Table 6

Standardized Open Ended Focus Group Questions

Cultural implications

1. What advice would you give our young Cajuns regarding school?
2. What would you like to see younger Cajuns do to promote the culture?
3. What does it mean to be Cajun?

4. How has your culture influenced your life?

School Experience

5. What do you wish would have been different about school when you went?
-

The focus group was videotaped in order ascribe data to particular participants. The purpose of questions one through four was to focus on cultural implications. Cultural preservation and language revitalization efforts are considerations in current south Louisiana (St. Hilaire, 2005). Often language is ascribed to cultural identity. Questions three and four focused on describing cultural identity (Trepanier, 1991). The purpose of the fifth question was to focus on school experience. As persons reflect on their past experience, they were able to identify what may have been done differently which may have helped them.

Audio Journal

I asked persons to engage in an audio journal for two weeks after the interview and/or focus group, if they wish to participate. Persons were prompted to record any memories or ideas they would like to share concerning the interviews or focus groups, since ideas may have come to the persons after completion of the interview and /or focus group. A handheld audio recorder device was provided for each person. After the final interview, I guided each participant in how to use the audio recorder; also included in the envelope was written instruction on the use of the recorder. Audio journals were provided in a self addressed, pre-paid envelope. Mailing instructions were included with the envelope. Persons simply placed the recording device in the padded envelope and placed it in the post. A copy of the focus group questions was included as a prompt for

the persons choosing to participate in audio journals. Audio journals were collected and transcribed. Three audio journals were received, two of which were from persons not participating in the focus group. One person felt more comfortable typing and emailing me things he thought of after the interviews; this person did not participate in the focus group. It is unclear why those who did not return an audio journal did not. Perhaps the technology made them hesitant, or they simply forgot.

Data Analysis

Data analysis procedures aligned with a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. After investigating the experience, I engaged in hermeneutic phenomenological reflection. This reflection provided insight into the meaning of the phenomenon; Van Manen (1990) describes the process as one “of reflectively appropriating, of clarifying, and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience” (p.77). I kept a reflective journal (see Appendix F) consisting of data insight, assumptions, and personal bias to assist with hermeneutic interpretation (Laverty, 2003). Analysis was cyclical and included the use of the hermeneutical circle interpretive. My assumptions and bias were not set aside, but rather my perspective and bias shaped interpretation of the data. Hermeneutic phenomenology enlisted personal bias and assumptions as essential to the process of interpretation, hence the importance of a reflective journal (Laverty, 2003). While bracketing is utilized in other qualitative designs, it is not necessary in hermeneutic phenomenological studies.

Van Manen (1990) suggested thematic analysis to determine the themes present in the meaning of the study and classify the information. Of Van Manen’s three suggested approaches to thematic analysis, I utilized the selective or highlighting approach, because

this allowed the revelation of common themes during data analysis. This approach required I read the data several times to determine what was essential about the phenomenon in the data and what statements were revealing and meaningful about the phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). I noted information which was unclear or confusing for further exploration (Crist & Tanner, 2003). Statements or phrases which stand out in the text helped me to develop the multi-faceted meaning of the persons' experience. Van Manen's four existentials, spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality, provided a reflective framework for me using thematic analysis. Corporeality concerned the physical experience of the persons. Spatiality included the lived space of the experiences of the persons. The lived time of the persons was reflected on by me in reference to temporality. The fourth existential was relationality, which included the lived human relation.

Reflective writing was used to develop my interpretation of the phenomenon. A summary of integral themes with some excerpts began the writing process; the summary was three to five pages (see Appendix G) as suggested by Crist and Tanner (2003). I reread, revised and rewrote the data and interpretations, adhering to the cyclical nature of hermeneutic phenomenology (Creswell, 2007). Through this process, examples of specific themes emerged. The persons' narratives had some similar meaning; these common stories or information were considered exemplars (Crist & Tanner, 2003). Paradigm cases emerged from the data as well. Crist and Tanner (2003) described paradigm cases as, "vibrant stories that are compelling" (pg. 204). The coding of themes and exemplars was called naming (Benner, Tanner, & Chesla, 1996). Through the hermeneutic interpretation, central themes arose and connections were made through

individual stories; the written summary of interpretation highlighted the meaning found through common themes in the stories (Crist & Tanner, 2003). Interpretation was an ongoing process and repetitive; therefore, it never truly ended (Creswell, 2005). Diekelmann and Ironside (1998) suggested readers will make the last interpretation as they read the study.

To engage in hermeneutical interpretation, the data collected was made manageable and malleable. In order to accomplish this, I transcribed the interview, focus group, and audio journal data, and the content was read and reread several times. In order to document emerging themes and ideas, I engaged in memoing, the written record of data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Description of the data was reflected in the reflective journal I kept. Classification of the data into themes was part of Van Manen's (1990) thematic analysis (see Appendix H).

Data analysis on the demographic questionnaire described the persons in the study. Mean ages, mean education, mean age learning English, and gender was presented in tabular form. The frequency of persons passing on Louisiana French to their children, the frequency of persons remembering their first teacher, and the frequency of profession choices was presented by pie charts. This data helped me provide overall descriptive portraits of the persons.

Trustworthiness

The credibility of the study was addressed through triangulation, member checks, and peer debrief. Method triangulation is reached when multiple forms of data are collected (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Multiple data collection methods are used to provide corroborating evidence; when multiple sources generate similar conclusions, the

trustworthiness of the study is increased (Creswell, 2007). This can help ensure the data presented was valid. Similar themes emerged from the data in interviews, focus groups, and journals lending to the reliability of the data; it increased the study's validity.

Member checks allowed persons to review data and read interpretations; this presented the opportunity for persons to evaluate the data for clarity and meaning (Creswell, 2007). Member checks were crucial to credibility in a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When persons reviewed my work, they provided insight into missing data, confusing interpretations or possible misrepresentations. Member checks were conducted during follow up communications. Each person was mailed a copy of interviews and transcription. The person was asked to contact me if they had any concerns or had information they would have liked to add. Once interpretation took place, persons were mailed copies of the thematic analysis and interpretation. Again, persons were asked to contact me via phone or email with any suggestions or concerns.

Peer debrief is when someone outside the study, who is either knowledgeable about the method or phenomenon, looks over the process and data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Utilizing peer debrief allowed me to ensure objectivity in data collection and analysis. I asked my former first grade teacher to serve as my peer debrief. She contacted me upon seeing my letter to the editor in the local newspaper. She was very familiar with the culture and the phenomenon. She is also a lifelong educator and demonstrated a strong interest in the study. She was consulted on occasion to review the document and findings.

Hermeneutic phenomenological research is an exercise in writing (Van Manen, 1990). Transferability was addressed through rich, descriptive details on the explored

experience. The meaning of authentic experiences of Louisiana French speakers entering elementary school was offered. As much detailed as possible was given in order allow the reader to grasp the setting and phenomenon as authentically as possible (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

I addressed dependability through reflexivity and audit trails. Reflexivity is the disclosure of personal bias and assumptions (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Phenomenological studies require researchers to bracket their personal experiences and beliefs (Moustakas, 1994); however, hermeneutical phenomenology utilizes researcher beliefs, experiences, and bias to relate to research. My personal experiences with the setting, participants, and culture was identified and embraced. These personal assumptions, beliefs, and bias enriched interpretation during analysis of the data.

Utilizing an audit trail allowed transparency in data collection and analysis. An audit trail documented the process of researching the phenomenon; detailed logs of activities were kept (Creswell & Miller, 2000). A journal was kept of coordinating details in the research process (see Appendix I). All purchases and supplies were logged into this journal.

Ethical Considerations

This study took into account several ethical considerations. No data was collected for this study prior to IRB approval. All Liberty University guidelines were followed and embraced.

The persons participating in the study were considered a vulnerable population due to their age. It was important to verbally explain the consent form and allow them to read it themselves. This population should never be placed in a position where they are

marginalized or taken advantage of. The researcher ensured all persons were fully able to consent to the study. Particular attention was made to the educational level of the persons. Many of these persons did not receive a high school education; in some instances their reading and writing skills were limited.

I have strong personal ties to the area and to its people. It was necessary all personal beliefs about the persons, about the field, and about the outcome are realized prior to data collection. A reflective journal detailing assumptions was started three months prior to data collection.

I ensured anonymity for all persons. Pseudonyms were utilized for all persons. All digital information was password protected and physical data was secured in a locked filing cabinet.

To ensure persons did not develop feelings of abandonment, I gradually disengaged from the persons. After research was conducted, informal communications and personal correspondences were to help provide gradual disengagement. Each person was sent a personal thank you note along with a copy of their interview. Other correspondences happened when persons initiated phone calls and emails to me. Again, at the holiday season, all participants were sent a card. This allowed me to remain sensitive to the stage of life persons find themselves encompassed.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to discover the meaning of the lived educational experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools in lower Bayou Lafourche, Louisiana. I wanted to understand the lived experiences of rapid English immersion on native Louisiana French speakers. My intention was to better understand the overall experiences of non-English speakers in English-only schools, which previous research had not addressed. Because my study sought to relate the meaning of the participants' lived experiences, phenomenological design worked best (Van Manen, 1990). A hermeneutic phenomenology study was used to find the meaning in the persons' school experiences as native Louisiana French speakers utilizing interviews, journals, questionnaires, and a focus group. The retrospective interpretative nature of the study and emphasis on existential meaning described hermeneutic phenomenology (Annells, 2006). Since I am an ethnic Cajun who is very familiar with the area and with the culture, the meaning of the collected data was processed hermeneutically, which utilized my perceptions, my culture, and my beliefs about the culture under investigation. Hermeneutic phenomenology was the best research design for my study.

Structuring the Results

The results of data analysis begin with collection and analysis overview. Using the research questions to frame the collection and methodology of the study, I was able to present a logical flow of the data collection and analysis. The first data I will present is the descriptive portraits of the persons taken from the questionnaires. The questionnaires

revealed preliminary descriptions of the persons, which aided in depth analysis. All data from the questionnaires is presented in graphic form. Following these results are brief portraits of each of the eight persons included in the study. Providing a brief life portrait of the persons places the data collected in a fluid and unique context. Understanding the meaning of entering English-only elementary school as a native Louisiana French speaker developed from holistic insight into the person's life at the time of the experience and impact of the experience throughout his or her life.

Hermeneutic phenomenology required reflection on Van Manen's (1990) four existentials. The existentials are spatiality, corporeality, relationality, and temporality. The four existentials are presented in light of the studied phenomenon. From these existentials, thematic analysis revealed four integral themes: confusion and fear the first days of school, physical punishment for speaking Louisiana French in school, humble early lives, and reflective wish for bi-literacy and language transmission. To reflect the integral themes, exemplar and paradigm cases are then presented. The research questions were then addressed individually and related to previous research and literature. The research questions were guided by thematic analysis, specifically hermeneutical phenomenology data analysis.

Data Collection and Analysis Overview

There were six research questions guiding my research. All of the research questions were addressed in the open-ended interview questions and focus groups. The research questions were as follows:

Research Question 1: What is the meaning of the experience of native Louisiana French speakers entering elementary school?

Research Question 2: What was the impact of school experiences on language transmission?

Research Question 3: What was the experience like to acculturate to Anglo-American culture?

Research Question 4: What was the impact of school experience for non-native English speakers on school performance?

Research Question 5: What was the impact of school experience for non-native English speakers on future endeavors?

Research Question 6: Why do native Louisiana French speakers think language transmission declined?

This study consisted of four forms of data collection: questionnaires, in depth interviews, focus group, and audio journal. I conducted three part in-depth interviews with each of the eight persons participating in the study. Each series of interviews focused on personal history, the experience of entering English-only school as a native Louisiana French speaker, and persons' perceived meaning of the experience. The focus group centered on how the lack of native language support may have affected language attrition; three of the persons attended the focus group. Audio journals were offered to each of the eight persons. The audio journals were intended to allow for communication with myself after the in depth interviews. A copy of the focus group questions was included with the audio journals in the hopes the questions would trigger the ideas and thoughts of the persons. Of the eight persons, three completed audio journals. One person felt more comfortable relating his thoughts via email and did so accordingly. Questionnaires on descriptive statistics were collected on each of the eight persons.

Questionnaire data is presented in tabular and graph form, while interviews, focus group, and audio journals are presented through thematic analysis.

Data Collection Notation

Because I am a lower Bayou Lafourche native and am fluent in standard French, I was able to understand the accent and language changing of the persons interviewed; therefore, it was not necessary to hire a translator. These unique nuances of the interviews also required I completed all transcription myself. Three of the persons included in the study responded to a letter to the editor soliciting persons to participate in my study (see Appendix E). One person in the study who responded, Alsace, contacted an entire of group of people he thought would be interested; this snowball sampling accounted for three persons. Two of the persons were personal contacts who were asked to participate in the study by people I knew.

All interviews and the focus group were video recorded. I personally transcribed the data in its entirety, increasing credibility. All of the persons were designated a pseudonym to ensure anonymity during transcription. The detailed methodology concerning data collection was described at length in Chapter Three. At the start of each interview series, I filled in a questionnaire of oral responses. The questionnaire provided descriptive portraits of the persons, while assuring persons met criteria for the study. After each interview or focus group, I kept reflective notes; field notes were kept during interviews. Keeping field notes allowed me to start connecting themes within the data. It was important for me to document what I was learning from each of the persons. Since the persons and I share cultural heritage, it may have been easy to assume I knew what their experiences may have been like. However, I wanted to learn and understand their

experiences in a meaningful way, so it was imperative I spend time truly listening and truly thinking about the meaning of their experiences. I set aside time at the end of each day I conducted interviews to reflect on the content of the interviews. I then recorded this via smart pen to keep an accurate record.

Descriptive Portraits

From the questionnaires, descriptive portraits of the persons were gained. The age range for all persons was 64 to 86 years old; the mean age was 77.4 years old. The mean age of learning English for the group was six or seven years old. The education range of the persons spanned the completion of 7th grade to college. The mean education was a high school diploma. Six of the eight participants were male, with 25% of the persons being female. The following table relates the mean age, mean education and mean age learning English. One interesting note on the gender of the persons participating in the study was how the experience varied from men to women. Women were responsible for socializing and raising children, which has implications on the interpretation of passing on Louisiana French to children.

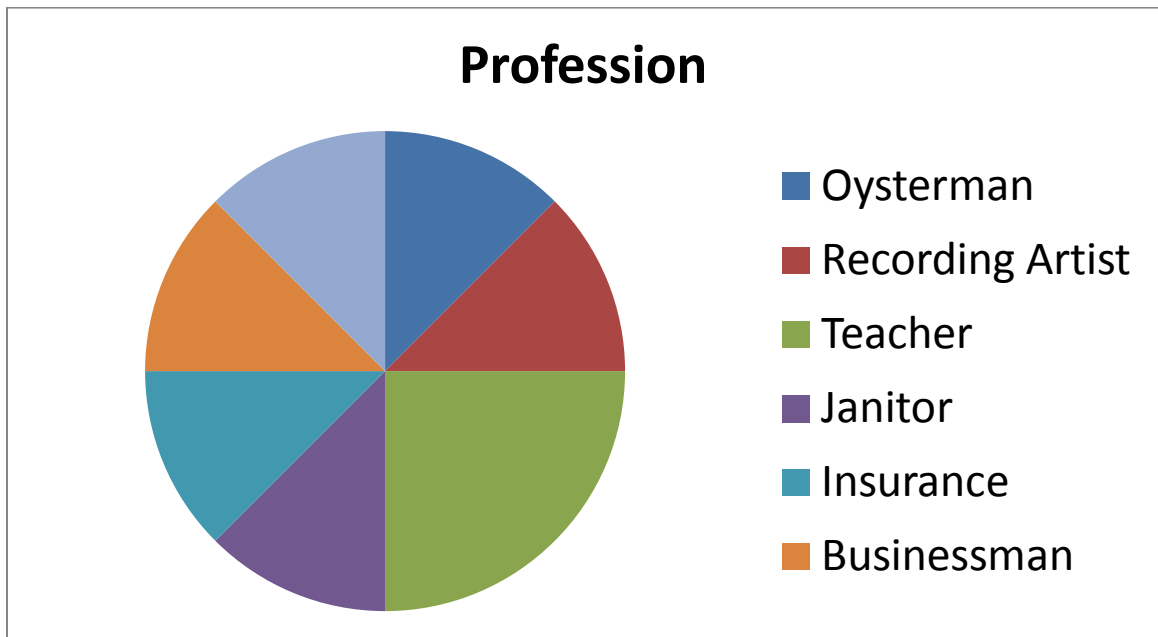
Table 7

Mean age, mean education, and mean age learning English of persons

Mean age	77
Mean education	High School
Mean age learning English	7 years old

The professions of the persons spanned a wide range. While most persons had more than one profession, the profession they engaged in the longest length of time is depicted in the figure below. It is also important to note most of the men had been involved with the oilfield industry at some point in their lives.

Figure 1 *Profession of Persons*



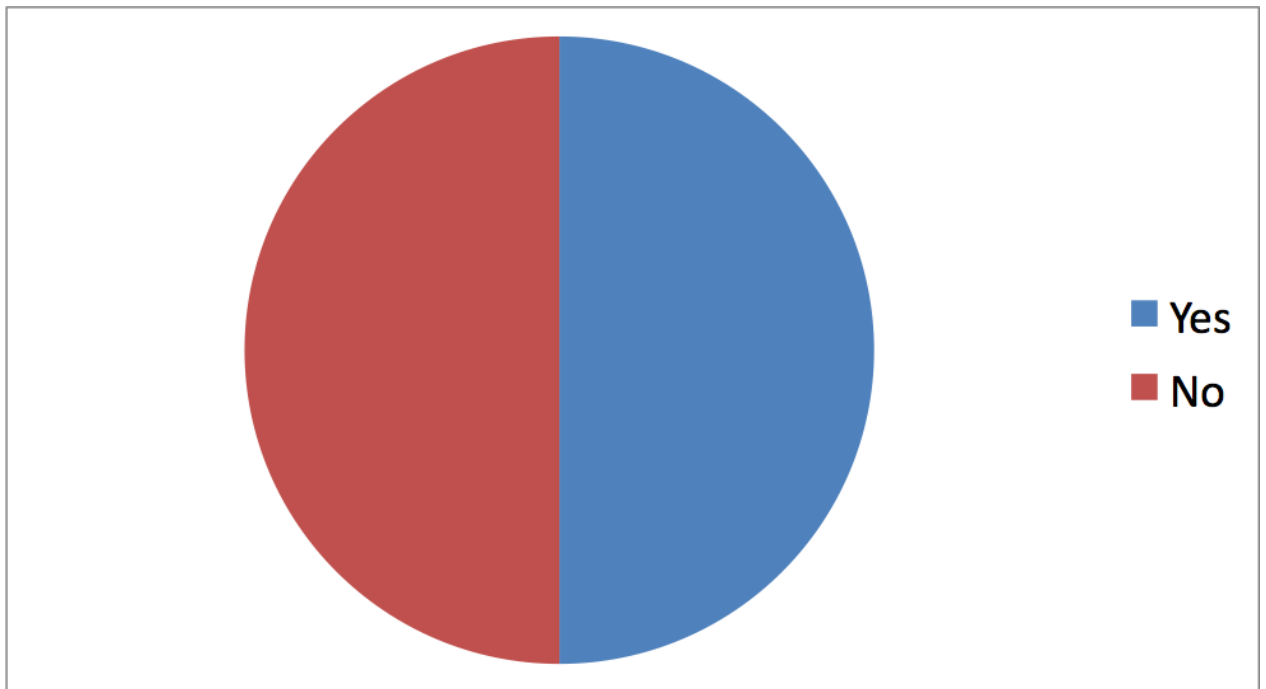
Recalling the name of their first teacher served two purposes. First, it allowed persons to begin recalling memories from a particular period of their life. Secondly, it provided credibility to the recollections shared. If they were able to remember their teacher, then persons' recollections of school may be considered more credible. Of the eight participants, only one person could not recall the name of their very first teacher. For the most part the persons had no problem recalling their first teacher.

The questionnaire asks persons if they passed on their native Louisiana French language to their children. The persons sampled were split; 50% passed on the language to their children and the other 50% did not pass on the language to their children.

Hermeneutical phenomenological data analysis explored the reasons for this finding.

Figure 2 indicated rapid language attrition for Louisiana French.

Figure 2 *Louisiana French Language Transmission to Children*



Persons' Background

Each person's background and synopsis of experiences was highlighted in order to recognize the uniquely human element of hermeneutic phenomenology analysis. The meaning of the experience was placed in the context of their life in order to provide accurate analysis.

Alsace. Alsace was an enthusiastic person to interview. At the time of the interviews he was 76 years old. He contacted me through my letter to the editor for the local paper. Prior to the interview he was extremely helpful in sending me video footage he made with his grandson for a school project. Because of his business, I knew of him, and he knew both sides of my family fairly well. A tall, slender man with thick white hair, Alsace was a very confident person. He commanded attention with his presence, but also had a very considerate nature about him. Often calling me by my nickname, Alsace was very warm and endearing. His voice was very raspy, due to a medical condition. His voice immediately reminded me of my grandfather's voice, who also had a naturally raspy voice and was called frog by his friends because of the way he sounded. During the course of our interviews, there was much laughter, but tears were also shed as he spoke of the day he found his mother on the ground after returning from school; she had a stroke.

He had great energy around the studied phenomenon and is an advocate for teaching French in schools at a very early age. Alsace seemed to have a very good understanding of how the Cajun culture and society had evolved over the past 70 years. He lived through post World War II transitions and a major change in economy. .

Alsace was born in Mathews, LA, the son of a sugar cane industry worker. Unique about Alsace was he attended a Catholic elementary and high school, where prayers were recited and sometimes written in French. While his school instruction was in English, he related French was tolerated. Therefore, he did not receive the harsh punishments for speaking French as those attending public schools did. He indicated his school experiences were positive. His family was very closely knit. He often spoke of

his parents and grandparents with reverence and honor. He related his parents were both literate in French; he recalled growing up and having newspapers and magazines in French. The language was nurtured and promoted at home for him.

At the time of the interview, Alsace was retired. He started an insurance agency in the 1960s; it was very successful. My knowledge of Alsace prior to the interviews indicated he was good businessman and a strong community member.

He married at a very young age and had four children. While Alsace did drop out of school to marry, he did receive his GED. Later, he attended classes at Louisiana State University. He transmitted Louisiana French to his children. His children are now grown and he has several grandchildren. Alsace indicated his children did not pass the language to his grandchildren. When asked why, he indicated maybe people didn't feel it was necessary. In his own life, he is a strong advocate of the French language and has done work in the area to bring the issue of language attrition to light.

I left our meetings with a great respect for Alsace. His wisdom is apparent, but his authenticity was astounding. We had contact on several occasions after the completion of the study. Always generous, Alsace sends me information he believes I am interested to know.

Johness. Johness was the oldest person at 86 years old participating in this study. I knew his name when he contacted me after seeing my letter to the editor in the local paper. When I arrived at his home, he took me on a tour of the area lasting about 45 minutes. In that time, he showed me where the school he attended was located, his properties, and his daughter's home. Johness was a very matter of fact person; clear and concise with his life history. When I first met him, I noticed his height because he was

tall, and his use of a cane when he walked. Despite the need for assistance when he walked, Johness moved around quite well. Generous with information, he showed me his family tree, which he found on ancestor.com. This straightforward man was quite accomplished. His office was filled with pictures and awards. He had pictures with many presidents and awards from Red Cross.

Johness grew up in Cut Off, LA, the son of a farmer. His childhood was happy. He described his family as poor, but related he was not aware of their economic situation until the day he asked for a nickel to see a movie, and his father was unable to honor the request.

He was punished for speaking French at school and indicated he felt his background in French held him back from pursuing higher education. His parents were strong supporters of education. At a time when it would have helped his family if he dropped out and started working, Johness indicated his mother was adamantly against him dropping out of school. Johness did not transmit the language to any of his six children. Today they are all college graduates. It seems he eliminated what he felt held him back from going to college for his children, and today each of them achieved what he wished for himself.

Professionally, Johness served in the military. He then worked in the oilfield, eventually owning his own businesses. At the time of his interviews, he was retired. When asked about language attrition, he related education pushed it out, but he didn't feel that was necessarily bad.

Walton. Walton was recommended to me as a possible participant by Alsace. I contacted him and he agreed to take part in my study. When I first met Walton, he was

smiling and gave me a hug. He was wearing a cap and jacket with Nova Scotia on embroidered on it. Very willing to share his life, Walton immediately asked me, “What you want to know?” He spoke a great deal using his hands and we laughed a great deal during his sharing. He told me I was related to his wife. As it turned out, I was. There was something still familiar about him; I couldn’t place my finger on. After our first interview, I realized I attended elementary school with his youngest son. The pieces came together for me. I did not think I knew him prior to the interviews. When speaking of his wife, Walton related, “I loved her since she was 13 years old.” His fervor for his wife and family was apparent. Any time he spoke of his wife or children, he had the biggest smile across his face. He did not transmit the language to his children and indicated he regretted it. As he indicated he regretted it, he pointed on the paper forcefully. We had contact after the interviews. He called to see how I was doing and ask me if it was ok to email me a story he remembered.

Walton was lively and very willing to share his experiences at 78 years old. He related with great detail his personal experiences and painted detailed portraits of the area. He was born in Cut Off, LA, and was very close to his parents and grandparents.

With great affection he recalled his first teacher, who was also Cajun. He did not indicate receiving any harsh punishments for speaking French in school from her, but he indicated in later years teachers perpetrated harsh punishments for speaking French in school. Very detailed in his recollections, Walton indicated the consequences of speaking French in school, starting with slaps on the fingers with a ruler and ending with expulsion. He graduated high school and indicated he wanted to become a veterinarian. Walton did not become a veterinarian, but he indicated raising cattle filled the desire to

work with animals. Walton worked for a period of time in the oilfield, but decided to work with his father in law and became an oysterman. He was retired at the time of his interviews.

While he did not learn to read and write French in school, he has taught himself literacy skills. He brought a story he wrote in French for me to see. Since Walton has retired, he and his wife made several trips to Nova Scotia seeking to connect with distant relatives. He displayed much joy upon finding relatives in Canada and remained in contact with them. He had great pride when telling of his cousins in Nova Scotia. Excitedly, he told me he speaks to them on the phone every so often.

Gaston. Gaston was a very humble and delightful man. Gaston was recommended to me by Alsace. I contacted him, and he agreed to the interviews. It was difficult not to know who he was. He still is our “down the bayou” celebrity. I knew of him, but did not know him personally. I was quite nervous to meet him and interview him. When I first met him, he was with his wife at local library. He was average in stature and immaculately dressed. Later in the evening he was going to make an appearance at a local festival. His hair was grey and very neatly parted and combed to one side. He then spoke, and all of a sudden I understood how he became such a successful musician. His voice was very melodic. His voice showed his age, but it was still very alluring. Our interviews took place in a room in the library, and near this room there was a corner dedicated to Gaston. It displayed his awards, playbills, instruments, and the key to the city of Clare in Nova Scotia. This was unplanned, but fitting.

He shared with me a life full of amazing occurrences. He was born in Cut Off, LA, the son of a farmer. At the time of his interviews he was 80 years old. He described

how his father farmed in the summer and trapped in the winter. They moved quite a bit; he described the life of tenant farming. He described his family as being very poor.

Gaston described an early life which was simple and without modern amenities. When speaking of his education, Gaston indicated he never liked school. While his family trapped in the winter, he would often be out of school for three months. Because he was away for so long, Gaston felt he was always behind academically. He indicated physical punishment for speaking French at school. When Gaston was in the seventh grade, he dropped out of school, and he did not relate any regret in doing so. In fact, he felt had he been more educated, he may have not become the man he was.

Gaston was a talented musician and was well known in lower Bayou Lafourche. He was the first Cajun recording artist to sign with Columbia records. Despite his success, he remained humble, being thankful for his early experiences. He married his wife when he was young, and they had five children. He passed on the language to all of his children. Gaston was a very genuine man, relating his experiences without any regret for the person he became. He spoke very carefully and thought about what he said in a reflective manner.

Walter. Walter came to find me at the library, because he heard I was conducting interviews there. Alsace told him about the study. At our first meeting, Walter did not look his age; he looked much younger. With few indications of age, Walter's head was absent of hair. We sat down in the library room dedicated to my interviews, and when he signed his consent form, his hands shook a bit. Walter was a quiet man and needed to be asked the correct questions in order to open up. It was obvious from his reactions and words he felt his education was an injustice to him because he was not taught to be bi-

literate. I was quite taken back by his strong responses concerning his education. When telling of his experiences, Walter was overcome with emotions at times. He was a thoughtful man and spoke candidly about his life.

Walter was born in Golden Meadow, LA, the son of a shrimper. He was 74 years old at the time of his interviews. He indicated his school experiences were very negative. He recalled frightening experiences while attending school. Walter related physical punishment for speaking French at school was common. These early school experiences caused him to think twice about speaking French. He also indicated he never cared for attending school.

Walter did graduate from high school and entered the US Army. In the Army, he was a cook. Upon exiting the military, Walter became a chef for an oil company. He provided service to the company elite and their customers. He indicated he enjoyed his profession a great deal. At the time of his interviews he was retired.

Walter is a strong advocate for the promulgation of French. He indicated he taught himself French literacy skills and attended a summer program at a university in Nova Scotia, immersing in the French language. He was purposeful in keeping up his French literacy skills by choosing to watch television and read in French whenever it was possible.

He expressed some frustration with many Cajun people not accepting standard French as an alternative in schools. He indicated the problem stems from the lack of literacy in Louisiana French, since it has been a spoken language only for the past 100 years. Walter related the language deteriorated because of lack of literacy. Walter did

pass the language to his children, however his grandchildren are not French speakers. He is passionate about his heritage and his language, a true advocate.

Beau. I knew Beau for my entire life; he was married to a family relation. Despite knowing him, I learned a great deal about him in this study. Beau was a joyful man, easy to talk to, and enjoyable to be around. He was the quintessential “Cajun” man; he loved hunting and fishing. We scheduled our interview at a particular time, because each morning he was going to go bow hunting in the swamp. The interviews took place at his residence, which happened to be the exact home he grew up. I had been to the home before as a child; on this occasion, as an adult, the home seemed very small. It was a typical Cajun “shot gun” house, narrow and long. There were two small bedrooms and a small bath. Greeting me with a big hug, it seemed like I had never left Bayou Lafourche. Beau was home for me. He was athletic with a beard and graying hair. Although a younger Cajun, Beau’s accent is very pronounced, despite his education and use of English. He spoke with his hands a great deal. I can still recall his story of meeting some of his first students in their adulthood, students who behaved so badly he almost quit teaching, Beau recalled how they would say, “Hey, *Podna* (brother/friend)” each time they saw him. While telling the story, Beau shook his two index fingers rapidly. My daughter and husband accompanied me to Beau’s home. At the end of our interviews he took my daughter to pick oranges from his orange tree, and I thought, “This is the simple life I would love my child to experience.” This was the simple life Beau forged for himself, living off the land, and remaining an authentic man.

Beau was the youngest person participating in my study. He was 64 years old at the time of his interviews. He was born in Cut Off, LA. His father worked in the oilfield industry, but also trapped and fished for a living.

He indicated while he attended elementary school, physical punishment was perpetrated for speaking French in the classroom. He described school as scary and confusing, because he didn't know English and he wasn't used to wearing shoes. He completed high school and attended college.

Beau was a lifelong educator, but supplemented his income as a teacher through seasonal jobs like fishing, trapping, and oil field work. He attended college and received a Master's degree in adaptive physical education. When speaking of his experiences as a teacher, he noted great differences between students and parents at the beginning of his career, the late 1960s, and the end of his career, the early 2000s.

Beau was retired at the time of his interviews. He also indicated he uses French whenever he can, mostly with his childhood friends. His audio journal indicated his desire for language transmission. While he did not pass the language on to his children, he wished more children would speak Louisiana French.

Beatrice. Beatrice's son responded to my letter to the editor on her behalf. I did not know Beatrice personally. However, Beatrice was Beau's aunt. Her interviews took place exactly across the street from Beau's residence. Beatrice's residence was located on family property as well. She was short in stature with curly grayish hair. She used a cane to walk, since she was infected with polio as a child. Polio had a significant effect on her life in terms of mobility, education, and family. She had a very high voice and

each time she referred to her son, her voice smiled. The closeness of their relationship was obvious, and she softened a great deal when recalling him as a child.

Beatrice was 83 years old at the time of her interviews and was retired. She was born in Cut Off, LA, the daughter of an oysterman. She described a simple life when she was growing up. While her family had enough to live, work was still hard. As a youngster, Beatrice contracted polio. As a result, she did not attend school until she was 11 years old. She indicated school was difficult for two reasons: her physical condition and the learning of English. In the ninth grade, she dropped out of school, indicated if she had been in school with children her own age, she may have stayed.

Beatrice indicated physical punishment was perpetrated for speaking French in school. She described in great length the logistics of school. Prior to bus service, she walked to school over a mile on crutches. She did pass the language on to her children, to whom she was very close.

Beatrice married when she was 23 years old. Her husband was a hard worker and worked in an oilfield related business. She worked as a part time janitor close to home. She continues to reside in the place she raised her children, who live within a few houses from her residence.

Liza. Liza, like Beau, was married to a family relation. While I grew up knowing her, I did not spend a great deal of time around her or her family. I was able to learn a great deal about her during this interview. Her very dark hair was graying and she was not as mobile as she once was. Liza still was a caretaker at her home, and she was the parent of a fifty year old who has Down's Syndrome. During our interviews, Liza spoke softly and did not seem fazed when interrupted by her son. She very calmly

explained she was working and it was time for work. Once this was explained, her son did not interrupt, but sat quietly beside her for a time. Her closeness to her parents was quite deep. When she spoke of her parents her eyes often wandered to her surroundings, her home. She lived in the home of her parents.

At the time of her interviews, Liza was 78 years old and retired. She was born in Cut Off, LA, the daughter of a farmer and businessman. She described a very happy childhood with strong attachment to her parents. Liza was living in the same home she grew up.

When she entered school, she related it was difficult. She did recall being punished for speaking French. She was married and had five children. She did not transmit the language to her children, which she regretted. She described her father's generosity on many occasions; when her father retired, she and her husband started to run his grocery store. After some years, she decided to attend college to become a teacher. She graduated from college and became a teacher. She was a special education teacher for many years. She was inspired to work with differently gifted children by her own experiences as a parent, since one of her sons had Down's Syndrome. She described difficulty attending college later in life.

Liza had a very close family. The family was very tight knit over many generations. She described the many grandchildren and great grandchildren who now share in her memories.

Four Existentials

Using Van Manen's four existentials: spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and

relationality, data analysis revealed the life of the persons at the time of the phenomenon. The four existentials allowed for deep reflection into the life of the person at the time of the phenomenon.

Corporeality. In terms of corporeality, all of the persons in the study related to me at the time of entering school, their families did not have much money, but their family did manage to get by. Most of their families were land owner farmers, sharecroppers, or fishermen of some sort.

Spatiality. It was evident from their descriptions the area of lower Bayou Lafourche spatially was not yet industrialized. The limited land was used mostly for farming. Today, this land is mostly homes, because the land was drained and used a levee system. There was a shift from an agrarian economy to an industrial economy. Johnness illustrated for me how he became aware of his meager life as a child. He asked his father for a nickel to go to the movie, and his father responded by saying, “It’s not that I don’t want you to go, it’s just that I don’t have the nickel.” Data of this sort was common when the persons spoke of their early childhood and described what life was like for me when they grew up. Many stories involving bartering rather than using money were related to me by the persons. For instance several persons described for me bartering chicken eggs for candy at the local commissary. Despite meager lifestyles, each person described their childhood outside of school to me as very happy or wonderful. When speaking of their family life, I found the persons seemed to smile very thoughtfully at recalling these early experiences.

Hard work was also a description persons used to describe their parents’ lives and their lives as well. Walton was an oysterman and described the long days and months he

spent fishing. He described his desire to spend more time with his family when leaving the oyster business, “ And I wanted to be more with my family because when I was working the oyster business, I’d leave for 30 days and I’d come home for three days. And the three days I was off, I had to work either on the boat, or go cut some posts, or go look for some men (to work). I just kiss my wife and may that is what it was.” In order to truly understand the phenomenon, it was essential for me to know what life was like for the persons.

Temporality. Concerning temporality, persons described a period of time occurring 60 to 80 years ago. Despite the length of time the persons experience these recollections, all persons recalled with great detail for me, not only the experience, but the feelings and thoughts that also occurred at the time of the phenomenon. Walton described in great detail an experience with his grandmother. He related to me:

Then she had a pirogue there, then she had a can which she had roasted some chicken in and a couple of biscuits. And it was in a coffee can. And then the jug of water. And then she’d tell me to sit on that bench in the front (of the boat) and not to put my fingers on outside because she, she would push pole. And she had that long skirt, long dress with five or six skirts underneath with the bloomers and the *garde soleil* (bonnet).

His memory was very vivid and detailed, highlighting a very simple life. Through reflection on the data, I was really quite surprised at the amount of detail persons provided when relating stories. Today I am unsure I could remember such detail about so many experiences in my early childhood. Perhaps the simplicity of their early childhood lent to the clearness of their recollections.

Relationality. When examining the relationality of the persons at the time of the phenomenon, I found all of the persons had very close relationships with their parents and siblings. Alsace described his parents' relationship, "... he was devoted to my mom, and uh he took care of my mom. Mom had a stroke. And uh (holding back tears). I'll get better. It's still painful. She was 29." The close relationships they shared with their parents carried over to their own relationships with their own children. When I interviewed Beatrice, she shared on three occasions that she missed her son who had been away for the week on vacation a great deal, "... oh I miss him so much!" Three of the persons in the study resided in the same home they resided in as a child. One of the interview questions asked persons to share what they did with their family together. Today we might expect to hear such things as travel, movies, games, parties, or mutual hobbies. Some related family dinners on Sundays, but most described work. Persons would help their parents with farm type chores, trapping, and fishing. This description contrasted our modern beliefs about how close families interact. During their early childhood, the persons studied did not have a great deal of free time, as their families were working to help sustain themselves. There was a great expression of gratitude for the early life they experienced, despite the lack of money and material amenities. This was a very important existential for me to consider when analyzing the data. As I reflected, I found the lack of life's amenities must have bonded the persons to their parents in very meaningful ways. They worked for a common goal, together.

Integral Themes

When identifying integral themes, I found the following themes surfacing: confusion and fear the first days of school, physical punishment for speaking French,

school experience negatively affects language transmission, and a reflective wish for bi-literacy and language transmission. The themes were determined as I used Van Manen's (1990) thematic analysis, which involved extensive reading and rereading of the transcription. As I read and reread, I made notes and highlighted telling phrases and stories. Since I video recorded the interviews, I was also able watch and re-watch the persons sharing their experiences and lives. This was particularly compelling, because I was able to hear the thick Cajun accents, remember smiles and faces, and recall emotional parts of their stories. While transcription provided those details as well, I felt hearing and seeing the participants was essential to analyzing the data they shared. I was caught by how much laughter was captured during the interviews. There were also moments of abundant tears during some of the interviews. Recalling how their emotions affected mine was essential to understanding their sacred and unique life experiences. As I explored these stories over and over, new meanings surfaced with each reread and re-watch; this is called hermeneutical interpretation. I took all of the stories I highlighted and found four themes emerging. As I followed through on the analysis, similar stories emerged; these were the exemplars (Crist & Tanner, 2003). There were also particularly compelling stories in each theme; these are the stories I considered to be paradigm cases (Crist & Tanner, 2003). A summary of the integral themes follows.

Confusion and fear the first days of school. The first days of school for most persons was described as confusing and terrifying. Several instances of running away from school were related to me. Being thrust into an environment where the only known language was different from what was allowed, caused some confusion and fear for persons.

Because of physical ailments, Beatrice did not begin school with her peers. She started school at 11. Beatrice related prior to entering school, French was the only language spoken in her home; her parents only spoke French. Entering school, she was forced to learn English rapidly. When reflecting on the experience of entering school, she said, “We had to learn the English. It was kinda rough, you know to learn.”

Beatrice’s experience was not isolated. Walter recalled:

I couldn’t understand what they were saying. So a man teacher caught me by the (gesture to the neck), I kicked him in the shin. I ran away to the marshes. And my daddy was a fisherman, trawler, but my grandfather was there. I was scared of him. I heard those big feet in the marsh. Boom, boom, boom. It sounded like 17 drums and they weren’t even turned up. He says, ‘Come here you going to school. If you don’t come, I’m going to split you in half with this belt.’

Hmmmm, I started thinking; I’ll take the lesser of two evils. I’ll go back to school, because I was afraid of my grandfather.

As a small child, school was confusing for the persons, which caused fear for native Louisiana French speakers. Walter’s story illustrated not only the actions of the first days of school, but also the feelings when communication was non-existent at school.

Eventually, persons learned English, but many reported to me fluency did not come quickly. When asked how long, they couldn’t give a definite period of time, but they related it took a couple of years. It is unknown how proficient the persons may have been in two years. Studies suggest English proficiency can take as long as five years (Collier, 1987; Cummins, 1981; Klessmer, 1994). Many persons remembered what it was like to enter school as a child and recalled fear associated with the experience. Walter said the

teacher looked as if he was seven or eight feet tall. He reminded me adults can be intimidating to a child, especially when communication is limited or non-existent.

Physical punishment for speaking French. School experiences can negatively affect language transmission (Wiltse, 2011). All but one person related to me they received punishment for speaking French in school. While they discretely spoke French among themselves when teachers were not around, all instruction was in English. The exception to this was Alsace, who attended a Catholic school; all other persons attended public school. While instruction was in English for most subjects, students were free to converse in French, pray, and write prayers in French. I saw the rejection of their native language had lasting effects on language transmission, since 50% of persons did not pass on the language to their children. Punishments ranged from swats on the fingers with a ruler to acts of violence such as slaps across the face. Walton related to me the series of consequences he received at school for speaking French. The fourth time you were caught speaking French at school, you were expelled. It seemed to me rather harsh consequences for students who were natural French speakers. Walton shared the amount and degree of punishment relied on whether or not the teacher was a native Louisiana French speaker, ... “if one (teacher) came from a French background, hardly ever would you be punished for it (speaking French). ... one (teacher) that wasn’t from our neighborhood, that didn’t speak French, they would (punish you).” Today lack of teacher diversity has been problematic (Snyder, 2008). Previous research also documented physical punishments for students speaking French in class (Bernard, 2003; Sexton, 2000). None of the participants addressed English speaking students in the classrooms.

Walter indicated “99.9 percent” of the students were French; therefore it may have been likely persons did not have any native English speakers were in classrooms.

Humble early lives. When persons described their early lives, they all painted a picture of simplicity and meagerness. The simple accommodations of plumbing and bathrooms were not always available. Rural life and lack of industrialization on lower Bayou Lafourche was evident. This was specifically found when persons spoke of their parents’ professions. “We were so poor, my mama and daddy couldn’t say yes and no in English,” illustrated the relationship of economic status to speaking French in lower Bayou Lafourche. Most of the persons’ fathers were shrimpers, oystermen, trappers, or farmers. Gaston said, “That’s all we did here, was try to make a living.” His statement revealed a meager life. He went on to explain how his family trapped in the marsh for three or four months at a time during the school year; this absence was required for the family’s survival, but it also affected his schooling. Alsace described the meagerness of the lifestyle during his childhood, and described his parents and grandparents, “Diligence was always uh, uh obvious in these people. To survive, there was an abundance of ways you could survive. You didn’t need money.” The youngest person, Beau, had a similar description of his youth. When describing his first day of school, he noted the discomfort and strangeness of having to wear shoes; he had spent most of the time barefoot.

Reflective wish for bi-literacy and language transmission. The persons I studied were in a position to offer a reflective look on their school experiences, both good and undesirable. The theme of reflective wish for bi-literacy and wish for language transmission struck me as the collective desire most all persons would have liked. Persons who did not pass on Louisiana French to their children regretted the decision.

They did not allude to how they felt their lives or family would have changed had they passed on the language other than it may have stifled Louisiana French language attrition. Walton said, “We used to use words in French to cover up so the kids wouldn’t (understand), and I regret that to this day.” Walton also related he and his wife thought his children would naturally pick up French; they didn’t. Today the value of Cajun cultural capital has increased. The last 20 years has brought the label “Cajun” to the forefront. Cajun cooking, Mardi Gras, and Cajun reality television exposed the nation to the uniqueness of the culture. What would television be without Swamp People? Not only is the culture accepted, but the culture is sought after. So today the nation embraces the culture, and this was reflected in how Beau viewed his native language. “The older I got the more I liked that I knew how to speak French. I’m glad I know how to speak French fluently, Cajun French, not that Parisian stuff. I wish more kids knew how to speak French.” The decline of language transmission resonated with Alsace who felt the school system failed native Louisiana French speakers. He said his wish would be for younger Cajuns and parents to embrace and promote Louisiana French as useful and necessary. Because it is a necessity to use French in daily life, Alsace related he thought people may not deem Louisiana French as a necessity.

Persons reflected on a wish for language transmission. Persons expressed a desire for “the kids” to speak the native language. However, there were two differing opinions on how to go about teaching French to students. Some persons thought standard French should be used. When asked if he had any feelings about standard French versus Louisiana French, Walter replied, “I think that’s where they whole problem comes in. They should have taught us standard French, to begin with all along with the English. ...

Now we speak 17th century French. In 300 years, it has become, the French (standard) evolved. And our French has deteriorated.” He also related to me how handing down the language deteriorated Louisiana French more and more partly due to the fact speakers were lingual, but not literate in the language. Another person expressed concern about standard French in schools, “...that’s (standard French) way far from being our language. I don’t understand some of the words they say.”

Exemplar Cases

Exemplars are narratives which have similar meaning; common stories for each of the themes emerged. Naming is the coding of themes and exemplars (Benner, Tanner, & Chesla, 1996). In order to name these common stories, I identified one story similar to others found in the transcription. Exemplars for each of the themes follow.

Confusion and fear the first days of school. Several persons related confusion and fear the first days of school along with specific instances of running away from school. I was particularly drawn to Gaston’s experience of his first two days of school. He said, “I didn’t know nothing in English. ...so I cried. I was so close to my mama, and uh, I wanted to come home. ...So the following day at lunch, at recess the following day, it started raining and thunder. We didn’t have, we lived about a half mile from there, so I said, ‘I’m going home.’ So boy, my mama said (points), ‘Go back.’ So it finished drizzling, so all the way back to school I cried.” To me, Gaston’s experience related his vulnerability as he was forced into rapid English immersion. It was also similar to stories other persons revealed about fear and confusion the first day of school. Murphy (2003) related entering school is difficult for children, as it is the first separation from home, but

this difficulty may be magnified for non- English speaking students entering an English-only school, since the experience is incomprehensible.

Physical punishment for speaking French at school. Narratives of physical punishment for speaking French in school were related to me quite commonly. Walton explained the series of corporal punishments received for speaking French at school. He related the first time you were caught speaking French, the teacher hit your fingers with a ruler and wrote pages of the dictionary. The second time, the teacher would have a stocking filled with rice or corn; you had to kneel on it, making impressions on your knees. As punishment for the third time you were caught speaking French at school, you received a paddle from the principal, and the fourth time, you were expelled. In regards to how the corporal punishment affected your feelings and use of your native language, Walton said, “So while you were on that (kneeling on the rice or corn), you are thinking is it worth me talking French or what?” This physical punishment was tied to the language spoken in their homes, so it impacted how they felt about the language and the choices they made in regards to language transmission.

Humble early lives. All persons described a simple way of life during their childhoods. They did not describe common accommodations considered standard today, like factory made mattresses, television, and central air and heat. Walton described experiences with his grandmother who was a widow, by relating how she trapped rats along the canal and gathered moss to sell. He shared:

So she would push pole (the *pirogue* down the canal) and she had some traps. So as we were going back, she'd pull out the rat, set the trap, put it back, keep going. It was along the *tranasse* (canal). That water was clear, clear you could see the

bottom. Then when we got where she wanted to gather her moss, she'd stick the pirogue (boat) on the bank. She had a long pole fork pole. And she'd twist, twist, and pull the moss out of the trees. And then she'd tell me to take the sticks out, you know. In French you say, *etrier*, to move it like this so you could take the sticks out. Then she would load up the *pirogue*, and the rats (previously taken from traps) was in the back, and I was against the moss, a big pile of moss in the front. Then she push poll back. When we got there, she pulled the *pirogue* out of the canal and she put the moss in a sack. And then she put that on her shoulder and then catch me by the hand and walk to the front. And when she got home, she dumps the moss, she'd *etrier* it some more, and put it to dry. And when it was black, you see it was green, and then when it was black it was dry. Then she'd sell that to someone who would buy the moss."

When asked what the moss was used for, Walton said the moss was used in beds and furniture. He painted a picture of simplicity, but also one of gentleness, as I can imagine him and his grandmother walking hand in hand. This experience was reflective of how, despite the need to sustain themselves through work, persons often experienced closeness to their parents and grandparents who involved them in the work of sustaining their lives.

Reflective wish for bi-literacy and language transmission. Bi-literacy and language transmission were common themes taken from the data. Liza expressed her regret over language transmission, "We spoke, but not much (Louisiana French). I guess because we were forced to learn the English language. And I saw how it affected me later. I didn't want it to be a problem for my children. But now I find it *is* a problem because I should have taught them French." Persons felt regret in not transmitting the

language today, because Louisiana French suffered a great deal of language attrition. Previous research noted students who received punishment for speaking Navajo were less likely to pass on the language to their children (Wiltse, 2011).

Walter was asked if his school experiences affected the way he saw French, or used it; he responded, “I look back on it as an injustice.” He later added, “The first word I ever spoke was in French, and I hope when I die the last word will be in French. That’s how strongly I feel about our French and how we are losing it.” One of Walter’s proudest moments was when he attended St. Ann University in Canada and couldn’t speak English; he was awarded honor student. The local television station interviewed him and asked why he had come to St. Ann. He responded, “For the simple fact, en Française (in French), that we were deprived of that in school.” Walter also indicated he would get sick every Monday when he had to go to school, “But after a while, a few years, I finally accepted the fact you couldn’t speak French in school.” The consensus among persons was they wished their education would have provided the opportunity for bi-literacy. They also regretted not transmitting the language to their children, if they did not, because it attributed to language attrition.

Paradigm Cases

Paradigm cases are compelling stories taken from each of the themes (Crist & Tanner, 2003). They are not only compelling, but exude the essence of the theme in a very tangible way. The paradigm cases for each of the themes follow.

Confusion and fear the first days of school. Beau was the youngest person in this study; he was 64 years old. He described being fearful his first day of school; going to school required he leave his family. Entering school also required Beau to speak

English; at the time of the phenomenon Beau had very little English language skills. He described his experience, “My first day of school, I was scared as hell. Because see, when I was a little bitty kid, I used to be barefoot; it was kind of strange for me to wear shoes. I had to wear shoes to go to school. I didn’t know (English), I had broken English, but I finally got through that.” Beau’s lack of English language skills caused fear upon entering English-only school.

Beau also related his parents had very limited English language skills. He said, “My Mama and daddy all the time spoke French to me never in (English), my daddy knew a little English because he worked on the boats, but my Mama, broken English, but she would talk French all the time. My daddy to us, never in English.” Beau’s home language remained French, despite his rapid English immersion at school. His experience entering school was scary, but it was also incomprehensible. This demonstrated a lack of native language support.

Physical punishment for speaking French in school. While research documented physical punishment for speaking French in school (Bernard, 2003; Sexton, 2000), Walter related a shocking instance of punishment for speaking French. He shared this about what happened to a little girl who spoke French, “And they had one little girl, she was speaking in French; that’s all she could speak. The teacher slapped her. Boom. The blood came out of her cheeks. She (the teacher) said, ‘Speak English.’ That did it for me. And ever since that day, I got second thoughts about speaking French.” While this case was isolated, it spoke volumes to me in terms of the affects of experiencing harsh punishments for students communicating in their native language. I reminded myself upon entering school, persons only spoke Louisiana French and had no real means

to communicate with English speakers. Witnessing the horrific incident stifled Walter's use of French for fear the same thing would happen to him. Throughout his interviews he often referred to these acts and lack of French language acceptance in school as a great injustice. When Walter related this story to me, I felt my heart sink and tears came to my eyes.

Humble early lives. Of the persons I interviewed, one presented a particularly compelling story of his humble childhood. He was successful, so when asked about his proudest moment, he asked if I wanted the truth. I replied, "Absolutely." I expected his proudest moment to include his many awards or his family, but I was quite surprised with his heartfelt answer. He said:

We were very, very, very, very poor. We never had a home. We used to live from one place to the other. In those days, people here didn't have much. It was people that had money had land. Property. And uh, they had houses there so they would let people, people like us move just to keep up the land. Farm. They wouldn't charge us nothing. Sometimes they would come get some potatoes, you know. Or come check on us. ... some of the people we, we stayed on the property, they had a sign to sell, so we'd move. And uh, my dad bought in 1946, he had made a good season trapping. And they had a small piece of land onto the 40 (acre canal) so he, he bought it. And uh, my sister, her husband was an oysterman, he had money. So, she, they came, he says, 'We are tired of seeing you move around.' And my daddy had bought some lumber; she says, 'We going to finish the house. We going to build you a house.' And when we move in that house, that was the proud, the most uh... (tearing up). ... To see that we didn't

have to move anymore. I was about 15, or 14. And uh, we, uh it looked like we, uh we were like heaven.

Gaston seemed to revisit his humble life on several occasions. This person was particularly compelling because of his humility and authenticity. He chose to spend his entire life on the Bayou, when his success as a recording artist might have allowed him to move to a more affluent area. At his stage of life, he was able to relate his experiences in perspective; he was a Cajun boy from the marshes, who was blessed. When talking about his career he then reflected, “A boy that was in the marsh, you know, and then flying all over the world. Then it’s, I just thank the good Lord for that, you know.”

Reflective wish for bi-literacy and language transmission. Alsace was the only person to achieve native language literacy in childhood. He attended a Catholic school which seemed more culturally responsive by allowing students to read and recite prayers in French. Alsace formed a group called *La Table Française*, which supports literacy skills for Louisiana French speakers. Members of the group meet monthly; they develop lessons focused on standard French, which include new vocabulary. The members then speak about the similarities and differences between standard French and Louisiana French.

The decline of language transmission resonated with Alsace; he said, “I think the schools had a lot to do with it because they showed us how to communicate in English. And there is nothing wrong with that. But son of a gun, the schools left us behind, because I wish they would’ve let us have a choice of a second language. ... without question the second language would have been French, because the ground work was already laid. The French was existing there in everybody’s soul.” In his audio journal,

Alsace addressed the practicality of being bi-literate in a global community. He used the example of European residents. Alsace related he noticed European students and adults know two or three language and not just their native language. He said his wish would be for younger Cajuns and parents to embrace and promote Louisiana French as useful and necessary. Alsace's actions of engaging those with native language illiteracy reflect heartfelt efforts for bi-literacy for native Louisiana French speakers.

Research Questions

Data analysis from interviews, focus group, and audio journal offered answers to the six research questions. Using Van Manen's (1990) thematic analysis approach, I read and reread all transcriptions several times. I highlighted interesting phrases and accounts. I also noted direct quotation and illustrations which gave an insider perspective of the experience. Thematic analysis provides the basis for the answers to the research questions.

1. What was the meaning of the experience of native Louisiana French speakers entering elementary school?

In order to identify the essence of this experience, understanding was key (Van Manen, 1990). Most of the persons described their first days at school as confusing and fearful. They described circumstances where no English was allowed in the classroom. Therefore, because they did not know any English, they did not understand instruction at all making their first days of school confusing.

The rejection of their native language by educational systems was reflective of the low cultural capital possessed by native Louisiana French

speakers. Despite the ethnic majority in lower Bayou Lafourche was Cajun, English only education was required in public schools. The theory of cultural capital holds education is influenced by the dominant upper class group (Bourdieu, 1973; Bourdieu, 1986). Persons in the study had humble and simple early lives; their families lived off of the land and water. The people of lower Bayou Lafourche were not deciding governmental or educational policy at the time, leaving little to no representation.

Physical punishment was a common part of the experience for persons. The degree of punishments varied, but they seemed to have lasting effects, since the punishments were not only remembered by the persons, but the details of the punishments were remembered remarkably.

Two of the persons in the study expressed a desire to attend college, but neither ever did. Johness directly stated, "... in the back of my mind, one of the reasons I didn't try to go (to college) was because of my speaking, you know, my background in French. That kind of held me back, I believe." Rapid English immersion coupled with native language illiteracy for some affected their life choices. For half of the persons, their educational experiences affected the transmission of the language to their children. While several persons stated they believed English should be taught, because they resided in America, they also expressed the wish French literacy would have also been taught

2. What was the impact of school experiences on language transmission?

Some persons indicated how challenging school was because they spoke no English, like Liza. Wanting to save her children the challenge of rapid English

immersion, she did not transmit the language to her children. Guardado (2006) found cultural awareness played a part in native language maintenance for non-native English speakers.

The persons included in my study all had humble early lives and lived off of the land. The low socio-economic status experienced by native Louisiana speakers may have affected language transmission, because their low SES affected instructional language. Government was more readily influenced at the time by Anglo-Americans in Louisiana, often at the expense of the Cajuns (Bernard, 2003).

Walter described witnessing a traumatic situation his first day of school, “And they had one little girl, she was speaking in French; that’s all she could speak. The teacher slapped her. Boom. The blood came out of her cheeks. That did it for me. And ever since that day, I got second thoughts about speaking French.” Not all persons experienced such callous actions for speaking French, but they were punished for speaking their native language in school. To a large degree, these early educational experiences influenced the promulgation of the language.

While other contributing circumstances attributed to language attrition, like non-Louisiana French speakers moving to the area and the oilfield industry, early educational experiences had significant impact on whether or not parents passed the language on to their children. Half of the persons did not pass their native language to their children. Liza recalled she thought she did the right thing not teaching her children French, because she didn’t want her children to struggle

as she did. All of the persons who did not pass on the language, related regret in not doing so due to language attrition. Lack of native language recognition in schools influenced the transmission of the language. Wang's (2009) case study suggested the lack of native language utilization and maintenance in school was a concern for parents in terms of language transmission. This study found similar outcomes in terms of language transmission. I found the longer the person stayed in school the greater probability they would not pass on Louisiana French to their children. Bernard (2003) and Sexton (2000) found the population of Louisiana French speakers who transmitted the language to their children declined. This study found similar outcomes in the decline of language transmission.

3. What was the experience like to acculturate to Anglo-American culture?

Anglo-American culture was first experienced by persons upon entering English only elementary schools. Prior to this they were socialized at home with French speaking parents and relatives. This thrust into Anglo-American culture caused a great deal of confusion and fear the first days of school for the persons in my study.

A number of the persons attended elementary school during and the immediate time after World War II; Bernard (2003), Brasseaux (1987), and Sexton (2000) found heightened Anglo American influences at this time. For the most part, persons related their parents had little to no English language skills, many of their parents spent less than three or four years in school. English became the official language in Louisiana in 1921, which intern required English only education (Sexton, 2000). I found education to mirror Anglo-American

influences; authority in government was often held by Anglo-Americans from the 1800s (Sexton, 2000). Many persons related industry, specifically the oilfield, brought in non-native Louisiana French speakers, attributing to rapid changes in language, customs, and daily life. Persons described radical changes in daily life from the time they were small up until now. Their lives changed from an agrarian culture to an industrial culture, which also ushered a change culture. Bernard (2003) found rapid Americanization in Acadiana.

Rapid English immersion occurred under the duress of physical school punishment for persons. These experiences were part of the circumstances described by both Sexton (2000) and Bernard (2003). The first instance of acculturation for persons at this time in history was attending school.

Walter often used the word deprived to describe the total absence of French from education, "... we were deprived of French in the schools." Walter also referred to his very first teacher as a non-native Louisiana French speaker, "No. She wasn't from here. God knows where she was from; she was Anglo." Persons in the study did not find native language support in school, leading to native language illiteracy.

4. What was the impact of school experience for native Louisiana French speakers on school performance?

The common circumstances shared by those entering English only elementary schools as native Louisiana French speakers seemed to have little bearing on their school performance. Walter related, "...99.9% of the people here spoke only French." Gaston described the mutual circumstances of his

classmates, “ Well, I felt bad because I didn’t know how to speak English. You know, and we had all, we had the whole people from around here that went to school and hardly nobody knew how to speak English.” The scope of this study focuses on entering elementary school and not entering higher education. However, I will note higher education opportunity and performance seemed to have different outcomes. One person related he felt his French background held him back from attending college, while another person Liza, related great difficulty in college, especially English. Liza related she always did well in Math, but in English at the university she struggled. She felt because she was not a native English speaker, she had some difficulty.

Persons in this study did not reflect peers who had different life circumstances; they all described friends and family with similar lifestyles. Because of the common circumstances, it didn’t appear their humble early lives had any bearing on school performance, with possibly one exception. Gaston described spending winter months trapping in the marsh with his family; he would not attend school at this time, making it difficult for him to keep up with the other children. These absences, while necessary, did affect his school performance and eventually ended his school attendance.

Sexton (2000) related many elderly Cajuns he interviewed had traumatic school experiences. The persons I studied were as young as 64 years old and as mature as 86 years old. This population may not have been considered elderly twelve years ago when Sexton conducted his study. All persons interviewed related to me corporal punishment was used as a consequence for speaking French

at school. Because classes were made up of students of similar backgrounds and native Louisiana French speakers, it didn't appear school experiences had an impact on school performance.

The findings of this study do not indicate a reflective wish for bi-literacy and language transmission had any impact on school performance. The persons studied now reflect on their education, wishing they were literate in their native language.

5. What was the impact of school experiences for native Louisiana French speakers on future endeavors? The impact of entering an English only school for native Louisiana French speakers can be viewed differently: higher education, career, and bi-literacy efforts.

In terms of higher education, two persons expressed the desire to attend college. While Johnness related he felt French held him back from going to college, and Walton always wanted to become a veterinarian, I found most persons to be comfortable with their life choices. All of the persons expressed going to school was important to their parents. However, the sometimes confusing and traumatic experiences of English-only education may not have had any impact on their overall life choices, since this traumatic experience was shared by the majority of students at the time.

The early lives of the persons in the study did not have an impact on their future endeavors. They were all self-made, and expressed a wonderful life full of happiness at home.

In terms of career, Gaston shared, "... but I don't think the way I wanted to live my life, I don't think if I would've had plenty of education it would've helped me. Because I'm so happy what I am, you know. Uh, I had, I went all over the world. It's not school that sent me there." When speaking of his life, Alsace confided, "I really had a good life. I really had a wonderful life." While Sexton (2000) and Bernard (2003) found traumatic school experiences may have contributed to overall life choices, the consensus of the persons included in this study is one of acceptance for the life choices they made.

Concerning bi-literacy efforts, many of the persons learned French literacy skills later in their lives. This action indicated a desire to become literate in their native language; this was something most were deprived of when entering an English only elementary school. Native language illiteracy and attrition is documented for native Louisiana French speakers (Bernard, 2003; Brown, 1993; Sexton, 2000).

6. Why do native Louisiana French speakers think language transmission declined? Language transmission of Louisiana French is well documented (Landry, Allard, & Henry, 1996; Ryon, 2002; Sexton, 2000; St. Hilaire, 2005). This study found the reflective insight of the experiences of the persons studied coincided with historical instances. School experiences, industry, and technology had a significant impact on how the Cajuns of lower Bayou Lafourche lived their lives.

Because of the challenge faced when entering an English only school as a native Louisiana French speaker, half of the persons in this study related wanting their children's experience to be easier than theirs; therefore, they did not pass

Louisiana French on to their children. This desire for an easier life for their children affected language transmission.

When the once somewhat isolated agrarian area began to support and aid the oilfield industry, communications and technology demanded daily life utilize English. This shift from agrarian to industry also shifted the language patterns of the area. It is important to note prior to this shift, many other cultures like Native Americans and some Anglo-Americans acculturated to Cajun tradition (Brasseaux, 1987).

Physical punishment for speaking French at school did affect language transmission. Walton related while he was being punished, he questioned whether or not it was worth speaking French. These physical and sometimes traumatic punishments affect students in very real and lasting ways. Wiltse (2011) found similar outcomes for speakers of indigenous languages.

The consensus among the persons in this study was a wish for bi-literacy and language transmission. Many persons related to me when the oilfield became a major industry in the area, less and less French was used; this is consistent with Falgoux's (2007) biography of several lower Bayou Lafourche boat company owners. A secondary effect of the oilfield industry was the intermarrying of non-Louisiana French speakers to native Louisiana French speakers. When a native Louisiana French speaker married a native English speaker, the language of the home was the common language, English. Alsace did pass the language on to his children and when asked why he thought others did not pass on the language, he

shared, “They didn’t think they needed it, or they didn’t think it was, uh, necessary.”

Summary of Interpretation

Four forms of data helped to reveal the meaning of the lived experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools in lower Bayou Lafourche. Questionnaires provided descriptive portraits of the persons participating. The age range of person in the study included 64-86 years old. Most of the persons were male, and persons were from a variety of professions. Exactly 50% of the persons did not transmit Louisiana French to their children.

Van Manen’s (1990) four existentials, spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality, were used as a reflective framework when analyzing the data. The physical area where the phenomenon occurred was undeveloped industrially. Spatially, Residents lived off of the land’s natural resources, mostly earning a living through fishing, trapping, and farming. Corporally, persons’ physical experiences during the phenomenon involved some confusion, since they knew no to little English upon entering elementary school. The time frame of the persons experience was childhood, entering elementary school. Because perceptions and understanding of experience develops and matures with adulthood, persons were able to place meaning on a childhood experience with an adult understanding. For all of the persons, the closest relationships at the time of the experience were familial relations. Unanimously, persons described close parent/child relationships. For some close relationships extended to their siblings and grandparents.

Using Van Manen’s (1990) thematic analysis, a summary of integral themes was developed. The themes of confusion and fear the first days of school, physical

punishment for speaking French in school, humble early lives, and reflective wish for bi-literacy and language transmission emerged. Naming then generated exemplars, common stories. Hermeneutical analysis brought forth four paradigm cases, which were compelling and emerged from the themes.

Persons described the first days of school as confusing and fearful. Because of limited communication, persons described a failure to understand teachers and staff. Several persons ran away from school, but were promptly sent back to school by parents. The majority of their peers also had no English language skills, making peer support non-existent. As a young child the incomprehensibility of instruction, compounded by the forced detachment from parents, made for a traumatic or an unwelcomed first school experience.

All persons, but one, shared physical punishment experiences for speaking French at school. The harshness of the punishments varied from slaps on the fingers with a ruler to shocking acts of physical harm. One person related to me how punishment sometimes depended on the background of the teacher; teachers who were Cajun didn't really punish students for speaking French much, but non-Cajun teachers did punish students readily for speaking French.

Persons painted a detailed picture of humble and simple early lives. Residents of the region lived off of the land, supporting themselves by fishing, trapping, and farming. While many experienced a lifestyle we would consider harsh today, persons expressed happy childhoods. Persons came from a variety of professions, but shared similar upbringings. As children many related they helped farm, trap, and work alongside their parents.

Thematic analysis also revealed the theme of reflective wish for bi-literacy and language transmission. School experience affected language transmission for half of the persons. Persons expressed a desire to shield their children from the experiences they had at school. In retrospect, persons felt regret for not transmitting the language to their children. Persons experienced English only education and were not taught to read or write their native language. Many expressed a wish for bi-literacy. As older adults, some persons taught themselves to read and write French with the help of a peer group, demonstrating a desire for bi-literacy. Promulgation of the language concerned persons; they would have liked to see younger generations fluent in their native language. However, persons were split on whether standard French or Louisiana French should have been taught in schools.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

Finding the meaning of English-only elementary school experiences on non-native English speakers is important because the current educational climate struggles to adapt to growing minority student populations. With this in mind, I was able to study a population of non-native English speakers who lived out the effects of English-only education and rapid English language immersion, providing meaning for the early school experiences of non-native English speakers in English-only schools. Populations such as native Louisiana French speakers provide unique insight into minority language speakers' education. However, the population constriction of native Louisiana French speakers called for urgent and timely research in order to capture the lived experiences of native Louisiana French speakers while the population still exists. Therefore, in Chapter Five, I discuss the findings and implications of my hermeneutic phenomenological study.

Summary of Findings

Eight persons, two female and six male, participated in the study and related their experiences of entering English only elementary school as native Louisiana French speakers. Information was gathered from in depth interviews, focus group, questionnaires, and audio journals. The in depth interviews I conducted consisted of three parts: life history, the studied phenomenon, and the meaning of the phenomenon. Once data was collected, I transcribed the video and audio recordings, and I began hermeneutical reflection, focusing on spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality. Utilizing the four existentials allowed for in depth reflection on the life of the person at the time of the phenomenon. Four themes emerged from analysis.

Confusion and Fear the First Days of School

Persons expressed their first days of school were filled with confusion and fear. Several ran away or attempted to run away. Because they did not know English coming into school, communication made was difficult, and this caused confusion and fear. This situation was unique, because the majority of the students were native French speakers; therefore, persons' peers were "in the same boat" in regards to the confusion and the fear felt. Several students also expressed a strong attachment to their families, exacerbating the challenges of entering an English-only elementary school. Going to school also involved lengthy walks, making school far removed from their home life at the specific time of their lives.

Physical Punishment for Speaking French in School

Physical punishment for speaking French in school was experienced by all but one person. The physical punishments ranged from slaps on the fingers with a ruler to a shocking act of violence involving brutal slaps across the face. Persons were able to relate their thoughts and feelings about French while undergoing physical punishments. They related to me second thoughts of speaking French and feeling bad about speaking their native language. Several persons related they did not speak Louisiana French to their children, because they desired to protect their children from the similar experiences. The only person not to experience physical punishment for speaking French in school attended a Catholic school. The private school was afforded autonomy in regards to language.

Humble Early Lives

Persons all painted a simple lifestyle during their early childhoods through numerous stories. They described lower Bayou Lafourche as unindustrialized; essentially all of their parents lived off of natural resources. They described a period of time when money was not a necessity, and bartering was common. Because their families sustained themselves by fishing, farming, or trapping, hard work was modeled to them by their parents and grandparents. The lives they attained in adulthood were the result of hard work, and they were all independent and self-reliant people. Despite the meagerness of their early childhoods, each one related his or her experiences in childhood and life in general was wonderful and very happy.

Reflective Wish for Bi-literacy and Language Transmission

Half of the persons did not transmit the language to their children; all of the persons regretted their choice in not transmitting the language. Persons related an awareness of language attrition for Louisiana French, and wished the language might be saved. Noted with a wish for language transmission was the wish for bi-literacy. Since persons were not taught to read and to write Louisiana French, they were not literate in the language. Some have taught themselves to read and write in French, which demonstrates their wish for bi-literacy. Several persons expressed dissatisfaction with the fact schools did not allow both Louisiana French and English in school, which would have embraced bi-literacy.

Discussions

My study offered a unique view into English language learners who have lived out the consequences and effects of English-only education. Louisiana French speakers

and the area of lower Bayou Lafourche provided insight into the meaning of English-only education on non-native English speakers. My study indicated four topics requiring further discussion: native language literacy, language attrition, heritage language programs, and cultural capital.

Native Language Literacy

Persons described English-only education and rapid English immersion in my study; they shared the meaning of this experience in their lives. The persons who participated in my study were not necessarily literate in their native language. Native language literacy is a relevant issue for educational policymakers today. Palmer, Zhang, Taylor, and Leclere (2010) found a need for native language instruction, since native language literacy may help second language acquisition. Further supporting native language literacy, Cummins (2000) found the development of both first and second languages can have positive school outcomes. Studies found bilingual education can have positive school outcomes (August & Shanahan, 2008; Golash-Boaz, 2005; Portes & Hao, 2004).

The findings of this study indicated native Louisiana French speakers would have liked to attain literacy in their native language. Some desired this enough to teach themselves, with the help of peers, how to read and write in French. Because they sought to become literate on their own later in life, this demonstrated their genuine desires for native language literacy. Their actions also spoke to the importance of native language literacy for English language learners. Their interviews, focus group, and audio journals also indicated a desire for native language literacy, which manifested as one of the four themes during analysis.

Language Attrition

The effects of native language illiteracy in my study suggested language attrition occurred quite rapidly. Because of native language rejection and lack of support at school, several persons did not transmit the language to their children. Today the effects of language attrition are drastic in terms of cultural identity for Cajuns. While factors like technology, industrialization, and inter-marriage affected language transmission in general, educational experiences were found to also influence Louisiana French transmission. Young people identifying as Cajun do not necessarily speak Louisiana French (Bankston & Henry, 1998). Persons in this study who made the decision not to transmit the language as young parents came to regret the decision later in life, in part due to attrition. Similar to Guardado's (2006) study, my study found connection between cultural awareness and native language maintenance and transmission. Persons in my study reflected on the lack of bi-literacy and language transmission. I found as persons reflected on their lived life decisions, they were able to relate the meaning of school experiences on attrition; they specifically placed meaning on how the rejection of their native language at school impacted whether or not they transmitted the language to their children. Language maintenance and language attrition may be tempered today by implementation of heritage language courses (Beaudrie et al., 2009; Coles-Ritchie & Lugo, 2010; St. Hilaire, 2005; Wang, 2009; Wang and Phillion, 2007; Yamasaki, 2010). Literature suggested immigrant families often loss their cultural language by the third generation (Alba et al., 2002). This finding was supported by my research, since seven of the eight persons studied do not have grandchildren who are able to speak Louisiana French.

I found persons in my study expressed concern over Louisiana French language attrition which resonated with me as a member of the cultural group. Wang (2009) found similar parental concerns over loss of culture. Faced with increasing minority populations who are non-native speakers today, educational leaders and policymakers must address the long term affects of English-only education and rapid English immersion on students. About 20% of students today speak a language other than English at home (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). NCLB (2002) is assimilative in nature, counteracting in some regards culturally responsive education. Taylor, Stecher, O'Day, Naftel, and LeFloch (2010) relate nearly half of schools with high poverty rates needed assistance for ELLs meeting NCLB standards. Minority students who are non-native English speakers may have experiences similar to persons in this study. The persons in this study offered a holistic meaning of how early educational experiences affected their lives and culture. Each person felt culturally responsive education which included native language support would have been helpful; some, even in the twilight of their lives, felt the education provided to them was a great injustice, depriving them of bi-literacy. I feel these findings are important in light of the current educational practices in American public education. Persons who participated in my study offered wisdom and insight into a current challenge in education today.

Heritage Language Programs

After much analyzing, my consensus is this study provided compelling evidence which supports bi-literacy, native language education, and heritage language programs. This study called to the forefront the need for heritage language programs in a timely manner. As evidenced in this study, neglect of heritage language contributed to the

attrition of Louisiana French rather quickly. Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) related connections with home language and collaboration allowed leaders to transform schools and demonstrate positive learning outcomes with ELL students. My study calls educational leaders to address home language needs for stakeholders in a timely fashion, because language attrition can occur quickly.

Persons in this study were split on how to promote Louisiana French in schools. Some felt Louisiana French should be taught for cultural reasons while others felt standard French was appropriate to teach. Despite this difference in findings, my study indicated the language was important and tied intrinsically to the Cajun culture.

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital served as the theoretical framework of this study; cultural capital was evident both as part of the studied phenomenon and through analysis. The meaning of the experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools reflected low cultural capital at the time persons entered elementary school. Native Louisiana French speakers were often poor and non-English speakers who found prejudice in Anglo-American society (Bernard, 2003; Sexton, 2009). Research found less valued cultural capital for minorities (Lareau, 1987). At the time of the persons' studied experience, Cajuns had devalued cultural capital; this was evidenced by instructional language and lack of representation in government. However, the cultural capital of Cajuns has increased in the past 20 years; this led to an increased value of Cajun culture and Louisiana French. Rise in cultural capital was reflected by the pride of the persons studied who indicated joy and pride in their heritage. The change in cultural capital was an expected finding. The noted change in cultural capital may also be in part

to an economic shift from an agrarian economy to an industrial economy. Falgoux (2007) shared the biography of several lower Bayou Lafourche boat company owners. As Falgoux shared their biography, the change in culture is detailed. From fishermen leading simple lives to boat company owners earning and spending hundreds of thousands of dollars, Falgoux (2007) related the rapid change in culture from Cajun to American.

The cultural capital I brought to the study also made a difference in the solicitation of persons to participate in the study and the analysis of the study. I found my heritage was rather important to the persons studied. They desired to know who I was and what family I came from. Upon learning this, they agreed to the study. I found my insider status attributed to both their willingness to participate and to a friendly spirit when interviewing. I not only found my understanding of the persons' accent was important, but also my understanding of slang was also important. If I had to ask for clarification on Cajun slang words, the interviews may have been stifled to some degree. Being from the area, persons did not need to explain to me locations, since I was well aware of the area geographically. The cultural capital I possessed aided in the development, procedure, and analysis of my study.

Implications

The implications of my study focus on ELLs, hermeneutic phenomenology, and Biblical principles. This study was indeed a work of the heart, but my study also provided valuable insight into the lasting impacts ELLs may face throughout their lives. I hold with great esteem all persons who participated in this study, who offered their experiences, and who shared their wisdom.

English Language Learners

The most obvious implication from my study concerned ELL students and heritage language programs. The four themes which emerged from the study, fear and confusion the first days of school, physical punishment for speaking French at school, humble early lives and reflective wish for bi-literacy and language transmission, leads to discussion on the education of ELL students and heritage language programs. Fear and confusion the first days of school related by the persons and physical punishment for speaking Louisiana French at school related the absence of culturally responsive education. In order to meet the cultural and emotional needs of ELL students, early educational experiences must be supportive of home language and culture and responsive to the unique literacy needs of ELL students.

The reflective wish for bi-literacy and language transmission by the persons has implications for heritage language education. Persons described a lack of support and acceptance for their native language in school, which had some lasting affects in terms of literacy and language transmission. This study has implications for heritage language education consistent with previous research (Beaudrie et al., 2009; Wang & Phillion, 2007; Wang, 2009). Heritage language programs focus on the distinct language and culture of ELL students; they can help promulgate the cultural values of students and their families. This study found the lack of opportunities for native language use in education had lasting affects in terms of transmission and literacy. The lack of native language support can contribute to overall life choices and satisfaction in terms of education into adulthood. As demonstrated in this study, lack of language support and language transmission impacted future generations in terms of language. In support of

native language literacy, studies have found positive impacts when native language literacy is achieved; literacy in native language can contribute to English language acquisition for ELLs (Cummins, 2000; Proctor et al., 2010). Heritage language programs must be considered under the auspices of NCLB, which greatly impacts ELL students.

While heritage language programs typically occur in secondary education, I believe, based on the findings of this study that heritage language programs can have a positive impact on students in early childhood and primary education programs. The Council of the Development of French in Louisiana has implemented Louisiana French immersion classes throughout south Louisiana. The reason why the Lafourche Parish School Board has not taken advantage of this program is unclear. Louisiana French immersion for early childhood students may offer the most impact in terms of slowing and reversing Louisiana French language attrition.

Lucero (2010) documented the impact of native language support through the study of a paraeducator. The case study highlighted the positive impact not only to ELL students, but also to their families. My study found the persons who shared their experiences had great pride in their culture, but they did not find acceptance for their culture in terms of education. The very early school experiences of the persons studied remained formative throughout their lives. The implication for today's ELL students is actively engaging school leaders as to embracing culturally responsive education on a deep level for their students. By allowing students and families to embrace their culture and language, education can make an impact on a deeply formative level for ELL students in terms of native language literacy, language transmission, and cultural identity.

My study has implications for NCLB (2002) legislation. For instance, persons participating in this study experienced rapid English immersion. As a result, the lack of native language support, lack of native language literacy, and rejection of their native language by the educational system had lasting affects in terms of life choices and future education. While none of the persons regretted learning English, rapid English immersion proved to be fearful and confusing for the persons in this study. NCLB (2002) allows one year for English proficiency for ELL students; this requirement requires rapid English immersion because students will be included in assessment after one year.

Implications must address the one person included in this study who did not receive physical punishment for speaking French at school. Alsace attended a Catholic school and had parents who were literate in French and provided French literature within in the home. While Alsace did attend an English-only school, French was tolerated and prayers were often recited in French. In terms of lasting affects, Alsace had a positive view of his native language, because his native language was not rejected from the education environment. Acceptance of French at school coupled with culturally aware parents allowed Alsace to build upon his positive perceptions of his native language. The implication for ELL students and educational leaders is native language literacy, school support, and culturally aware parents can affect students' perceptions about native language, native culture, and education. Guardado (2006) also found culturally aware parents had impact on native language maintenance.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic phenomenology lent well to my study and my own bias and heritage cannot be discounted in analysis. The people and area of lower

Bayou Lafourche are home to me. I am a living example of young Cajuns who were never taught Louisiana French. However, I have lived away from the area for almost 17 years, and my experiences and ideas about the area were of a very young adult. Before I conducted this study, I did not have a holistic perception of the people and language of lower Bayou Lafourche. Persons which participated in my study enabled me to broaden my perception. My foundation and root in lower Bayou Lafourche helped my research in a couple of ways. First, when I searched for possible persons to participate in this study, participants wanted to know where I was from immediately. To me, this demonstrated some skepticism concerning outsiders. When they found out I was from lower Bayou Lafourche, they then wanted to know my family. Many persons agreed because they know one or both sides of my family. Familiarity with the area and the people were crucial for me. Second, because I was aware of some Louisiana French words and spoke French, I was able to understand the language switching. Persons were also very specific when speaking of particular locations; if I had not been aware of the area, conversation may have been marred by asking participants to explain.

Biblical Implications

The Biblical implications of my study may not be evident from the topic or study design. However, this study contained some strong Biblical implications from my perspective. Education may not always be Christian in nature, but education does have some similarities to Christian evangelization. Education, at its root, is the imparting of knowledge in order to develop the minds of students. Christian evangelization requires imparting the knowledge of Christ to those unaware of his eternal salvation. To equip Christian disciples of this task, the Holy Spirit has worked in the hearts and minds of

those who believe for over two thousand years. In Acts 2, the gift of the spirit came to rest on each of the disciples, and Acts 2: 4 states, “And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues, as the spirit enabled them to proclaim.” Scripture calls believers to examine the gift of tongues given to the disciples. Each person heard the disciples preaching in his or her own language. In the New Testament, Jesus opens salvation to all who believe, not only the Israelites. This new covenant encompasses a group of diverse followers in terms of language, race, tradition, and custom. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit the disciples baptized 3000 on that very day.

In the same way Christians are called to proclaim to others, educational leaders are required to provide accessible education to all students. This is not an advocate for instruction in native language only; accessible education is a call for meeting students’ needs in terms of culture and language. Native language support at school can help provide students with strong home and school connections, enhancing the accessibility of education.

At the very core of Christianity is a perfect model, Christ. Throughout the New Testament, Christ teaches and models the sanctity of human life in all forms. From healing, to preaching, and to teaching, Christ never marginalizes the value of any life. From the beginning, I designed and carried out this study with this reverence in mind. I found importance in valuing each person not only as a participant in my study, but I found importance in valuing each person as a Godly creation. In terms of society today older generations are not held in as great esteem as they may have been in the past. I haven’t subscribed to that particular contemporary value. I have always felt the wisdom and value of older generations should be held in great esteem. Those in the twilight of

their lives offer a great deal of wisdom for younger generations who are still willing to hear. My hope for this study was to help honor the wisdom of older men and women in a real and reverent process. Recently, the newly elect Pope Francis stated when speaking to his brother cardinals, “Courage, dear brothers! Probably half of us are in our old age. Old age, they say, is the seat of wisdom. The old ones have the wisdom that they have earned walking through life. Like old Simeon and Anna at the temple whose wisdom allowed them to recognize Jesus.” (Vatican News, 2013). The persons who participated in my study have attained their wisdom, and I, for one, was open to hear. In scripture both Simeon and Anna, though in old in age, recognized the Christ. The wisdom of Simeon and Anna allowed them to “see” the true nature of Jesus and prophesize His salvation. I hoped to honor the wisdom of the persons in this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study suggests future research on heritage language programs and the effects of heritage language programs on language maintenance and culture would be helpful in addressing best practices. Heritage language programs differ from foreign language programs in terms of audience. Heritage language programs focus on literacy and culture, while foreign language classes focus on literacy and conversational language skills.

St. Hilaire (2005) related grassroots initiatives for Louisiana French immersion programs were often supported by younger, educated Cajuns, who did not necessarily know Louisiana French. My study focused on native Louisiana French speakers; however, delving into the affects of language attrition on subsequent generations can provide a holistic perception on the issue of cultural ties to native language. Louisiana

French immersion programs supported by younger Cajuns who are not Louisiana French speakers seems to suggest younger Cajun generations may experience a sense of loss, because the language was not passed on to them.

Alsace had a very different school experience from the others in the study. He attended a Catholic school which instructed in English, but allowed students to use French to pray and write prayers. Future research on the lived experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering a private, Christian, or Catholic elementary school would be helpful to relate the meaning of the lived experiences for native Louisiana French in terms of private education.

I came across a wonderful person in the course of my study, Alsace, and he was instrumental in recommending possible persons to participate. He suggested I may want to contact native Louisiana French speakers who were Native American; I was not able to contact the suggested persons to include them in the study. There is a population of Native Americans on lower Bayou Lafourche, and until 1969, Native Americans attended a segregated school and were not required to attend school. In 1969 a senate report led to increase awareness about Native American culture and language in education (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). This subject was also touched upon by another person. I interviewed a person who related she served as a Red Cross volunteer in the aftermath of a devastating hurricane; she recollected being surprised young Native Americans could not speak English in the 1960s. I recommend future research on the lived experiences of Native Americans on lower Bayou Lafourche be considered. Comparing language attrition for Native American populations and white populations can help garner a more complete perspective on the possible effects of school experiences on language attrition.

Study Limitations

This study was bound by the scope of the research. In this study I sought to relate the meaning of entering English-only elementary school as native Louisiana French speakers in lower Bayou Lafourche. Cajuns are an ethnic minority. This study was limited to native Louisiana French speakers who entered elementary school with little to no English language skills. Geographically lower Bayou Lafourche is part of Acadiana, the region where ethnic Cajuns originate. While considered an ethnic minority, Cajuns made up the population majority in the area. This was quite unique and is not reflective of today's English language learners who are mostly considered a minority population in any area.

Persons included in this study were ages 64 to 86 years old. This may be considered a limitation of the study. Ages of the persons included in this study could not be controlled, as the population of native Louisiana French speakers has diminished. Prior to the start of this study, I thought persons included in the study may be well over 70 years old, but I did not expect persons to range as young as 64 years old. A chief concern I had was the reliability of the information related by persons who were older; I was concerned about dementia. None of the persons included in my study had signs of dementia in any way. However, because persons related experiences occurring 60 to 80 years prior, the accuracy of their recall is unknown. All but one person was able to name their very first teacher, which lends evidence to the accuracy of their early childhood recollections.

Another limitation may be the use of Louisiana French and English interchangeably during some interviews. Slang Cajun words were also related during

interaction with persons. There are times when meaning can get lost in translation from one language to another language. This may be considered a limitation of the study.

Each person participating in my study was known to me in some way, or they knew of my family. This can be considered a limitation of the study; however, Bayou Lafourche is a small community and knowing the persons or knowing of the persons was unavoidable. I shared the same ancestry as the persons, but I was not related by blood to any of the persons interviewed.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to relate the lived experiences of native Louisiana French speakers entering English-only elementary schools. The scope of research was very specific to location and to home language. While previous research touched on physical punishment for speaking Louisiana French in school and language attrition, the experience of entering an English-only elementary school as a native Louisiana French speaker was never explored in depth. Findings of my study emphasized the impacts of early education experiences for ELL students on life choices and language transmission. Qualitative research emphasized the lived personal experiences of the persons studied and provided meaningful personal interactions between the persons and myself. The four themes emerging from the study, confusion and fear the first days of school, physical punishment for speaking French at school, humble early lives, and reflective wish for bi-literacy and language transmission, highlighted the role of early educational experiences in the lives of persons. I sincerely hope this study will encourage educators to thoughtfully consider how lack of native language support can affect English language learner education.

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APPENDIX A

Map of Acadiana

(Map of Acadiana, 2012)



APPENDIX B

IRB Letter Approval

Dear Jolynda,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases are attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.

Professor, IRB Chair

Counseling

(434) 592-4054

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

The Lived Experiences of Native Louisiana French Speakers Entering English Only
Elementary Schools in Lower Bayou Lafourche

JoLynda Strandberg

Liberty University

School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study to understand the impact of entering English only school on native Louisiana French speakers in lower Bayou Lafourche through qualitative research. You were selected as a possible participant because your home language prior to entering school was Louisiana French. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: JoLynda Strandberg, Liberty University, School of Education

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of entering English only school on native Louisiana French speakers in lower Bayou Lafourche through qualitative research.

Procedures:

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

Data will be collecting through interviews, focus groups, demographic information, and audio journals. Interviews and focus groups will be video-taped. Documentation will be obtained through your audio journaling during the course of the study. Interviews will be conducted up to three times and last approximately one hour each. You will be asked to review data and findings for accuracy at a later date.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study has several risks: First, information gathered which indicates abuse or self-harm of any type will be reported; Second, recalling past experiences may in some instances be painful and if the participant experiences undue distress, which is unlikely, participation in the study will be terminated.

The benefits to participation are: The benefits include the ability to relate personal history and benefit to greater Louisiana French speaking population.

Compensation:

No monetary compensation will be given for participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Real names will not be used in any circumstances when documenting and analyzing data. All data will be stored electronically on password protected computers and physical data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. The researcher will have access to this information only. There is no anticipated future use of the data. All electronic data will be erased after three years, complying with federal regulation. After the interview participants can review the video, if desired, and decide whether or not they choose to allow the information to be used. All printed information will be stored in secured storage cabinets. Participant confidentiality cannot be promised during focus groups.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. To withdraw from the study, please contact the research through email or phone: 701.526.3594 or jvining@liberty.edu. Upon informing the researcher of your wish to withdraw, all data collected from you will be erased and/or destroyed.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is JoLynda Strandberg. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her by phone at 701-526-3594 or by email at jvining@liberty.edu. The student's advisor, Dr. Sandra Battige can be reached by email at sbattige@liberty.edu or by phone at 904.993.8212.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

____ I consent to video-record and audio-record my interview, focus group and audio journal.

____ I do NOT consent to video-record and audio-record my interview, focus group and audio journal.

Signature: _____ Date:

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date:

IRB Code Numbers: 1389.090412

IRB Expiration Date: Sept 4, 2013

CONSENT FORM

The Lived Experiences of Native Louisiana French Speakers Entering English Only

Elementary Schools in Lower Bayou Lafourche

JoLynda Strandberg

Liberty University

School of Education

Vous êtes invités à être dans une étude de recherche pour comprendre l'impact d'entrer à l'école seulement anglaise sur les locuteurs natifs de la Louisiane française en bas Bayou Lafourche, par le biais de la recherche qualitative. Vous avez été sélectionnés en tant que participant possible parce que votre langue maternelle avant d'entrer à l'école était la Louisiane française. Nous demandons que vous lisez ce formulaire et posez des questions que vous pouvez avoir avant d'accepter d'être à l'étude.

Cette étude a été réalisée par : JoLynda Strandberg, Liberty University, School of Education

Renseignements généraux :

Le but de cette étude est de comprendre l'impact d'entrer à l'école seulement anglaise sur les locuteurs natifs de la Louisiane française en bas Bayou Lafourche, par le biais de la recherche qualitative.

Procédures :

Si vous acceptez d'être dans cette étude, nous vous demandons de faire les choses suivantes :

Des données grâce à des entrevues, des groupes de discussion, d'informations démographiques et journaux audio. Des entrevues et des groupes de discussion seront enregistré sur une bande vidéo. La documentation sera obtenue par le biais de votre journalisation audio au cours de l'étude. Entrevues seront dérouleront jusqu'à trois fois et durent environ une heure. Vous aurez l'occasion d'examiner des données et les conclusions de précision à une date ultérieure.

Risques et les avantages d'être à l'étude :

L'étude comporte plusieurs risques : d'abord, l'information recueillie qui indique l'abus ou l'automutilation de tout type signalera; Deuxièmement, rappelant les expériences antérieures, il se pourrait que vous éprouviez l'inconfort émotionnel et si vous éprouvez la détresse excessive, ce qui est peu probable, il sera mis fin participation à l'étude.

Les avantages de la participation sont: les avantages comprennent la capacité de se rapportent à l'histoire personnelle et de bénéficier d'une plus grande population Louisiane francophone.

Indemnisation :

Aucune compensation monétaire ne sera accordée pour la participation à cette étude.

Confidentialité :

Les dossiers de cette étude seront gardés privés. Dans tout type de rapport que nous pourrions publier, nous n'inclurons pas toute information qui permettra d'identifier un sujet. Les dossiers de recherche seront stockés en toute sécurité et seulement les chercheurs auront accès aux documents. Les vrais noms serviront pas en toutes circonstances lors de documenter et d'analyser les données. Toutes les données seront stockées par voie électronique sur les ordinateurs de mot de passe et les données physiques seront stockées dans un classeur verrouillé. Le chercheur aura accès à cette information uniquement. Il n'est pas prévu pour l'utilisation futur des données. Toutes les données seront effacées après l'exécution réussie de la dissertation. Toutes les informations imprimées seront stockées dans des armoires de stockage sécurisé. Votre confidentialité participant ne peut pas être promise lors de groupes de discussion.

Caractère volontaire de l'étude :

La participation à cette étude est volontaire. Votre décision de participer ou non n'affectera pas vos relations actuelles ou futures avec la Liberty University. Si vous décidez de participer, vous êtes libre de ne répondre à aucune question ou retirer à tout moment, sans affecter les relations. Pour retirer de l'étude, veuillez communiquer avec le chercheur par courriel ou par téléphone : 701-526-3594 ou jvining@liberty.edu. À

informer de votre souhait de retirer le chercheur, toutes les données recueillies auprès de vous seront effacées ou détruites.

Contacts et Questions :

Le chercheur qui mène : JoLynda Strandberg. Vous pouvez demander des questions que vous avez maintenant. Si vous avez des questions plus tard, nous vous encourageons à communiquer par son téléphone à 701 526 3594 or par email à jvining@liberty.edu. : email de Dr Sandra Battige est slbattige@liberty.edu et son numero téléphone est 904-993-8212.

Si vous avez des questions ou des préoccupations au sujet de cette étudiant et désirez parler à quelqu'un d'autre que le chercheur, vous êtes invités à contacter la Commission institutionnelle, le Dr Fernando Garzon, Président, 1971 Université Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 ou par courriel à fgarzon@liberty.edu.

Vous recevrez une copie de cette information à conserver pour vos dossiers.

Déclaration de consentement :

J'ai lu et compris les informations ci-dessus. I ont posé des questions et ont reçu des réponses. Je consens à participer à l'étude.

____ Je consens à l'enregistrement vidéo et audio-dossier mon entrevue, le groupe de discussion et le journal audio.

____ Je ne pas consenti à l'enregistrement vidéo et audio-enregistrement mon entrevue, le groupe de discussion et le journal audio.

Signature: _____ Date:

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date:

IRB Code Numbers: 1389.090412

IRB Expiration Date: Sept. 4, 2013

Appendix D

Warning Signs Checklist for Alzheimer's Disease

(Alzheimer's Association, 2009)

1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life- forgetting learned information, important dates or events, and/or asking for the same information over and over
2. Challenges in planning or solving problems- trouble following simple directions, and/or difficulty concentrating.
3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, work or leisure-
4. Confusion with time or place- lose track of dates, seasons and the passage of time.
5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships-difficulty reading, judging distance and determining color/contrast.
6. New problems with words in speaking or writing- trouble following or joining a conversation, stop in the middle of a conversations and have no idea how to continue or repeat themselves.
7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps- placing things in unusual places, accuse others of stealing.
8. Decreased poor judgment- changes in decision making, pay less attention to grooming or cleanliness.
9. Withdraw from work or social activities- remove themselves from social activity, trouble keeping up hobbies or teams.
10. Changes in mood or personality- can become confused , suspicious, depressed, fearful or anxious, get upset when out of their comfort zone.

Appendix E

Letter to the Editor

Preserving the history of our Cajun French Speakers-

Those of us who are native to South Louisiana are blessed with rich cultural traditions and a unique language which is not often realized outside of our community. It is with this in mind I am pursuing research on native Cajun French speakers, hoping to preserve the stories and histories of those who grew up with Cajun French as their first language.

My dissertation research will focus on the lived experiences of native Cajun French speakers in lower Bayou Lafourche. At this point I am asking for volunteers who entered elementary school speaking little or no English south of Lockport. Those willing to participate would be asked to sit for three interviews in a two week period of time, October 25- November 4, 2012. Participants will be asked about their life, their experiences at school and how these experiences helped shape their adult lives. If participants choose, they can also participate in focus groups and an audio journal.

Anyone who meets these requirements and would like to participate in this study should contact the telephone number or email address below:

701.526.3594

jvining@liberty.edu.

JoLynda H. Strandberg, Ed.S.

Appendix F

Reflective Journal Exert

Oct. 31, 2013

It has been a long week, but I feel so very attached to the people I am interviewing. One of the things I believe, we, as a society miss is the opportunity to reflect on the wisdom of those who have gone before. When I see and hear about the lives of the people I am working with, I am struck by the great amount of change they have experienced in the past 70 or so years. When the oilfield came to the Bayou, their lives changed dramatically. They didn't necessarily need money before; they farmed and were self sufficient, but as the area was industrialized, it became driven by the dollar. They also changed culturally because outsiders were now common in the area. This also lead to a decreased use of French. They lived an early childhood of what would be considered now to be hardship. However, not one has used those words; they all describe a happy early life, despite some trying circumstances. As a result, I think that they were all very hard workers.

The question of my insider/outsider status is raised by the respondents. They either want to know why I'm interested or where I am from. When I say I'm from there, they want to know about my family. There seems to be somewhat of an implied distrust of educated people doing work about the culture. Part of me feels I have to sell this idea.... Because I don't know if they can fully understand my intent to honor the culture and language. I feel overwhelmed by the responsibility sometimes.... Honoring their story while remaining true to my work.

Appendix G

Integral Themes Summary

Integrated Theme Summary

The first day of school for some of the persons was described as confusing and terrifying. I noticed several instances of running away from school were related to me. Being thrust into an environment where the only known language was different from what was allowed, caused some confusion and fear for persons. I was particularly drawn to Gaston's experience of his first two days of school. He said, "I didn't know nothing in English. ...so I cried. I was so close to my mama, and uh, I wanted to come home. ...So the following day at lunch, at recess the following day, it started raining and thunder. We didn't have, we lived about a half mile from there, so I said, 'I'm going home.' So my boy, my mama said (points), 'Go back.' So it finished drizzling, so all the way back to school I cried." To me, Gaston's experience related his vulnerability as he was forced into rapid English immersion.

Because of physical ailments, Beatrice did not begin school with her peers. She started school at 11. Beatrice related that prior to entering school, French was the only language spoken in her home; he parents only spoke French. Entering school, she was forced to learn English rapidly. When reflecting on the experience of entering school, she said, "We had to learn the English. It was kinda rough, you know to learn." Beatrice's experience was not isolated. The youngest person, Beau, who is 64 also related being scared the first day of school because he didn't know English. Eventually, persons learned English, but many reported to me fluency did not come quickly. When asked how long, they couldn't give a definite period of time, but they related it took a

couple of years. It is unknown how proficient the persons may have been in two years. Studies suggest English proficiency can take as long as five years (Collier, 1987; Cummins, 1981; Klessmer, 1994).

Many persons remembered what it was like to enter school as a child and recalled the fear associated with the experience. Walter said the teacher looked as if he was seven or eight feet tall. He reminded me adults can be intimidating to a child.

School experiences can negatively affect language transmission (Wiltse, 2011). All but one person related to me they received punishment for speaking French in school. While they discretely spoke French among themselves when teachers were not around, all instruction was in English. The exception to this was Alsace, who attended a Catholic school. While instruction was in English for most subjects, students were free to converse in French, pray, and write prayers in French. I can see the rejection of their native language had lasting effects on language transmission since 50% of persons did not pass on the language to their children. Punishments ranged from swats to the fingers with a ruler to acts of violence. Walton related to me the series of consequences he received at school for speaking French. The fourth time you were caught speaking French at school, you were expelled. It seems to me rather harsh consequences for students who were natural French speakers. Walton shared the amount and degree of punishment relied on whether or not the teacher was a native Louisiana French speaker, ... if one (teacher) came from a French background, hardly ever would you be punished for it (speaking French). ... one (teacher) that wasn't from our neighborhood, that didn't speak French, they would (punish you)." Today the lack of teacher diversity has been problematic (Snyder, 2008). Previous research documented physical punishments for

students speaking French in class (Bernard, 2003; Sexton, 2000). In a shocking instance of punishment for speaking French, Walter told me the story of a little girl who spoke French at school on his first day of school, “And they had one little girl, she was speaking in French; that’s all she could speak. The teacher slapped her. Boom. The blood came out of her cheeks. That did it for me. And ever since that day, I got second thoughts about speaking French.” While this case was isolated, it spoke volumes to me in terms of the affects of experiencing harsh punishments for students communicating in their native language. I remind myself upon entering school, persons only spoke Louisiana French and had no real means to communicate with English speakers.

When persons described their early lives, they all painted a picture of simplicity and meagerness. The simple accommodations of plumbing and bathrooms, were not always available. The rural life and lack of industrialization on lower Bayou Lafourche was evident. This was found when persons spoke of their parents professions. “We were so poor, my mama and daddy couldn’t say yes and no in English,” illustrates the relationship of economic status to speaking French in lower Bayou Lafourche. Most of the persons’ fathers were either shrimpers, oystermen, trappers, or farmers. Gaston said, “That’s all we did here, was try to make a living.” His statement revealed a meager life. He went on to explain how his family trapped in the marsh for three or four months at a time during the school year; this absence was required for the family’s survival, but affected his schooling. Alsace described the meagerness of the lifestyle during his childhood, but described his parents and grandparents, “Diligence was always uh, uh obvious in these people. To survive, there was an abundance of ways you could survive. You didn’t need money.” The youngest person, Beau, had a similar description of his

youth. When describing his first day, he noted the discomfort and strangeness of having to wear shoes; he had spent most of the time barefoot.

The persons I studied were in a position to offer a reflective look on their school experiences, both good and undesirable. The theme of reflective wish for bi-literacy and wish for language transmission struck me as the common wish most all of persons would have liked. Persons who did not pass on Louisiana French to their children regretted the decision. Walton said, “We used to use words in French to cover up so the kids wouldn’t (understand), and I regret that to this day.” Liza also expressed regret, “We spoke, but not much (Louisiana French). I guess because we were forced to learn the English language. And I saw how it affected me later. I didn’t want it to be a problem for my children. But now I find it is a problem because I should have taught them French.

Previous research noted students who received punishment for speaking Navajo were less likely to pass on the language to their children (Wiltse, 2011). Today the value of Cajun cultural capital has increased. The last 20 years has brought the label “Cajun” to the forefront. Cajun cooking, Mardi Gras, and Cajun reality television exposed the nation to the uniqueness of the culture. What would television be without Swamp People? Not only is the culture accepted, but it is sought after. So today the nation is more embracing of the culture, and this is reflected in how Beau viewed his native language. “The older I got the more I liked that I knew how to speak French. I’m glad I know how to speak French fluently, Cajun French, not that Parisian stuff. I wish more kids knew how to speak French.” The decline of language transmission resonated with Alsace; he said, “I think the schools had a lot to do with it because they showed us how to communicate in English. And there is nothing wrong with that. But son of a gun, the

schools left us behind, because I wish they would've let us have a choice of a second language. ... without question the second language would have been French, because the ground work was already laid. The French was existing there in everybody's soul."

Walter was asked if his school experiences affected the way he saw French, or use it he related; he responded, "I look back on it as an injustice." He later added, "The first word I ever spoke was in French, and I hope when I die the last word will be in French. That's how strongly I feel about our French and how we are losing it." One of Walter's proudest moments was when he attended St. Ann University in Canada and couldn't speak English; he was awarded the honor student. The local television station interviewed him and asked why he had come to St. Ann. He responded, "For the simple fact, en Française (in French), that we were deprived of that in school."

Appendix H

Table of Themes

Name	School	Family	Life	Children	Economy	Values	Health	language
Beatrice	Started late	Parents fishermen	Lives on family property	Closes to son	Young-family lived off of land	Family	Had polio	Likes to speak French
	Quit school	2 children	Retired	Sees both children daily	Husband worked as oysterman and oil field related job	Hard work	Health did not allow her to go to school until 11	
	Hard to learn English	Close to son	Janitor at bank	passed language		Selflessness		
	Important to father	Married at 23	Wonderful life			Pride in heritage		
	Punished for speaking French	Misses siblings who have passed	Related how times changed					
			Doesn't like all the commercialness of life					
Beau	Didn't like to wear shoes	Family close	Lives in childhood home	2 children	Teacher	Honesty	good	Likes Cajun French
	Scared the first day	One brother	Retired	Close relationship	Odd jobs to support family	Hard work		Not literate in native lang
	Went to college	Married twice	Taught for 30+ years	Did not pass on language	Retired now	Family		Uses French with friends
	Advocates continuing education	widower	Lives with 2 nd wife			simplicity		
	Punished for speaking French		Hunts/fishes			education		
			Would love to live off of land					
			Poor growing up					
Alsace	Not punished	Parents literate	Oil field worker	Passed on Language to children	Family farmed	Family	Had bout with throat cancer	Would like to see st. French in school
	French prayers	Farm	Insurance agency	5 children	Sugar cane industry worker	education		Sees injustice at lack of literacy
	Catholic School	Modest home	Leader in community	Close relationship		Taking chances		
		Close to mother						
	HS GED/							

	Some college							
Gaston	Fear first day	Close family	Musician	Passed lang to kids	Farming	Family	Good	Likes Cajun French
	Ran away	Farmers	Successful	4 kids	Trapping	Hard work		Distaste for standard French
	Didn't understand	Moved a great deal	Politician	Close relationships	Very poor	simplicity		Wishes more kids would speak it
	Didn't like school	Trapping	Wishes life were simple again		Simple life			
	7 th grade	Modest						
	Punished for speaking French							
Walter	fear first day	Fishermen	Married and divorced	Three kids	family fished	hard work	good	Standard French
	Ran away	Scared of grandfather	US Army	pass on lang	lots of siblings			injustice not teaching French
	Little girl hit		Chef					attended St. Ann
	Didn't like school q		Retired					wishes more kids spoke it
	HS		Loves travel					
	punished for speaking French							
Liza	punished for speaking French	close to parents	took over father's business	5 children	farming	hard work	heart problems	teaching children French
	HS	lived in same childhood home	teacher	did not pass on language	business owner	family		not literate in French
	ran away	father farmer	special needs son	close to children		religion		
	scared 1 st day		retired					
	college							
Walton	HS	close family	worked in oilfield	close to children	farming family	family		regrets not teaching children French
	punished for speaking French	grandmother	became oysterman	did not pass on language	business owner	hard work	broke back	taught himself to read and write French
	liked first teacher	siblings	married				general good health	
	wanted to be a vet	farmers	children					
			retired					
Johness	punished for	close family	oilfield worker	6 children	farming	family	good health	felt French held him

	speaking French							back
	HS	poor	Army	did not pass on language	business owner	hard work		
	wanted to go to college	close to mother and father	business owner			education		
	education important		boat owner					
			retired					

Appendix I

Audit Trail Log and Activies

Purchase Log

Sept 2012 Delta- airline tickets: \$550
 Budget- Rental car: \$300

Oct 2012 Amazon- digital recorders for participants: \$120
 Smart Pen: \$120
 US Post - \$31

Dec 2012 Walmart- Discs for data: \$ 12.99
 Amazon- Dragon Speak: \$100
 US Post- \$25

Jan 2013 US Post- \$21.46

Feb 2013 US Post- \$5.75

Log of Activities:

Sept 4, 2012- IRB Approval

Sept 6, 2012- Sent letter to the editor of The Lafourche Gazette and Daily Comet. The letter ran one day.

Sept 7, 2012- Contacted MC and LL about possible participants

Sep 8, 2012- Ms. RG called about the letter to the editor and offered to participate.

Sep 9, 2012- MA called about his mom participating.

Sep 10, 2012- Contacted RG via email about participation. Contacted Beau, MC, Ms. Vickie and LL about participation.

Affirmation from six people about participation. Alsace confirmed his participation.

Sept 12, 2012- DTP from Golden Meadow responded to participate. Left message.

Sept 13, 2013- Called DTP back and she recommended LP as a participant.

Sept 20, 2012- Locating a place to conduct interview. Jerrie Tyler emailed me and suggested the Library. She reserved the library for me already.

Sept 21, 2012- Currently have 9 participants identified.

Sept. 22, 2012- Purchase recorders/live scribe

Sept 24, 2012- Sent out update to committee

Oct 1, 2012- Update on dissertation portal

Oct 11, 2012- Schedule participants. Contact Curole, Bychurch, Guidry, RG.

Oct 12, 2012- Contact Alsace.

Oct 21, 2012- Called AD back.

Oct 22, 2012- confirmed with AD.

Oct 24, 2012- Flying to New Orleans

Oct 25, 2012- Prepaid postage for audio journals.

Oct 26, 2012: Beatrice- 0900-1100

AD- 1100-1300 (not a native speaker)

Walton -1400-1600

Gaston- 1600-1730

Oct 29, 2012 Alsace- 0900-1100

Walton- 1100-1300

Peer Review meeting- 1500

Oct 30, 2012 Gaston- 0900-1130

Liza- 1300-1500

Beau- 1530-1730

Focus Group- 1800-1930

Oct 31, 2012 Walter-0900-1130

Vegas- 1200-1400 (not native speaker)

Alsace- 1400-1500

Liza- 1530-1700

Nov 1, 2012 HC- 0900-1130 (audio no good)

Bouzigas- 1300-1500 (wife answered questions)

Walter- 1500-1630

Beau- 1700-1745

Nov 2, 2012 Johnness – 1200-1700

Nov 5, 2012 Flying back from New Orleans

Nov 13, 2012 Sent thank you notes to all participants

Nov 20, 2012 to Jan 4, 2013 Transcription of all data.

Dec 11, 2012- copied all interviews and sent a copy to the participants at their request

Dec 20, 2012 Sent all participants Christmas cards

Jan 4, 2012 Sent transcriptions to participants for member checks

Jan 25, 2012 Sent findings to participants to verify findings

Feb. 13, 2013 Peer reviewer

Feb. 22, 2013 remailed some copies of the interviews per participant request