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Americans in Paris: A Discourse Analysis of Student Accounts  
of Study Abroad

By

Timothy Paul Wolcott

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requirements for the degree of

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Committee in charge:

Professor Claire Kramsch, Chair

Professor Patricia Baquedano-López

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Professor Richard Kern

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Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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In this study, I provide a discourse analytical and narrative-theoretical examination of four American undergraduate students' interview accounts of study abroad in France. The key finding is that all of these students accounted for the significance of their experiences studying abroad in terms that transcended the institutionally sanctioned academic and professional goals of the program itself. Instead, these students discussed the various impacts of their term abroad in largely personal and life historical terms. In order to account for the often deeply personal ways in which these participants made sense of their experiences, I turn to recent post-structuralist scholarship on subjectivity and symbolic competence. I also position these accounts within the broader history of the programmatic implementation and the scientific evaluation of American undergraduate study abroad. Seen against this historical backdrop, I pay particular attention to how these student accounts both reinforce and undermine some of the dominant discourses found in the established research and commentary on study abroad in the applied linguistics and international education literature. While the ultimate purpose of this study is descriptive, in the final chapter I explore some of the pedagogical implications of my findings and offer a sample syllabus of a course designed to help students reflect on the subjective dimension of their study abroad experiences.

For my mother

## **Acknowledgements**

This seeds for this dissertation were planted during my own undergraduate experiences studying abroad in France. Though I went into my Junior Year Abroad as an enthusiastic French literature major, I exited with an even more passionate interest in the ways languages are learned and taught. Since starting my graduate studies at UC Berkeley, I have had the great pleasure to work with many scholars, peers and professors alike, who have helped me to devise, implement, and complete this dissertation research project.

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## **Chapter One**

### **The Question of Competence and its Relation to Student Identity during Study Abroad**

#### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to provide a discourse analytical and narrative-theoretical examination of four American undergraduate students' interview accounts of study abroad in France. Moving from the 'micro' level of the text to the 'meso' level of the interactive/institutional context and on to the 'macro' level of the social, cultural, political, and historical conditions of possibility (Bateson, 1972; Blommaert, 2005; Foucault, 1971), I will attempt to position these accounts within the history of the implementation and the scientific and popular evaluation of American undergraduate study abroad. Seen against this historical backdrop, I will pay particular attention to demonstrating how these student accounts both reinforce and undermine some of the dominant discourses found in the established research and commentary on study abroad in the applied linguistics (Carroll, 1969; Freed, 1995; Kinginger, 2008; Pellegrino-Aveni, 2005; Wilkinson, 1998) and international education literature (Bolen, 2001; Citron 2002; Engle & Engle, 2002; Feinberg, 2002; Goodwin & Nacht, 1988; Gore, 2005; Hoffa, 2002; Vande Berg, 2007). While the ultimate purpose of this study is descriptive, I hope that my findings may contribute to the current and pressing discussion of the role of study abroad in the internationalization of the American undergraduate curriculum (American Commission on Undergraduate Education Final Report, 2000; Council on Education (ACE), 2002b; Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE), 2003; NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2004; Knight, 1994; Smelser Report, 1986). Moreover, in bringing two research literatures on study abroad into theoretical and curricular dialogue, I hope to demonstrate the productive benefits of such cross-fertilization for the scientific understanding and the pedagogic integration of study abroad within American institutions of higher education.

My initial theoretical and empirical orientation to this project focused on language learning, grounded primarily in the applied linguistics and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature. However, as I began to observe and interview these students, I quickly realized that language learning was not a top priority for many of the participants in this program. While this caused me quite a bit of initial panic, as my data analysis progressed I soon realized that while language learning did not figure very prominently in their accounts, other types of personal and intellectual development were highlighted in the kinds of "reportable events" (Labov, 1972, 1997) they recounted during our interviews. As I will explain in more detail below, I then shifted my focus to a larger view of learning (both curricular and informal or 'incidental') in study abroad contexts. Moreover, while my perspective remained (and remains) rooted in applied linguistics/SLA, this shift of empirical focus required recourse to the broader examinations of the educational benefits/outcomes of study abroad found in the

international education literature (see chapter four). The following research questions emerged as I integrated these theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical concerns in my efforts to situate and explicate the ideational, interpersonal, and (inter)textual functions (Halliday, 1978; Fairclough, 1989; Blommaert, 2005) of these student accounts of study abroad in France:

1. How do these students' accounts help elucidate how study abroad, as an educational intervention, fits into their particular undergraduate experiences as well as the larger goals of American higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
2. Are there any disparities between the institutionally stated goals of study abroad and the actual goals, experiences, and evaluations of these participants? If so, is there merely a mismatch to be overcome, or are there hidden, unspoken factors (such as self-identity) at work that need to be addressed?
3. Which conceptualizations of identity and competence best account for the learning processes and products of these students' experiences studying abroad?

### **Background and Rationale for the Study**

Calls for more American study abroad are increasingly urgent as university professionals insist that institutions of higher education must “internationalize”<sup>1</sup> their curricula in order to better prepare their students for the globalized economic, technological, and political realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While study abroad has grown steadily since the 1990s, still fewer than 3% of all American undergraduates participate annually (Open Doors, 2009). This is seen as a regrettable state of affairs by international educators who cite American monolingualism (American Council on Education, 1989; Schiller, 2000; Schmidt, 2000; Demont-Heinrich, 2007; Simon, 1980), geographic ignorance (National Geographic-Roper Geographic Literacy Survey, 2006), and international immobility (Coleman, 2000; U.S. Department of State Passport Statistics, 2007) as indicators of an isolationist provincialism clearly dysfunctional in today's context of increasing global interdependence. If more undergraduates were to study abroad, proponents argue, they would be on the road to acquiring the “global competence” so essential to personal and professional success (NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2008; NASULGC Task Force on International Education Report, 2004). But what exactly is “global competence” and how specifically does study abroad facilitate its development?

Definitions of global competence vary somewhat<sup>2</sup>, but the following is fairly representative: “Globally competent graduates...1. Have a diverse and knowledgeable

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<sup>1</sup> Internationalization: “the process of integrating international and multicultural perspectives and experiences into the learning, discovery and engagement mission of higher education” (Knight, 1994, cited in NASULGC Task Force on International Education Report, 2004)

<sup>2</sup> These definitions also tend to be under-theorized, with most citations pointing to other task force and committee reports' ad hoc definitions in a rather circular fashion. In fact, “international education” does not represent a bounded field of scientific study, per se. American international educators are a loosely (but



worldview...2. Comprehend the international dimensions of the major field of study...3. Communicative effectively in another language and/or cross-culturally...4. Exhibit cross-cultural sensitivity and adaptability...(and) 5. Continue global learning throughout life” (NASULGC Task Force on International Education Report, 2004, pp. 20-22). This a lot to expect from American study abroad programs, one might argue, considering the facts on the ground. Today, 21% of Americans who study abroad do so in English-speaking countries, primarily the UK and Australia; of the remaining 79% who study in non-English-speaking countries, many take some or all of their classes in English (Open Doors, 2009). Moreover, there is very little disciplinary diversity among American study abroaders, with over 54% hailing from the social sciences and the humanities (ibid.). Also, since the 1960’s when nearly 90% of American universities had some kind of foreign language requirement for all or select degree programs, today fewer than two thirds have any such requirements (Engberg & Green, 2002). Furthermore, as programs multiply, the length of stay is shrinking, with fewer than 5% of all study abroaders spending more than a semester abroad (Open Doors Report, 2009). Finally, while many universities offer some kind of re-entry meeting and/or coursework for students returning from study abroad, most universities lack easily accessible, institution-wide international initiatives or programs in which returning students might continue systematic international engagement, whether academically, professionally, politically, or socially (NASULGC Task Force on International Education Report, 2004).

In this context, it is hard to imagine how the current state of American study abroad might contribute to the development of the laudable characteristics of the globally competent graduate. Does this mean then that these international educators are delusional, out of touch with these unpromising realities, or do they dare to assume that even study abroad *as it is* might be an integral part of the larger solution<sup>3</sup> to the American under-engagement with and misunderstanding of things global? In taking a close look at this report and others like it (American Council on Education, 1995; Institute of International Education, 2004; International 50, 1998), I have noticed a certain guarded optimism that centers around a belief in the potential of study abroad (of whatever duration) to develop American undergraduates’ capacity for “cross-cultural” or “intercultural” “communication” and/or “sensitivity” (Bennett, 1993; Olson & Kroeger, 2001; Williams, 2005).

In the above definition of global competence, for example, foreign language competence is offered as an exchangeable (and perhaps ideal) outcome in relation to (the ostensibly more feasible?) cross-cultural communicative competence: “Globally competent graduates will...(c)ommunicate effectively in another language *and/or* cross-culturally” (NASULGC Task Force on International Education Report, 2004, p.22, emphasis mine). For international educators, it seems, the ‘cross-cultural’ exists somehow apart from the

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increasingly) interconnected group of university professionals (faculty, faculty-administrators, and staff) who are involved in one or more of the various international domains of their institution, such as study abroad, international student/faculty programs, and international research.

<sup>3</sup> Including, as noted above, international student programs and international faculty research/scholarship, visiting scholars, etc.

'linguistic.' At first glance, this seems to be in stark contrast to the research on "intercultural communicative competence" done in applied linguistics (Byram, 2003; Byram & Fleming, 1998; Kramsch, 1998) and the work on "intercultural communication" and "cross-cultural communication" done in sociolinguistics (Scollon & Scollon, 1995) and anthropology (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1982), respectively. In my opinion, it is this separation of the cultural from the linguistic that affords the special blend of status quo pragmatism and progressive optimism that characterizes reports like these as well as the attitudes and inclinations of many Americans involved in study abroad, including the participants in the current study. That is, both these advocates of internationalization and my undergraduate focal students evidence, on the one hand, a certain hesitation to posit study abroad as fundamentally oriented toward second language learning, and, on the other hand, a firm conviction that study abroad without intensive language study is nevertheless sure to change participants in positive ways unattainable on the home campus.

### **Notions of Competence: Intercultural, symbolic, and translingual/transcultural**

American study abroad has always been inextricably linked to American geopolitical concerns. The first programs began after WWI and were motivated by a concern that American isolationism was untenable in the face of the urgent need for increased international understanding. When study abroad programs and foreign language instruction were significantly expanded in the wake of World War II, both were presented as providing educational outcomes that not only met students' academic and labor market needs, but also provided students with the personal edification, interpersonal skills, and international awareness necessary for maintaining world peace (Kramsch, 2002). During this same time period, applied linguistics emerged as a distinct field concerned with both the theoretical and empirical questions of how second/foreign languages are acquired/learned and the practical and pedagogical issues of how to meet the educational goals of language study in higher education.

However, due to the structuralist views dominant in linguistics at that time, most applied linguists narrowly defined the goals of language learning to include only measurable increases in linguistic proficiency. In keeping with the structuralist distinction between *langue* and *parole* (Saussure, 1986 [1972]) – or, at the time, "competence" and "performance" (Chomsky, 1957) – applied linguists adopted a cognitivist perspective that viewed language learning as the activation of innate "learning mechanisms" (Ellis, 1993) that filtered the messy, context-dependent linguistic "input" of everyday speech into "intake" (Corder, 1967), the underlying morpho-syntactic rules that generate all speech, whatever the context. In doing so, applied linguists (and, by extension, most language educators) espoused a definition of linguistic competence that deliberately rendered the individual speaker anonymous and excluded from consideration any of the larger sociocultural and historical dimensions of the communicative context. Moreover, this universalist and ahistorical perspective ignored the political dimensions of language learning, from the personal to the international. "Who" a learner was and "why" (s)he was learning the language was irrelevant; all that mattered was "what" (s)he learned.

That is, at its inception, applied linguistics effectively severed the ties between language learning and the very cross-curricular initiatives that drove the expansion of foreign language instruction in the first place.

In keeping with this perspective, the early applied linguistics research on study abroad, though generally celebratory, considered it only in terms of its effects on linguistic proficiency, as measured post-sojourn by standardized oral and written examinations. For historical reasons that I need not address in detail here – including the decline of the liberal arts model in higher education and the corresponding increase in disciplinary specialization and academic autonomy (Kerr, 1963) – this psycholinguistic perspective and its attendant quantitative assessment methods persisted until well into the 1990s. As a result, the seemingly definitive findings of Carroll's (1967) large-scale quantitative study of the linguistic benefits of study abroad generally held sway throughout this period:

Time spent abroad is clearly one of the most potent variables we have found, and this is not surprising, *for reasons that need not be belabored*. Certainly our results provide a strong justification for a “year abroad” as one of the experiences to be recommended for the language majors. Even a tour abroad, or a summer school course abroad, is useful, apparently, in improving the student's skill. The obverse of this finding may be rather humbling for the foreign language teaching profession: those who do *not* go abroad do not seem to be able to get very far in their foreign language study, on the average, despite the ministrations of foreign language teachers, language laboratories, audio-lingual methods, and the rest (p. 137, first italics mine).

So, on the one hand, applied linguists generally viewed study abroad as a language-learning panacea; however, on the other hand, their definition of linguistic competence obviated any reference to the geopolitical dimensions of the broader educational purposes originally associated with incorporating international or “foreign” experiences into American higher education. This exalted yet excluded status of study abroad vis-à-vis language learning is important to note, for as applied linguistics research blossomed throughout the 1970s and 1980s there was relatively little interest in study abroad (Comp et al., 2008, p. 99). This is significant because not only did it result in a benign neglect on the part of language educators and teacher-scholars toward the curricular particulars of study abroad, but it also left applied linguistics research on study abroad in a kind of epistemological time capsule by isolating it from the increasingly inter-disciplinary conceptualizations of linguistic practice gaining currency among social scientists beginning in the 1970s (Bourdieu, 1977; Halliday, 1978; Hymes, 1972, 1974).

These conceptualizations, which I will address in more detail below, expanded the notion of communicative competence by insisting that the ability to speak depends as much on the sociocultural and political dimensions of the context as it does on the speaker's capacity to generate grammatical utterances. In this model, speech is seen as social action in which the reasons for speaking (or not speaking) are paramount. When this is

applied to language learning, learner motivation is similarly complicated such that the reasons for learning another language become as significant as the learning outcomes. Indeed, in much of the recent applied linguistics research on study abroad, researchers are as concerned with why learners *do not* learn as with why they do (Pellegrino-Aveni, 2005; Kinginger, 2008; Wilkinson 2002). Moreover, these researchers increasingly consider gains in “intercultural communicative competence” (Byram, 1997), i.e. in the ability of individual learners to act as mediators between different cultural meaning systems on the intrapsychological, the interpsychological, and even the international or “global” interactive planes. So it seems that foreign language learning and study abroad have come full circle in applied linguistics research: after many intervening decades, they are once again posited as contributing to American undergraduate students’ capacities for acting in the world (Kramsch, 2005). In what follows (and in chapter three), I will provide a more comprehensive outline of this historical trajectory.

Beginning in the 1980s, applied linguists began to question the feasibility and appropriateness of positing the native speaker as the model for formal language learning (Kachru, 1985; Paikeday, 1985; Quirk & Widdowson, 1985). In Europe, scholars working in connection with the Council of Europe’s project *Language Learning for European Citizenship* created the notion of the “intercultural speaker” (*intermédiaire culturel*) who develops not native speaker competence but rather an “intercultural communicative competence”, or the capacity to mediate between a number of cultural perspectives and between the target language and the first language (Byram & Zarate, 1994; Risager, 2006). Within the context of the unification of Western Europe, this competence emphasized international cooperation as the result of increased mobility of national citizens across geographic, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. In a later reformulation, Byram (1997a) distinguished between “intercultural competence” and “intercultural communicative competence”, with the former designating the ability of native speakers to interact with non-native speakers and the latter specifically applying to using a second/foreign language in interactions with native speakers of that language or in *lingua franca* situations. Both competences, however, require a blend of attitudes and skills, or *savoirs* (Byram & Zarate, 1994) that enable speakers to recognize and mediate between cultural differences rooted in native speaker communities, nationally understood. In the studies outlined in this section, it is clear that these researchers, as language educators, focus on the ways in which American students abroad achieve intercultural communicative competence, as evidenced by both their linguistic gains and their expressed attitudes and evaluations of their interactions in the target language.

However, given the realities of foreign language studies in American higher education as well as the growing recognition among applied linguists that attaining native speaker proficiency is a flawed and unrealistic goal of language education, many language educators are beginning to offer alternative models of competence. Drawing on ecological perspectives on language learning and use, Kramsch offers the notion of “symbolic competence” (Kramsch, 2006b; Kramsch & Whiteside, 2007, 2008). Kramsch (2008) emphasizes the ability of speakers to manipulate the various linguistic codes at their disposal to manage not only their capacity to “approximate or appropriate for

oneself someone else's language, but to shape the very context in which the language is learned and used" (p. 664). In this view, a special emphasis is placed on the ways in which speakers negotiate the shifting interstices of real and historical time in the face of the various symbolic exigencies of *in situ* multilingual interactions. Kramsch argues for considering not just the socially-recognized and legitimized *identities* in play, but also the more personal-historical, affective, and aesthetic dimensions of communicative practice – what she calls *subjectivity* (Kramsch, 2006, 2009).

Through an analysis of multilingual encounters among immigrants and natives in the United States, Kramsch & Whiteside (2007, 2008) highlight how speakers deploy the various linguistic codes at their disposal in order to play with the differential "symbolic power" (Bourdieu, 1991) attributed to each and to actively influence the performative "effects" of their interlocutors' "speech acts" (Austin, 1962). This is not to say that speakers can "impose reception" (Bourdieu, 1991) of whatever idiosyncratic "subjective resonances" (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008, p. 667) evoked by these various symbolic codes; whatever its post-modernist overtones, Kramsch's view is fundamentally grounded in the Bourdieusian view of "symbolic violence" (1991). That is, social action is still presented as interactions between agents with unequally distributed "symbolic capital" (*ibid.*). However, rather than positing the various spatial and temporal displacements inherent in the multilingual contexts of late modern societies as necessarily contributing to the dominance and illegitimacy of the multilingual, Kramsch argues for a recognition of social agents' capacity to develop a practical sense that "reterritorializes and rehistoricizes" (2008, p. 667) the spaces of human encounters enough to ensure "linguistic survival" (Butler, 1997). This does not deny the power of dominant institutions or the performative force of the delegated authority inherent in legitimate speech (Bourdieu, 1991); instead, it suggests that multilinguals may learn to invoke the symbolic power of their previous institutions<sup>4</sup> across time and space to exert some influence over the performative effects in the here-and-now of emergent social action.

Of course, applying the notion of "symbolic competence" to understand the linguistic practices of American undergraduates studying abroad may seem somewhat dubious. Like Norton (2000, 2001), Kramsch & Whiteside work with immigrants – and *undocumented* immigrants at that – so it is reasonable to question the applicability of an analytical framework constructed to account for the competence of such disempowered social agents. As evidenced in most of the research outlined above, what American students abroad seem to struggle with the most is their lack of recognition of their own relative dominance – sometimes bordering on arrogance – in their multilingual interactions in-country. However, I see some potential complementarity in the emphasis placed on awareness in Kramsch's notion of symbolic competence – i.e. the two-way, interpersonal awareness of the symbolic resonances and "lieux de mémoire" (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008, p.655, from Nora, 1997, p. 3031) of both one's own and one's interlocutor's socially-recognized linguistic and cultural patrimony.

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<sup>4</sup> Here I use "institution" in Bourdieu's sense as "any relatively enduring set of social relations which endows individuals with power, status and resources of various kinds" (1991: 8, italics in original).

Just as other applied linguists working in study abroad (Kinging, 2008, 2010; see chapter three) argue for raising both students' and applied linguists' awareness of the interpretative frames and "collective memories" (Wertsch, 2002) of the foreign hosts abroad, Kramsch's notion of symbolic competence requires a decidedly hermeneutic orientation to multilingual encounters. To be symbolically competent, one must negotiate the symbolic resonances of codes and symbols that evoke significance across multiple time-scales and on multiple levels of social organization and "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983). Admittedly, the stakes are much higher in the contexts described by studies of immigrants' second language use, and the "linguistic vulnerability" (Butler, 1997) of these marginalized social agents calls for a means of 'empowering' them through enhanced symbolic competence.

However, there is no reason why this model cannot be applied to other communicative contexts, even if only to describe what amounts to symbolic abuse of power. Moreover, more optimistically, perhaps Kramsch's model can inform efforts to create educational interventions to help American students become more aware of the symbolic dimension of their communicative practices abroad (see chapter seven). That is, by encouraging students to interrogate how their deeply personal resonances with the foreign language (what Kramsch calls "desire" [2006, 2009], see chapters five and six) intersect with larger social, cultural and historical symbolic networks, study abroad programs can 'empower' American undergraduates by reconciling them to the fact that their target language interlocutors are similarly oriented to speaking with an "American" (MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Language Learning, 2007). By recognizing the "layered simultaneity" (Blommaert, 2005) of intercultural encounters – and the multiplexity of emotional, aesthetic, cultural, historical, and political layers of significance this implies – American study abroaders may become empowered precisely by being humbled. Finally, Kramsch's model, by emphasizing the competence of speakers with sometimes very limited linguistic and communicative competence in the various 'target' languages they deploy, provides a useful framework for understanding students' capacity to "make do" (de Certeau, 1984) in the foreign language at whatever stage of the language-learning process, both in the classroom and abroad.

Indeed, Kramsch's notion of symbolic competence can be seen as an extension of the work done by the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Language Learning (of which she was a member) on "translingual and transcultural competence" (2007, p. 3). As part of an effort to reconceptualize and revitalize the role of foreign language study in American higher education, this committee recognizes the inadequacy of the native speaker model (Cook, 1999; Davies, 1991; Kramsch, 1993, 1998; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996) and replaces it with an eminently intercultural paradigm in which American students learn to "operate between languages" (2007, pp. 3-4). They write:

Students are educated to function as informed and capable interlocutors with educated native speakers in the target language. They are also trained to reflect on the world and themselves through the lens of another language and culture. They learn to comprehend speakers of the target language as members of foreign

societies and to grasp themselves as Americans – that is, as members of a society that is foreign to others. They also learn to relate to fellow members of their own society who speak languages other than English. This kind of foreign language education systematically teaches differences in meaning, mentality, and worldview as expressed in American English and in the target language. (p. 4)

To my mind, the crux of their argument for rethinking American foreign language study entails two interconnected imperatives – one intra-departmental and one inter-departmental. The first, aimed at departments of foreign language, calls for valorizing and institutionally recognizing the expertise of those faculty who specialize in the teaching/learning of a foreign language. That is, they question the utility of the ascendancy of the foreign literature faculty and suggest that language instructors and applied linguists play a more central role in determining the curricular goals, with special attention paid to “incorporat(ing) cultural inquiry at all levels” (2007:4). The second imperative, aimed at the university as a whole, calls for valorizing and institutionally recognizing the study of foreign languages/cultures as a fundamental element in the undergraduate curriculum, understood within the frame of “humanistic learning” (ibid.). The goal here is to better diffuse the study of foreign languages/cultures across disciplinary boundaries (i.e. academic departments) such that, for example, the ‘study of French’ is the primary, but not exclusive, domain of the ‘French Department.’ This vision offers a resolution of the uneasy situation so often deplored by foreign language and international educators alike: namely, that the late modern American university under-serves its students in terms of developing their foreign language competence because of an institution-wide ossification of departmental autonomy that, at once, disinclines foreign language departments to address students’ non-literary interests in modern languages and inhibits potentially fertile inter-disciplinary and *translingual* academic collaborations.

That is, the committee recognizes that the institutional status quo of American foreign language education is at odds with the linguistic and cultural needs of students and academics – and, by extension, all educated citizens – in an increasingly inter-dependent, globalized world of scholarship, politics, and labor (2007, pp. 1-2). Clearly, study abroad is uniquely poised to aid in the kind of curricular overhaul they recommend. However, given the current participation demographics of American study abroad – i.e. majority social science majors enrolling in short-term, non-immersion programs – the question that remains at present is what kind of competence can we expect today’s undergraduates to develop through a term abroad? Moreover, as program designs shift away from intensive linguistic and cultural immersion and toward shorter, more insulated models, what sort of learning outcomes can we reasonably expect participants to achieve?

### **Program Details**

All four of my focal students were participating in the same American public university’s study abroad program in Paris, France during the fall semester of 2006. Other than the French language courses, which were taught primarily in French, all classes were

conducted in English by seven American and five French faculty and graduate students. Eligible students were required to have no less than one, but no more than three, semesters of college level French. So, while language study was an integral part of this study abroad program, it was not a French language program per se, and none of the incoming students were French majors or minors.

In this regard, however, the program reflects the curriculum design of the vast majority of American study abroad programs. According to the 2009 Open Doors Report published by the Institute of International Education (IIE), 95% of American students who studied abroad in 2006/2007 did so for one semester or less. Moreover, this student population, in being primarily social science majors, represents the majority (33%) of students who studied abroad through this statewide system between the 2000 and 2005 academic years (UOEAP, SM&C Research, 2005). Therefore, in this research project, while I may not have had access to students involved in more language-intensive programs, I will be able to report on the experiences of a highly representative sample of American undergraduates pursuing study abroad.

My research site represents an increasingly popular and, by some accounts, quintessentially American (Coleman, 2000) form of study abroad – the “island” or “enclave” model. Following distinctions originally developed by Goodwin and Nacht (1988), in “enclave” or “island” study abroad programs, unlike traditional “immersion” models, “the home institution sets up a special program, sometimes termed pejoratively an ‘enclave,’ using predominantly local staff and reflecting only to a very limited extent the curriculum and teaching methods of the host country” (p. 42). The historical archetype for such ‘overseas campuses’ is the “self-contained teaching and living centers operated for decades by Stanford University across Western Europe” where the informal motto is allegedly “no hassle, no language” (p. 42).

However, as my participants repeatedly mentioned while discussing their reasons for choosing this program, such island programs do offer some considerable bureaucratic and academic benefits. For example, unlike students taking courses at French universities and other non-American organizations, a student at this program can be sure of the transferability and the quality of their courses taken abroad. While many immersion students in France must petition to have some or all of their courses count toward their degree requirements, these students can resolve all these weighty issues before ever leaving their home campus. Moreover, by requiring all teaching faculty to create and post online their course syllabuses, this program ensures that prospective students (and their advisors) can verify in advance the breadth and depth of the course content. While one may argue that such winnowing of Franco-American academic cultural differences precludes a valuable source of intercultural negotiation (Vande Berg, 2007; Kern, personal communication), programs like this and similar programs within the same statewide system exist precisely to offer a more controlled intercultural environment. Designed for beginner through advanced beginner students of French, this program is geared toward the American-style academic study of selected aspects of French and European history, society, and culture. The implicit assumption seems to be that students



without advanced language skills are better served by the scaffolding of American academic culture in which rigorous intellectual investigation compensates for the loss of the cultural authenticity experienced (with its attendant problems) in more immersion-style programs. In fact, some international educators argue that it is exactly this kind of student-centered intervention that is required to maximize the intercultural/global competency gains of the average American study abroad (Woolf, 2007; Vande Berg, 2007).

In the field of Applied Linguistics there has been considerable research done in an attempt to determine the predictors for linguistic gains in study abroad/foreign immersion (Brecht et al., 1990, 1993, 1995; DeKeyser, 1986, 1991; Huebner, 1991; Freed, 1993, 1995; Schmidt, 1983, 1990), as well as a several studies on what constitutes key elements of “intercultural competence” (Byram & Fleming, 1998; Coleman, 1998; Roberts, 2003) and “mobility capital” (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002, 2003). However, as American study abroad becomes decreasingly oriented toward language learning in favor of the new emphasis on developing “global competence,” so far few researchers have examined how students in these programs actually talk about their ‘global’ experiences during and after their term abroad. Meanwhile, decontextualized student comments are frequently used for marketing purposes and occasionally used as fodder for polemical critiques of American study abroad (Engle & Engle, 2002; Feinberg, 2002).

In this study, my intentions are first and foremost descriptive; that is, I intend to provide as “thick” a description (Geertz, 1975) as possible of my participants’ accounts of study abroad. To this end, I am interested in ecologically disentangling the semiotic and interactive nexus these “co-authorings” (E.M. Bruner, 1986) represent. While my discourse analytical methods ultimately lead me to situate these accounts within a life historical and sociological frame, this is done in the service of my primary interpretive goal of understanding my participants’ communicative practices (Hanks, 1996). By balancing critique with hermeneutic empathy, I hope this study might represent the kind of research called for by one of the most knowledgeable<sup>5</sup> international educators currently working in American study abroad, William Hoffa (2002), who writes:

Given the new skepticism of many campus colleagues who believe that the further study abroad moves away from the full and extended cultural immersion experience, the less successful it will be (even if the courses are ‘OK’), it is especially important to pay more attention to what our students can teach us from their experience. What they mean when they say, along with their predecessors, that living and learning overseas was ‘the best experience of my life,’ ought to be something we listen to and learn from. (p. 72)

In the present study, I will draw on the preceding research in key ways as I assume a discourse analytic and narrative theoretical perspective on American undergraduates’ accounts of study abroad. However, as I mentioned above, I also intend to add an as yet

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<sup>5</sup> Hoffa, William W. (2007). A history of US study abroad: Beginnings to 1965. Special issue of *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*.

unexamined narrative phenomenon in the existing research on study abroad – the “conversational narrative” (Ochs & Capps, 1991).

### **Conversational narratives**

In *Living Narrative*, Ochs and Capps (1991) focus their analysis on the everyday narratives of conversational exchange. They do this for important theoretical reasons. First of all, they believe that these conversational narratives provide exactly the kind of exploratory, contingent, and open-ended negotiations of meaning that literary narratives tend to exclude (to the detriment of an accurate representation of human experience). In fact, Ochs and Capps suggest that literary narratives – in fact all crafted narratives with beginnings, middles, and ends – should be seen as secondary products of the more fundamental, primary conversational narratives that are ‘launched’ in order to collaboratively make sense of unexpected or confusing life events. They argue for seeing “narrative activity as a sense-making *process* rather than as a finished product in which loose ends are knit together into a single storyline” (1991, p. 15). Next, while they recognize the potentially oppressive constraints that conversational interaction can place on individual expression, Ochs and Capps draw on their extensive research in language socialization to assert that conversations with intimate familiars are the privileged sites of the airing of open-ended narratives about problematic and unresolved life events. In this way, conversational narratives provide ideal data for considering the functions of narrative in human existence. Capturing the essence of Bakhtin’s (1981) dialogism, Ochs and Capps situate their study of the human languaging of experience within actual dialogic negotiations of narrative meaning.

### **Post-Structuralist Approaches to the Study of Language and Identity**

In this way, Ochs and Capps bring their study of narrative in line with several key post-structuralist theories of the relationship between language and identity. Rather than viewing identity as something that one *has* – some “authentic nugget of selfhood” (Appiah, 1994) – post-structuralist theorists contend that identity is something that one *does* through active engagement in the social world. However, post-structuralists also recognize that an individual is by no means a *tabula rasa* upon which any identity whatsoever may be inscribed through the processes (primarily linguistic) of identification and differentiation (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004).

Drawing on the work of the structuralist sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1991), these theorists posit fundamental limits on human agency, determined primarily by the affordances inherent in the relationship between a social agent’s “*habitus*” and the various “fields” (Bourdieu, 1977) of action available in a particular social, historical, and political moment. Simply put, *habitus* accounts for what is commonly called one’s ‘social background,’ i.e. the dispositions to action and reaction that are the product of one’s socialization into a particular ‘place’ in society. In Bourdieu’s (1991) model, these social habits represent a sort of repository of linguistic, cultural, and social “capital” (p. 14) that can be drawn upon as one maneuvers through the various positions and position-

takings (i.e. “fields”) that make up the social world. While Bourdieu does not dismiss social agents’ ability to manipulate, improvise, or otherwise increase their capital, his model is designed as a heuristic for understanding the conservative forces of social (re)production. For Bourdieu, then, the relationship between language and identity must be seen as interdependent only insofar as one’s social position authorizes one’s right to speak, rather than seeing one’s speech itself as socially constitutive of a particular identity.

However, some theorists, operating from a more post-structuralist perspective, critique what they see as the social reproductionist and deterministic elements of Bourdieu’s practice theory (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Butler, 1997; Derrida, 1988; Kramsch, 2009; Rampton, 2006;). These theorists accept the relationship between linguistic habitus and field; however, they contend that social agents have the capacity to performatively (Austin, 1962; Butler, 1997) resist and reconfigure this relationship in ways that disrupt the reproduction of the status quo. As a result, these researchers often examine the social practices of agents at the margins of speech communities. For example, Bucholtz and Hall (2004) illustrate how agents with limited social and linguistic capital (e.g. poor black homosexual men) consciously critique their societal position by performing ‘privileged’ identities (e.g. rich white heterosexual women) during drag shows. These performances, while not reconfiguring the social hierarchy itself, allow these alienated social agents to expose the ideological (and thus theoretically arbitrary) ground of the “marked” and “unmarked” racial and sexual identities that fuel their systemic social alienation and stigmatization (Bucholtz, 2001; Ochs, 1992).

The potentially empowering capacity of performing multiple identities is examined from a language learning perspective in the work of Bonny Norton-Pierce (1995, 1997, 2000). In her study of adult immigrant language learners of English in Canada, Norton-Pierce shows how her informants managed to draw on their multiple identities (e.g. mother, head of the household, cosmopolitan citizen) to empower themselves in situations of domination and humiliation by native English-speaking Canadians. For example, one learner, who was being disrespected by her significantly younger co-workers, succeeded in overcoming this asymmetrical power relation by tapping into her social identity as a mother in order to assert herself as an elder deserving deference.

One key limitation of Norton-Pierce’s work, however, is that while she claims to operate under post-structuralist and (feminist) post-modernist formulations of identity as “multiple, a site of struggle, and changing over time” (1995, p. 14), in fact the very identities that Norton-Pierce’s informants are said to draw on in these situations seem to be themselves defined primarily by their recognizability in the social sphere. As result, these identities could very well also represent imposed and static ways of being that oppress rather than enable, stifle rather than embolden. Moreover, by defining social identity according to such static and *structural* criteria, Norton-Pierce’s model fails to fully incorporate its own post-structuralist epistemological assumptions. That is, if all identities are “multiple, a site of struggle, and changing over time” (p. 14), then these

identities ‘exist’ only in an ongoing process of social construction and therefore are defined situationally and discursively rather than structurally.

In this way, Norton-Pierce’s model of social identity at work in SLA effectively removes language from the discussion of language and power by taking too far the Bourdieusian equation of linguistic and social practice<sup>6</sup>. When language becomes inextricable from social action, it is exactly at the level of individual agency that so much is lost. That is, if the language one speaks is seen as only having a life in the social realm of discourse, then the truly subjective reactions to, and reappropriations of, language are rendered analytically invisible. When someone learns a second language, she acquires new ways of speaking and ways of being – i.e. of *acting in* the world – while simultaneously developing new means of *acting upon* herself in her subjective experience of the world. In order to fully account for learner’s experiences in SLA, this two-way-street reversibility (Wertsch 1985b, p. 81) of linguistic meaning-making processes must be adequately addressed.

While Norton-Pierce’s model falls short in this crucial regard, Claire Kramsch (1989, 1993, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2009) offers a post-structuralist approach that posits second language learning as the site of the synergistic point of contact between social constraints and subjective creativity. Kramsch (1993) sees L2 learners creating a “third place” (pp. 233-247) where the hermeneutic recursivity of Self-Other relations affords unique opportunities for the language learner to act upon the world while the world acts upon the learner.

In *Context and Culture in Language Teaching* (1993), Kramsch places cultural difference at the center of the language learning enterprise. However, for Kramsch, the important aspect of cultural difference is not the potential for translation and consensus across cultural boundaries, but rather the boundaries themselves – the incommensurable and irreconcilable differences and contradictions that, since they cannot be resolved, must instead be tolerated, or, better yet, left open to continued dialogue and respectful disagreement (1993, p. 14). Drawing on Bakhtin’s (1981) notions of “dialogism” and “heteroglossia,” Kramsch argues that one’s “voice” is the result of the individual appropriation and historical accumulation of others’ voices, i.e. that the ‘self’ is constituted in the moment of enunciation according the speaking subject’s (mostly unconscious) selection and animation of ‘other’s’ voices. Kramsch applies this to second language learning by first noting that this dialogism affords the potential for a “double voiced discourse” (Bakhtin 1986, p. 108) wherein a speaker’s utterances result not from conforming to any ‘single voiced,’ normative, prescriptive discourses (e.g. the so-called ‘native speaker’ norms), but rather from the dynamical tension between the speaker’s practical purposes, intended meanings, etc. and the various ‘voices’ available to the speaker in the larger “linguosphere” (Slobin, personal communication).

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<sup>6</sup> Here I am drawing primarily on Bourdieu’s (1991) assertion that the performative efficacy of linguistic practice is the product of the speaker’s social position vis-à-vis the social situation (his/her “delegation”); thus, language unto itself has no socially performative potential whatsoever until it is animated by the “social magic” of authorization.

For the second language learner, then, who finds himself at the intersection of two or more irreconcilably different social semiotic systems, the saliency of the dialogic nature of language is drastically heightened. Often cited (and frequently dismissed) as transient instances of ‘culture shock,’ this confrontation of meaning-making systems is reconfigured and repositioned in Kramsch’s model as the enduring driving force behind language learning, seen as “a systematic *apprenticeship of difference*” (1993, p. 235, italics in original). In this view, the learner is positioned on neither side of a cultural boundary, but rather on the boundary itself. This position, though precarious and often derided as ‘fence sitting,’ exists in neither the first place of the L1/C1 nor the second place of the L2/C2, but in a “third place.”

This notion of the third place turns the traditional model of communication on its head by inserting both interpsychological and intrapsychological intercultural communication within a hermeneutic dialectic that guarantees not translation, not compatibility, but merely unending dialogue on insurmountable differences of meaning (1993, p. 47). Borrowing from Fiske (1989a), Kramsch maintains that struggle, not mutual understanding, is the only result of the confrontation of differing meaning-making systems, or cultures:

New knowledge is not an evolutionary improvement on what precedes it; rather, new knowledges enter adversarial relationships with older, more established ones, challenging their position in the power play of understandings, and in such confrontations new insights can be provoked. (Fiske, 1989a, p. 194)

Like the bottom-up producers of popular culture<sup>7</sup>, second language learners must struggle to carve out their particular third place in between the various “linguacultures” (Kramsch, 1993, p. 30) at their disposal. It is a “liminal experience” (p. 30) between two or more worldviews where the learner realizes not only the differences between the social voices of cultures, but also the differences *between his personal voice and any and all social voices*.

It is an experience of marginality, to be sure, where the naïve monolingual mappings of word and world are dissolved; therefore, the third place is often an initially troubling, uncomfortable, or ‘shocking’ experience. However, as Kramsch maintains, the third place is ultimately everyone’s place insofar as we all must come to terms with the ruptures between our idiosyncratic ‘take’ on the world and those of the various inherently normative speech communities in which we participate. Of course, when norms become naturalized (Bourdieu 1991; Bucholtz & Hall 2004; Fairclough 1989), the distinctions that differentiate and stratify the social world are no longer recognized as arbitrary and thus execute a “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1991) that often imbues the experience of marginality with suffering. The second language learner, says Kramsch, is sensitized to

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<sup>7</sup> Fiske’s (1989) key example of this is the way in which mass produced commodities, such as blue jeans, are deliberately re-designed (ripping, fading, bleaching, etc.) by consumers in an effort to personalize such inherently impersonal commodities.

this arbitrariness such that, instead of seeing the margin as a space of pain and confusion, he or she may capitalize on the “privilege” of interculturality (Kramsch, 1998).

Rather than feeling ‘neither here nor there,’ the language learner can embrace the polysemy and uncertainty of linguacultural practice, and in doing so reap the communicative, moral and aesthetic benefits of a multilingual subjectivity (Kramsch, 2009). All in all, Kramsch is most interested in accounting for the particular social semiotic affordances of SLA. Her work on roles, voices, and third places is ultimately grounded in her belief that, for the second language learner, issues of language and identity can be best understood if we first account for the specifically linguistic identities that emerge as learners experience the cognitive, epistemic, affective, and aesthetic shocks and elations of conflicting sign systems.

### **Conclusion and Chapter Outline**

Similarly, in the present study I will approach the analysis of student accounts of study abroad from a perspective that sees these communicative practices as both deeply personal and fundamentally social processes. That is, study abroad offers first hand intercultural experiences that, once reflected upon in autobiographical narrative, may provoke insights into the contours of students’ “third places.” As learners narrate their unique experiences of living and learning in France, it is assumed that they will, to some degree, provide evidence of an interrogation of the tension between subjective agency and sociocultural (and political) constraints. In this way, these accounts may shed light on essential yet ephemeral aspects of the transformation of self-identity, seen as “the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives” (Giddens, 1991, p. 5). To this end, I will explore to what degree these students’ interview narratives conform structurally and functionally to “conversational narratives” (Ochs & Capps, 1991) typically found in more spontaneous, informal, everyday dialogues. As mentioned above, this focus of my research project is predicated on the hypothesis that these conversational narratives represent a site of the linguistically-mediated, interactive negotiation of learners’ evolving self-identity during a study abroad term in Paris.

However, this study is not exclusively focused on second language learning. To be sure, these focal students studied French (quite intensively, in fact, for the first three weeks) and lived on their own (“immersed”, as it were) in Paris. However, as my fieldnotes and interview data suggest, many of their most salient learning experiences during their term abroad tended to be deeply personal in nature and, more often than not, experienced in English. This is not to say that these students represent the kind of self-obsessed, interculturally indifferent and/or oblivious, “ugly Americans” so often vilified in the more trenchant critiques, popular and academic, of American study abroad (Engle & Engle, 2002; Feinberg 2002; Lander, 2008; see chapter four for review). True, the students in this study were not, first and foremost, in France to learn French, and thus stood little chance of occupying the kind of “third place” (Kramsch, 1993) the struggles of intensive language learning afford. Yet they also were not living in total isolation from the French language, culture, and society; they were not hermetically sealed within

the bounds of an “American bubble.”<sup>8</sup> As Citron (2003) observed in his study of American study abroad in Spain, these Americans in Paris moved within a kind of “third culture,” not very ‘French’ but not purely ‘American,’ the product of the unique ecology of this “island” (Goodwin & Nacht, 1988) study abroad program. To continue the ecological metaphor (Kramsch, 2002; van Lier, 2000), the affordances of this third culture, while unarguably varied, seemed fundamentally constrained by the ecosocial dynamics (Lemke, 2002) at work in a study abroad program designed not for the purposes of language education, but *international education*.

In the next chapter, I outline my methods of data collection and analysis, with an emphasis on my use of “semi-structured interviews” and the attendant problem of interpreting autobiographical data. In chapter three, I provide a selective outline of American applied linguistics research on study abroad, with a special focus on recent qualitative studies addressing the issue of learner identity. Chapter four includes an overview of international education research, commentary, and policy statements, followed by a brief outline of Bourdieusian (1984) and neo-Marxist (Skeggs, 2004) sociological critiques of the identity-transforming effects of global mobility. In chapters five and six, I summarize the key findings of my four case studies, including a discussion of how best to account for these deeply personal accounts of their term abroad. In the final chapter, I discuss the implications of the study and offer a sample syllabus for a course designed to encourage students in non-immersion study abroad programs to more actively and consistently recognize and negotiate cultural differences, understood from both a structuralist and post-structuralist perspective.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.worldhum.com/weblog/item/students\\_abroad\\_escaping\\_the\\_american\\_bubble\\_39071105/](http://www.worldhum.com/weblog/item/students_abroad_escaping_the_american_bubble_39071105/)

## Chapter Two

### Methods: Data Collection and Analysis

#### Participant Selection and Research Sites

The participant population was limited to students, 18 years old or older, participating in the same American study abroad program in Paris, France during the fall semester of 2006. Invitations to participate (Appendix 1) were sent to all 55 students in the program, with four students ultimately agreeing to participate in the study. Students in this semester-long program in French and European Studies were enrolled in one French language class and two to three additional courses in the humanities (Art History, Literature) or social sciences (History, Political Science, Sociology). As I mentioned in chapter one, eligible students were required to have no less than one, but no more than three, semesters of college level French. As such, most students in this program were functioning at around the beginner to advanced beginner level, and none of the incoming students were French majors or minors.

While the sponsoring American university system was uniquely responsible for all course content and instruction, the bulk of the facility (including accommodations) and logistical issues were managed in collaboration with the neighboring private international education corporation (hereafter “TravelEd”).<sup>9</sup> Based in San Francisco, CA, this company has study abroad program offices in Paris, Florence, London, Madrid, and Rome. It works with over 50 American universities; however, in Paris the majority of the fall semester students were from the same statewide university system (approximately 60% in 2006). In 2006, the Paris office had seven staff members who coordinated most of the day-to-day activities from classes and guest lectures on site, to social events (e.g. dinner at a Moroccan restaurant) and field trips throughout Paris and France (e.g. weekend trip to Normandy). The program center and TravelEd occupy adjacent buildings in a 19<sup>th</sup> century courtyard in the 11<sup>th</sup> arrondissement near the bustling Place de la Bastille. The program has three full-time staff members: a Center Director (faculty from one of the campuses in the statewide system with a three year tenure), an Office Manager (an American originally from Marin, CA), and an IT/Academic Manager (an Australian/Italian, who resigned at the end of the semester).

Students arrived in Paris on August 17, 2006. They participated in a language practicum from August, 22<sup>nd</sup> to September 9<sup>th</sup>, and classes officially started on September 11<sup>th</sup>. In the fall semester of 2006, this program had 55 students from across the statewide system, with roughly 50% hailing from only two campuses (23 students). During the initial language practicum, all of these students lived together in the nearby dormitory owned and operated by TravelEd (26 students would remain in the dorm for the semester, 29 moved to homestays). Most students lived in double rooms during these first three

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<sup>9</sup> A pseudonym.



weeks, but once the homestay students moved out, all of the remaining students lived on their own in studio apartments.

### **My role as participant observer.**

While my work as a Teaching Assistant (TA) did not begin until regular courses started after the three-week language intensive program, I also worked as one of two Resident Advisors (RA) in the dormitory, so I was one of the first staff members to meet and interact with the incoming students. Like most American college RAs, my primary responsibilities were to assist students in emergencies and to maintain dormitory quiet hours, overnight guest, and alcohol consumption policies. After 11:00 p.m., students were expected to keep their apartment doors closed, have no non-resident guests, and keep noise volume at a level inaudible through the closed door. While alcohol was not strictly forbidden in the dormitory, students were told that all recognizable alcohol containers would be seized on sight by TravelEd staff. I was on duty only two nights per week and one weekend per month, as I shared my job with a full-time Accent staff member, Magda<sup>10</sup> (a Belarusian university student, in her early 30s, living in Paris for five years), who worked the rest of the time. In addition to policing student conduct, the RA on duty was on call (my phone number was posted on signs throughout the dormitory) to handle the frequent student lock-outs. The dormitory doors automatically locked whenever they were closed, so students often locked themselves out of their rooms. Since lock-outs typically happened at odd hours, TravelEd charged students an inconvenience fee of 50 € (euros) for this 24 hour service. However, I rarely collected this fee, which soon earned me the reputation of the ‘good cop’ RA in contrast to ‘bad cop’ Magda, who was much less lenient in this regard. While this no doubt undermined my authority as an RA, I believe it helped me in my role as researcher insofar as all of the students who self-selected to participate in my study were dormitory students (two were also my students)<sup>11</sup>. As I will discuss in more detail below (and chapter six), this familiarity also seems to have had significant effects on the structure and content of the interviews themselves.

Of course, this set of four self-selected students represents a convenience sample insofar as I could not ensure a representative sample of the broader population of students. However, since participation was strictly voluntary, I could accept only those students who elected to participate. Moreover, while it is impossible to generalize from this sample of students, my interactions with the rest of the program participants through my work as an RA and an instructor suggest that these four focal students shared many of the same goals and attitudes as the majority of their peers. That is, while I recognize the many limitations of these case studies, I believe it is fair to assume that some of the discernable commonalities may have been shared by the larger participant population.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

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<sup>10</sup> All the names other than my own are pseudonyms.

For this dissertation project, I primarily employed the ethnographic methods of participant observation (field notes) and semi-structured interviews (audio taped, during and post-program). In these “semi-structured interviews” (Smith, 1995), I used some pre-scripted questions/prompts during interviews, yet I allowed and encouraged the informants to chart their own narrative course within the thematic boundaries of my question set. As an ethnographer, I am interested in gleaning an “emic” (participant-relevant [Pike, 1967]) perspective on the experience of study abroad in France. To this end, while I came to the study with some fundamental questions, I also remained open to the topics and concerns that my informants found most pressing and relevant to my lines of inquiry. Although I still used my interview scripts as topic guidelines, the interviews were very informal and I rarely posed any of my pre-scripted questions directly; my topic control was more subtle, with the topics seemingly just ‘coming up’ in the course of the conversation, and my only obvious recourse to the script typically occurred toward the very end of the interview when I wanted to verify that we had ‘covered’ all the topics I had intended to discuss. Still, I understand that even this most “open-ended” interview technique is embedded within an asymmetrical power relation that must be considered in any analysis of its speech data (Briggs, 1988; see below).

All interviews in Paris took place in my apartment in the dormitory. Lola and Veronica were interviewed twice, once in early November and once in early December. Claire and Audrey were interviewed once in Paris, both in late November. I also conducted four follow-up interviews after their return to their home campuses. Two of these follow-up interviews were done in person: one in my office on campus (Veronica, 03/20/07) and one at the participant’s apartment (Lola, 02/03/07). The other two interviews were recorded remotely: one over the telephone (Claire, 04/04/07) and one online using Skype software (Audrey, 07/20/07). I also telephone interviewed the French professor with whom I’d worked at the program center (09/20/07), and I interviewed the founding director of the study abroad program in person at his home campus (Smith interview, 09/25/08).

Like most American students today, my participants led very active lives online, communicating to friends and family back home and throughout the world through email, Skype, and social networking sites like Myspace and Facebook. One participant (Claire) told me in a follow-up interview that she spent an average of one hour per day online during her term in Paris. All of my participants granted me access to their Myspace and/or Facebook sites, where each has one or more photo albums devoted exclusively to their time in Paris (containing upwards of 100 photographs in each). One of my participants (Veronica) also maintained a web log, or “blog,” to which she posted on a roughly bi-weekly basis. She provided me with access to all of her blog posts during and regarding her term abroad.

While in Paris, I collected fieldnotes across various sites: the dormitory, the program center, TravelEd classrooms (my section and the professor’s lecture), field trips (Père Lachaise, L’Opéra Garnier, Belleville, Sacré Cœur/Montmartre, Parc de la Villette), the popular hang outs (the Accent/UC Center courtyard, local cafés, bakeries, bars, open air

and super-markets), three concerts (The Walkmen, Peaches, Junior Boys), one participant's birthday dinner party (in the restaurant near the dormitory), and the annual Techno Parade at the Place de la Bastille.

I also amassed a substantial collection of documents from the Paris program center and the TravelEd Paris office. I collected copies of all of the program center syllabuses, including those from the pre-semester language intensive program, as well as field trip schedules, attendance/grading policies, and student codes of conduct. I also kept copies of all non-confidential email correspondence from the program center or TravelEd staff regarding student conduct issues and/or dormitory life.

### **A caveat on a shift in data collection and analysis.**

As I mentioned in chapter one, I began this ethnographic study with the intention of documenting and analyzing student narratives of their experiences of enculturation and second language learning during study abroad in France. I had also originally intended to document the more quotidian, open-ended, interactive stories that informants tell in the course of their everyday life in France. Both of these initial goals eventually gave way, however, as it became clear that my initial focus on language learning was far too narrow, and when recording everyday interactions proved logistically unfeasible. Surprisingly, in transcribing the interviews, I found that some of the participants' narratives seemed to exhibit the form and fulfill the function of the kind "conversational narratives" (Ochs & Capps, 1991) I had hoped to catch on tape in more informal speech events. As I will explain in more detail below (and chapter six), one of the distinguishing features of a conversational narrative as defined by Ochs and Capps is that it is co-constructed in real-time dialogue *between social intimates*. As such, it is surprising to find these narratives in a speech event as formal as the research interview. While these narratives appear most strikingly in one participant's (Lola) responses, all of the interviews contain some conversational pseudo-narratives or "small stories"<sup>12</sup> (Bamberg, 2006b; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2005).

Unlike the monologic narratives most often collected in social science research, conversational narratives are not launched by their narrators to explain what has happened to them in the past (cf. Labov, 1972, 1997; Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Schegloff, 1991). Rather, these narratives are aired as a bid for an interlocutor's help in making sense of past events. As much of the existing qualitative research on study

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<sup>12</sup> "...we have been employing 'small stories' as an umbrella-term that captures a gamut of under-represented narrative activities, such as tellings of ongoing events, future or hypothetical events, shared (known) events, but also allusions to (previous) tellings, deferrals of tellings, and refusals to tell. These tellings are typically small when compared to the pages and pages of transcript of interview narratives. On a metaphorical level though, *small stories* is somewhat of an antidote formulation to a longstanding tradition of *big stories* (cf. "grand narratives", Lyotard, 1984): the term locates a level and even an aesthetic for the identification and analysis of narrative: the smallness of talk, where fleeting moments of narrative orientation to the world (Hymes, 1996) can be easily missed out on by an analytical lens which only takes fully-fledged ("big") stories as the prototype from where the analytic vocabulary is supposed to emerge." (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2005, p. 5).

abroad shows (Brecht et al., 1995; Kinginger, 2004, 2008; Pellegrino-Aveni, 1998b, 2005; Polanyi, 1995; Wilkinson, 1998), student narratives of their study abroad experiences often relate exactly these kind of problematic, perplexing, and/or vexing experiences. In this study, however, I expand the analytical focus on the content of the narratives themselves in order to include a description of how these stories are interactively accomplished within the speech event of a “semi-structured” research interview (Smith, 1995; see chapter six for analyses).

### **Analytical Foci and the Relation Between Language and Identity**

With some minor exceptions, the bulk of the interview excerpts analyzed in chapters five and six were drawn from the in-country interviews. The reasons for this decision are both methodological and analytical. First of all, while the follow-up interviews varied widely according to the time, place, and medium of communication, all of the face-to-face interviews in Paris were face-to-face, took place in one location, and occurred roughly within the same month. Second, in the early stages of data analysis, the salience of the deeply personal consequences of these students’ sojourns eclipsed any consideration of the more academic outcomes of their term abroad. As a result, I shifted my attention to their *in situ* accounts in order to focus on their more immediate reactions and interpretations. Finally, while I did discover some interesting shifts in the ways in which some of these respondents evaluated and narrated their study abroad experiences post-sojourn, this was not the case for all participants, thus eliminating the prospect of any analyses across case studies.

In chapter five, I focus on how the form and content of these speakers’ interview accounts provide textual evidence of more deeply personal processes of meaning-making. Issues of context – from the situational to the cultural – are largely excluded in favor of close linguistic and intertextual analyses (Fairclough, 1992). I recognize that this kind of close textual or “content analysis” is increasingly viewed with suspicion by discourse analysts and narrative theorists (see below; cf. Freeman, 1999). However, the symbolic complexities of these accounts led me to first consider these comments in relative isolation from the more interactional and conventional constraints that impinged upon their production. That is, while I eventually turn my attention to the ways in which these students’ accounts represent interactively-negotiated “acts of identity”, i.e. active efforts at identifying with recognizable social groups/personae, I first examine the degree of idiosyncratic creativity displayed as these social agents negotiate, play with, idealize, and “mythologize” (Barthes, 1954; Kramsch, 2009) such ready-made identities. Moreover, this kind of “poetic construction of selfhood” (Freeman, 1999) is central to my discussion of the utility of the post-structuralist notion of “subjectivity” (Kramsch, 2009, 2010; chapters five, six and seven) for re-conceptualizing the educational products and processes of a term abroad.

Researchers interested in studying identity have argued that “identity” is both a product and process of lived interaction, i.e. that it is enacted (LePage & Tabouret-Keller, 1985) via more or less agential intersubjective negotiations, assumptions, and impositions (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Likewise, ethnographers of communication,

conversation analysts, and sociolinguists studying autobiographical narrative have emphasized the need for analysts of spoken interaction to consider the tension between convention and invention in even the most seemingly ‘natural’ and ‘conversational’ exchanges (Atkinson, 1996; Briggs, 1986; Linde, 1993; Ochs & Capps, 2001; Pavlenko, 2006). Most of these scholars operate within a more structuralist orientation to language use in which communicative events are understood as fundamentally constrained by community norms that exert an enduring influence on participants’ communicative strategies of both production and interpretation.

However, a poststructuralist perspective on communication, while emphasizing the ability of speakers to draw on symbolic resources (e.g. identities) that the linguistics of community would consider ‘off limits’, also underscores that speakers’ creative capacity to do so *in interaction* is fundamentally constrained by micro and macro contextual conditions of possibility (Blommaert, 2005; Foucault, 1978). That is, the poststructuralist focus on performance (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Butler, 1997), (im)posture (Kramsch, 2010), stylization (Rampton, 2006), and other forms of in situ self-identity construction is grounded in the understanding that all such performances are co-constructed social accomplishments in which the ‘performer’ and ‘audience’ (whether face-to-face or imagined) interactively negotiate the more or less successful or “felicitous” (Austin, 1962) reception of the performance. In other words, if identity/subjectivity is seen as a discursive accomplishment, then it is necessarily seen as vulnerable to more or less enduring – if not *a priori* – conventions and power relations that exert limitations on the sayable in communicative practice.

### **Critical Perspectives on the Research Interview and the Use of Autobiographical Data in Social Science Research**

The anthropologist Charles Briggs (1986) offers some useful suggestions for how to account for the interactive negotiations of meaning within research interviews. First, Briggs cautions against interpreting interview data as purely referential texts without a systematic consideration of the “the way in which interview data reflect both the events described and the context of the interview itself” (p. 9). Building on Austin’s (1962) discussion of the “descriptive fallacy” that assumes that all human language use is geared toward the exchange of information that is merely true or false, Briggs (1986) points out that social scientists working with interview data too often assume that “(w)hat is said is seen as a reflection of what is ‘out there’ rather than as an interpretation which is jointly produced by interviewer and respondent” (p. 3). As a linguistic anthropologist, Briggs is fundamentally concerned with elucidating how culture, understood as meaning-making that is the product of an individual’s active appropriation of collectively-shaped “interpretive frames”, is co-constructed in situated communicative practices (Hanks, 1996).

As a result, he insists on recognizing the research interview as a culturally specific “speech event” whose “rules of use” (Hymes, 1972) may not be shared equally by both interviewer and interviewee. Of course, this applies most directly to cross-cultural fieldwork; however, Briggs insists that even researchers working within their own speech

communities must demonstrate how interpretive congruency is jointly accomplished through turns-at-talk, rather than simply assuming that respondents are interpreting the interview exchange in the same manner as the researcher. Moreover, because the “interview” is such a “complex and multifaceted” (1986, p. 18) speech event, researchers must be sensitive to possible mis-interpretations and mismatches between interviewers’ and respondents’ understanding of the interactive goals and other “metacommunicative norms” (p. 6) at play throughout the interaction. To do otherwise, argues Briggs, is to ignore the potentially shifting and contradictory orientations of both interviewer and respondent toward ‘what is going on’ during the research interview.

Borrowing from Hymes’ (1972, 1974) ethnography of communication, Briggs suggests that analysts consider the totality of the interview transcript in order to attend to patterns of both theme and interaction, with special attention paid to shifts in “key” and “genre”<sup>13</sup> as potential indices of speakers’ (re)orientations to the meaning of the ongoing interaction. Heeding these “contextualization cues” (Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz, 1976) provide the analyst with invaluable connections between text and context and help analytically elucidate exactly the kinds of shifts in “footing” (Goffman, 1955, 1981) and subject positioning that poststructuralists emphasize in their conceptualization of identity as a discursive accomplishment/performance.

Critics of poststructuralist notions of identity as a self-construction often decry the lack of attention paid to the interactive and conventional dimensions of this social construction. The anthropologist Paul Atkinson (1997), for example, argues that social scientists who consider identity-work too monologically are making crucial methodological and epistemological errors. First, by ignoring the situated context of speaking, they are occluding the interactive negotiations inherent to all dialogue and the larger context of culture that provides both interviewer and interviewee with narrative scripts (see Brown [2001] on “forced narratives”) and prototypical social identities.

This is particularly dangerous, Atkinson cautions, in late-modern Western societies where the ascendancy of therapeutic modes and norms of “self-expression” endorse “the romantic image of the interior self – a self that is anterior to the realm of social action” (1997, p. 342; see also Cameron, 2000). Within these “interview societies” (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997), the interview operates as a “transcontextual technique” (Cameron, 2000; Fairclough, 1992) in which communicative norms and interpretive frames from one discourse (e.g. therapeutic discourse) are transferred across diverse speech events. As a result, argues Atkinson, the social scientist must account for the larger cultural forces that shape informants’ accounts rather than uncritically celebrating the interview as the ideal method for uncovering “authentic” selves. Citing Foucault’s notion of the “technology of the confessional” (1978), Atkinson suggests that as people become increasingly pre-disposed to relating their life stories as deeply personal “full disclosures”, scientists who use these stories as data must recognize the ritualistic – i.e. cultural and conventional –

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<sup>13</sup> Part of Hymes’s (1974) SPEAKING analytical framework for the analysis of speech events, “key” is defined as the “tone, manner, or spirit” of the speech event or act (1974: 57), and “genre” is the type of conventionally-determined speech event or act.

dimensions of such autobiographical accounts. To do otherwise, Atkinson suggests, generates analyses of autobiographical accounts that “float in a social vacuum” (1997, p. 339) and render invisible the conventionality of all social action:

We are, for instance, surrounded by a culture that stresses and rewards self-revelation and autobiographical work. [...] Autobiographical accounts and self-revelations are as conventional and as artful as any other mode of representation. We sell short ourselves and the possibility of systematic social analysis if we implicitly assume that autobiographical accounts or narratives of personal experience grant us untrammelled access to a realm of hyperauthenticity. (p. 341)

In chapter six, I focus precisely on the tensions that emerge between the more structurally-defined identities and the more personally-negotiated subjectivities that these interviewees and I co-construct in the course of their interviews. While I recognize the potential for social action to reproduce social agents’ positions within larger/longer/slower social processes, I also embrace the poststructuralist perspective that this reproduction is by no means an *a priori* given. That is, if all identity is a social construction, then this construction is vulnerable to more or less conscious contestations and performances in situated social practice. So, in turning my attention to interaction, I do so with the assumption that all social action is “an intricate process of imposition, collusion and struggle in which people invoke, avoid or reconfigure the cultural and symbolic capital attendant on identities with different degrees of purchase and accessibility in particular situations” (Rampton, 2006, p. 24).

### **The Research Interview as Speech Event**

I retain this blended perspective in my appraisal of my primary method of data collection: the research interview. As I mentioned above, in this study I adopted the use of “semi-structured” or “open-ended” interviews. Unlike the traditional fully-scripted interviews in which respondents answer only a prescribed sequence of questions, semi-structured interviews utilize a set of pre-scripted questions, but of a more general, open-ended type designed to create topics of discussion within which respondents are more or less free to change/add topics and digress along thematic lines as they see fit. In practice, this typically led to long periods of discussion between scripted questions, with my introducing the next scripted question either more ‘naturally’ without marking it as ‘the next question’ or in a more marked manner when the preceding discussion seemed to be waning.

I mention this methodological point not to suggest that these interviews were necessarily more conversational and thus yielded truly spontaneous, informal, and/or ‘authentic’ speech. However, I also do not want to characterize these speech events in strictly structural terms, with speakers’ roles, goals, and interpretive frames pre-determined by conventional and institutional constraints. Instead, I see the research interview, as a type of speech event, yielding multiple and shifting interactional affordances according to the similarly shifting degrees of conventionality and spontaneity co-constructed throughout

the course of each interview. For example, while the larger situational context of the 'research interview' necessarily rendered my respondents' speech more self-conscious and performative, the consequences of this "recipient design" (Garfinkel, 1967) do not merely reproduce the institutional roles of "researcher" and "informant". In fact, in several cases, this self-consciousness yields a degree of artfulness and performance that function as both the products and processes of respondent-initiated breaks with the more conventional goals, keys, and genres of the research interview. Moreover, paradoxically, the interviewees with whom I was less socially and institutionally familiar tended both to exert more control over our interaction *and* to share much more personal biographical and psychological information. To account for this, it is necessary to recognize both the more durable and the emergent social semiotic resources through which these interviewees discursively responded to the exigencies and affordances co-constructed across turns-at-talk.

In chapter six, I will limit my analyses to the first interviews I conducted with all of my focal students. Following Hymes's (1974) analytical framework for describing speech events, I do this primarily to establish the rough commonalities of "setting", "participants", "ends", "act sequence", "key", "instrumentalities", "norms", and "genre" that apply to all of the interviews before moving into an analysis of the particularities of each case study.

### **Setting.**

My studio apartment in the student dormitory. All of the studio apartments were more or less identical, in terms of lay-out and furnishings: one main room with futon (folded into a couch by day, bed by night), a small island table with two wooden stools, a desk (with my computer and books), and a small kitchenette (one counter with two-plate electric range and sink, microwave mounted above sink and mini-fridge built in beneath the electric range). Our interview took place at the table, with my tape recorder and digital recorder, two water glasses and water bottle, pack of cigarettes, ashtray, and my interview script.

### **Participants.**

One interviewer (the author) and one interviewee. Although all of the interviewees lived in the dormitory where I worked as a Resident Advisor, two of the interviewees (Claire and Audrey) also knew me in my capacity as their Graduate Student Instructor for a course on French political history and sociology offered by the study abroad program. Additionally, in my invitation to participate in the study (Appendix 1), I had identified myself as a Ph.D. student in Education from a well-known public research university in California. Two of the interviewees (Lola and Veronica) also attended this university.

### **Ends.**



In the same invitation to participate, I identified the purpose of my research as “concerning the negotiation of multiple languages and multiple cultures during your semester here in Paris...in order 1) to help better prepare future generations of study abroad students and 2) to gain a better theoretical knowledge of how multilingual people adapt to (and appropriate for themselves) a new culture” (Appendix #). At the first meeting, however, I explained that I was interested in hearing about any aspects or experiences that they were inclined to discuss. I also explained that while I had specific questions, they were free to bring up new topics or digress in any new direction as they saw fit.

### **Act Sequence.**

Although this varied widely across interviews, due to my “semi-structured” approach, I did have a set list of nine pre-scripted questions (Appendix 2) that I used to guide the discussion. Also, prior to the beginning of each recorded interview, I asked the student to sign the consent form which indicated their agreement to participate in the study as well as the purposes for which they would allow the audio recordings and transcripts to be used (Appendix 1).

### **Key: the tone, manner, or spirit of speech.**

This was much more variable across interviews, given, among other factors, the degree of familiarity that I had established with each interviewee prior to the first interview. As I was keen on eliciting as much talk as possible, I generally adopted a fairly emphatic and inquisitive tone, with minimal evaluative or instructive feedback. That said, with each new pre-scripted question posed, the tone shifts toward the more formal and interviewer-directed. As I will describe in more detail below, there were also salient key shifts as interviewees transitioned into different speech genres, e.g. personal narratives and gossip.

### **Instrumentalities: forms and styles of speech.**

Overall, the interviews maintained a more or less casual register, aside from occasional shifts into more formal registers, especially when I employed more academic language in my pre-scripted questions. However, as my preceding and proceeding analyses demonstrate, I adopted a rather informal tone in most of my comments and questions, avoiding for the most part technical language and generally utilizing a good deal of colloquialisms and other elements of more informal conversational discourse.

### **Norms: social rules governing the event and the participants' actions and reactions.**

The over-arching frame of the research interview imposed clear speaking roles, with the interviewees yielding ultimate control of topic initiating and transitioning to the interviewer. However, given the semi-structured organization and informal tone of the interactions overall, there is some evidence to suggest that interviewees bring more

common, non-scientific cultural frames regarding the normative purpose and content of these interviews (see Atkinson & Silverman, 1997, and above on contemporary America as an “interview society”).

### **Genre: the kind of speech act or event.**

Given the “complex and multi-faceted” (Briggs, 1986) nature of the research interview, as well as the influence of interviewees’ preconceived notions of the purpose of all interviews, these interviews show a considerable amount of variability of speech genres (e.g. narrative, gossip). As I will address in more detail in chapter six, some of these shifts of genre function to re-orient the interaction in ways that are more or less subsumed under the macro-frame of the “research interview”.

### **My role**

As will become apparent in the data analysis chapters (five and six), most of these focal students felt very comfortable sharing deeply personal details of their life during these research interviews. While I attempt to account for this fact through a thorough analysis of the subjective dimension of their accounts, it seems necessary to address my own subjective orientation to these respondents, the program, and study abroad in general. First of all, like many applied linguists conducting research on study abroad, I have had my own positive experiences with study abroad for language learning purposes, and I am interested in empirically documenting how and why study abroad is such an effective means of achieving advanced proficiency in a foreign language. However, also like many applied linguists in this field, I participated in the more traditional Junior Year Abroad (JYA) model, living with a host family and taking all of my classes in the target language (though in the company of other American language majors/minors like myself). Indeed, I credit my experiences studying abroad in France with eliciting a shift in my academic pursuits between my undergraduate and graduate studies, from French literature to French pedagogy and applied linguistics, respectively. This doctoral research, then, represented a culmination of sorts, as it was my first chance to conduct a qualitative study of the effects of study abroad on American undergraduates’ proficiency in French. However, given the salience of my own undergraduate study abroad experiences in France, moving to Paris to conduct this research also felt like a kind of a return to that period in my young adult life. As a result, for the first few weeks or so, I believe I may have mapped my own experiences studying abroad onto the markedly divergent realities of the Paris program and its participants. As I mentioned above, this eventually led to a rude awakening as it dawned on me that these students had come to Paris largely for non-academic – or at least non-linguistic – reasons. However, once I began to engage more deeply with these students, I realized that it was more my own subjective, yet naturalized, presuppositions about study abroad than the realities of this particular study abroad program that required drastic revision. Furthermore, as the study progressed and these students continued to delve into more deeply personal dimensions of the effects of their term abroad, another recognition occurred: although our experiences differed so widely in nearly every observable aspect, these students and I

both had our lives deeply affected by spending a term abroad in France. That is, once I shed my preconceived notions about what study abroad *should be*, I found that I could better see what study abroad *is* for these students. However, this empathetic stance does not amount to the kind of “vulnerable observation” (Behar, 1996) that involves a systematic consideration of the researcher’s emotional involvement with the subject (s)he studies (e.g. death of family members). In the analyses that follow, to borrow a cinematic metaphor, though my head is occasionally in the frame (chapter six), it never blocks the shot completely.

## Chapter Three

### Applied Linguistics Research on Language Learning during Study Abroad: The Rise of Post-Structuralist Perspectives

#### Early Applied Linguistics Research on Study Abroad

American applied linguistics research on study abroad began in the 1950s, following the expansion of American undergraduate study abroad programs in the wake of World War II. Given the post-war context, program designers and administrators explicitly aligned American study abroad with the furthering of geopolitical concerns, with the assumption that increased international mobility on the part of educated Americans would yield the kind of international understanding necessary for avoiding armed conflict between nations. However, as I mentioned above, the earliest applied linguistics research largely ignored this geopolitical dimension, preferring to approach the study of language learning from a structuralist and innatist perspective that considered language learning as a fundamentally cognitive phenomenon that is only indirectly influenced by social and cultural factors. From this point of view, language acquisition is seen as the result of the mind's processing of language data that is 'out there' in the world but must be internalized, or in Corder's (1967) well-known terminology, "input" must become "intake." However, certain variables influence how successful a given learner is at accessing the right quantity and quality of language input. These variables are of the direct and indirect or "internal" and "external" sort (Ellis, 1994).

Direct or internal variables are those that have an immediate and unmediated effect on the hard-wired "learning mechanisms" (Ellis, 1994) seen as the mental engine for SLA. These include such psychological or cognitive factors as anxiety (Krashen's "affective filter" [1987]), motivation, and aptitude. Indirect or external factors are those that are seen as 'outside' of the individual brain, i.e. the contents of the sociocultural overlay that is 'put upon' the original, natural mind. These factors – such as ethnic identity and sociocultural context – are considered as having effects on the SLA process only in a secondary or *mediated* manner. That is, regardless of how inextricably and influentially such factors might become involved in the process of language learning, this influence is ultimately mediated by the direct/internal factors.

Due to this dominant epistemology in applied linguistics, the focus of the early research on study abroad was primarily limited to evaluating the impact of a term abroad on student's linguistic gains, typically measured by oral and written examinations administered upon the students' return to their home campuses. As I mentioned above, the findings of these early studies were largely positive (Carroll, 1967). So favorable, in fact, that the positive correlation between linguistic gains and study abroad was considered incontrovertible. Consequently, as AL research blossomed throughout the 1970s and 1980s, there was relatively little interest in study abroad (Comp et al., 2008, p. 99). The reasons for this were both epistemological and institutional-political.

First of all, the dominance of psycholinguistic, cognitivist models of second language acquisition during this period inclined researchers to view study abroad as a more or less ideal context for language learning. That is, given that study abroad presumably offered learning conditions most like those of first language acquisition<sup>14</sup>, priority was given to the much more problematic, ‘unnatural’ context of the foreign language classroom (see above quote, Carroll [1967, p. 137]).

Next, during this same time period, in many institutions of higher education – especially the larger public university systems like the University of California – the administration of study abroad was gradually moving out of foreign language departments and into more or less autonomous administrative units (White-Henry, 1990). As I will discuss in more detail below and in my review of the international education literature in the next chapter, this transfer of curricular and administrative control out of the hands of academic departments is a significant factor in the evolution of both American study abroad *and* American study abroad research. For now, it is sufficient to note that as study abroad became decreasingly under the purview of foreign language departments, teacher-researchers in these departments necessarily limited their focus to their institutional and professional *raison d’être*: classroom teaching. Of course, these institutional disincentives mainly served to reinforce applied linguists’ disinterest in a learning context viewed as irrelevant by the disciplinary orthodoxy of the time. While some dissenting voices did emerge during the 1980s (DeKeyser, 1986), it was not until the early 1990s that applied linguists’ interest in study abroad was substantially re-invigorated. This burgeoning of study abroad research occurred in two waves<sup>15</sup>.

The first swell crested with the publication of Barbara Freed’s (1995) edited volume, *Second Language Acquisition in the Study Abroad*. The bulk of the articles report on quantitative studies that focused primarily on linguistic gains. These researchers reject the uncritical embrace of study abroad as a language-learning panacea and demonstrate that such views were largely empirically unfounded. Furthermore, many of these studies come to the defense of formal language teaching. In fact, while many researchers identify prior language instruction as a significant predictor of language gains during a term abroad, some also find that students who went abroad perform no better than those who continue their language studies on the home campus. However, most of this research, though critical, still approaches the study of language learning from a psycholinguistic perspective in which:

1. Study abroad is posited as a singular context to be experimentally added or subtracted in test versus control groups;

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<sup>14</sup> It’s also important to note that during this period the Junior Year Abroad (JYA) model predominated, with students tending to enroll in full immersion programs (often taking all or some of their classes at a foreign university while living on their own or with a host family) for an entire academic year.

<sup>15</sup> These “waves” are less temporal than epistemological and methodological, with the first being largely quantitative, outcomes/predictors-focused studies and the second being more qualitative and process-oriented inquiries.

2. Proficiency is understood in linguistic and pragmatic terms based on a monolingual native speaker ideal against which learners' output is considered as more or less deficient (cf. Cook, 1999; Firth & Wagner, 1997; Kramsch, 1998; 2005);

3. Pre- and post-testing generally ignore the situated processes of language learning;

4. Student identity (except gender) is largely elided due to a universalist SLA model of interlanguage development (Corder, 1967; Ellis, 1994; Krashen, 1987; Selinker, 1972);

5. A blend of cognitivism and individualist/rational actor ideologies lead many researchers to blame the students for their failure to reap the SLA benefits of full immersion; i.e. the source of all learning failures/deficits is located within de-contextualized "learners-as-computers" (Kramsch, 2002) who fail to effectively manage the various linguistic challenges and opportunities offered by a term abroad.

Indeed, the impact of "popular belief" both among applied linguists and in the community at large – i.e. "shared by students and teachers, parents and administrators" (Freed 1995, p. 5) – is typically located within the learners themselves. In this way, a certain disdain permeates some of these reports that goes beyond the skepticism inherent in the scientific drive to falsify. For example, Miller and Ginsburg (1995), in their study of the most common "folklinguistic theories of language learning" found in thousands of student accounts of study abroad in Russia, conclude that:

- To a large extent students' views of language exclude many of the features of language for which study abroad is particularly advantageous.
- *In spite of the fact that students denigrate formal instruction*, their views of language and their views of learning lead them to try to recreate classroom situations in interactions with native speakers outside of class.
- As a consequence, *students do not appear to take full advantage of the unique opportunities for learning afforded by study abroad.* (p. 295, italics mine)

While I do not disagree that such folklinguistic theories can function as "self-fulfilling prophecies" during study abroad, I wonder why these teacher-researchers' discourse analysis does not include an examination (or a call for an examination) of the discursal sources of these ways of speaking about language learning. Of course, most of these researchers are language teachers, thus their focus is necessarily on uncovering predictors of successful language learning. However, it seems that their findings – namely, that popular beliefs students have developed 'elsewhere' are enduring in the 'here' of study abroad and negatively impacting their language learning – necessitate an investigation of the origins of such powerfully self-perpetuating discourses.

Moreover, following Foucault, if indeed “it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together” (1980, p. 100), then it seems that these findings also require a discussion of what power/knowledge is being re-produced in these student accounts. That is, why do they feel it is appropriate, in the context of both their term abroad *and* in the context of their participation in a research project on study abroad, to speak in these ways?

Whatever methodological precautions taken by the researchers to document an “emic” (Pike, 1967) perspective, it is important to remember that these student accounts are *addressed*, however indirectly, to the researchers and the pedagogical-institutional power they represent (Briggs, 1986). So either the students think they are speaking appropriately, i.e. resonating with/reproducing the discourse(s) (power/knowledge) of their addressees<sup>16</sup>, or they are invoking a counter-discourse that they intuit trumps any other in play. In either case, it is clear that there is a mismatch here, whether the students are haplessly misfiring or (un)consciously revolting.

Furthermore, rather than reducing these participants to a single, rather anonymous, identity of “language learner,” study abroad researchers like Miller & Ginsburg should recognize the possibility that their participants are invoking authorities and assuming identities that orient their actions and interpretations in ways that directly conflict with the researchers’ conception of a normative language learner (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Rampton, 1987, 1997). In fact, many of the researchers in the Freed volume recognize that this issue of student identity – typically indexed by reference to “learner differences” – is a variable too complex to control for in their large-scale quantitative studies (Brecht et al., 1995; Freed, 1995). Indeed, the problem of learner differences, along with a growing trend toward more interpretive research in applied linguistics, prompted many other AL researchers to conduct qualitative case studies of individual learners (Kline, 1998; Polanyi, 1995; Kinginger, 2004, 2008; Jackson, 2008 Siegal, 1995; Wilkinson, 1998, 2002).

In this second wave of American study abroad research, applied linguists assume a more post-structuralist perspective in which identity is seen as “multiple, a site of struggle, and changing over time” (Norton-Pierce, 1995, p. 14). That is, they reject the imposition of the singular identity of ‘language-learner’ in favor of a consideration of learners “as *people*, intentional human agents whose intentions and desires play a major role in the learning process” (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001, cited in Kinginger, 2008, italics in original). By introducing agency and conflict into the processes of language learning during study abroad, these scholars provide an alternative model of ‘failed’ language acquisition. Namely, they individualize and contextualize the experience of language learning by emphasizing the *uniqueness* of personal experience:

What one actually gets to know “in the field” is a product of the differential experience every language learner goes through. (...) That impersonal “one” which “needs to know” or “learns a language” is the issue. Who “one” is is a factor of one’s native talent for language learning, one’s educational background

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<sup>16</sup> Theories of autobiographical narrative insist this is almost always the case (Labov, 1972; Linde, 1993; Polanyi, 1985). I will address this in more detail in chapter five.

and motivation but it is also a product of one's gender, one's class, one's race, one's sexual orientation, one's health and degree of abledness. *Ultimately, every language learner is alone with a unique experience, an experience tailored to, by and for that individual.* (Polanyi, 1995, p. 287, italics mine)

That is, these researchers highlight the dialectical relation between agency and constraint, with constraint here understood as the socially negotiated positionings that emerge as individuals attempt to perform one or many of their various social identities (Pavlenko & Backledge, 2004). In this way, American study abroad research aligned itself with the growing trend in applied linguistics in the late 1990s toward more post-structuralist conceptualizations of social practice.

Drawing heavily (though not always faithfully) on the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, these applied linguists began to conceptualize the dynamics of more or less “successful” foreign and second language learning in terms that emphasized the social conditions of possibility for communicative competence (Norton-Pierce, 1995, 2000). Building on the Hymesian (1974) distinction between “use” and “usage”, these scholars suggest that the ability and/or inclination to speak appropriately is a function of a particular speaker's *habitus*, or the socially conditioned inclination to perceive, interpret, act, and react differentially according to an embodied and durable practical sense, or “feel for the game” (Bourdieu, 1974, 1991). This “practical sense” (*ibid.*), though theoretically transferable, is fundamentally conservative insofar as it serves to reproduce the speaker's relative status in the social world of their primary socialization. That is, they argue that assessing a learner's failure to communicate competently in a second/foreign language requires going beyond classic psycholinguistic notions of interlanguage transfer and fossilization in order to include a consideration of the transferability of a learner's *habitus* across specific contexts of communicative practice (Hanks, 1996). Generally speaking, applied linguists who adopt elements of Bourdieu's “reflexive”<sup>17</sup> – *not* post-structuralist – sociology do so in one of two ways.

Most researchers downplay the social reproductionist aspects of Bourdieu's theory of social practice (i.e. “symbolic violence”) in favor of emphasizing the empowering possibilities of the transferability of *habitus* (Jackson, 2008; Norton-Pierce 1995, 1997, 2000; Pellegrino-Aveni, 1998b, 2005). In this model, success and failure are understood as the product of a social struggle on the part of the language learner toward equalizing and/or counteracting the asymmetrical power relations within which they often find themselves. Norton-Pierce (1995, 2000) offers the notion of “investment,” which describes how language learners (in this case, immigrants) consciously respond to communicative encounters/contexts according to their potential ‘profits.’ That is, ‘empowered’ learners can choose to reject interactions that may indeed provide “comprehensible input” (Krashen, 1987) but at the cost of the social humiliation that can result from not being in control of which social identity one can perform within

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<sup>17</sup> In fact, Bourdieu explicitly distanced himself from post-structuralist theories of social practice. Indeed, he described his approach to sociology as either “constructivist structuralism” or “structuralist constructivism” (1990, p. 123).



asymmetrical power relations (cf. Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1955, 1981, on “facework”). Furthermore, in some cases these learners may even “impose reception” (Bourdieu 1977, p. 75, in Norton-Pierce 1995, p. 18) of a more empowering identity (e.g. “mother”) in lieu of being forced to assume a disempowering identity (e.g. “immigrant”). This is a social justice model, grounded in research on second language learning, that assumes that the learner-as-immigrant is in a subordinate social position vis-à-vis the speech community(ies) in which (s)he is attempting to participate.

Other applied linguists, however, focus on the potential incommensurability of a learner’s *habitus* with the exigencies of second/foreign language communicative events (Kramsch, 1993; Pellegrino-Aveni, 1998b, 2005). In this model, success and failure are understood as the outcomes of power relations within systems of social dominance that may or may not provide a particular learner with the requisite capital (linguistic, cultural, economic, symbolic [Bourdieu, 1991]) to allow or *incline* that learner to communicatively impose reception.

For Kramsch (1998), this suggests that intercultural differences may cause learners to ‘impair’ their own communicative competence by consciously prioritizing pragmalinguistic over sociopragmatic competence. However, Kramsch (1993) cautions against exaggerating individual agency and offers a dialogic view of language learning in which the balance between social empowerment and disempowerment is perpetually in flux as learners engage in an unending negotiation of incommensurable and irreconcilable differences (p. 14). This is also a social justice model, but one that is more applicable to research on foreign language learning as it allows for a greater diversity of learners in terms of their relative social status (real or imagined) vis-à-vis the target language community(ies). In my view, most of the qualitative studies of language learning during study abroad can be divided according to which of the above formulations of post-structuralist agency they (more or less explicitly) espouse. I will examine several recent studies in more detail below, but in general this research was motivated by a desire to understand how student identities contributed to language learning outcomes, both ‘successes’ and ‘failures’.

The earliest studies are aimed at reconceptualizing the notion of learning failure as the result of the degree of compatibility between learner identities and the various contexts of potential language learning afforded by a term abroad. For example, through an analysis of learner diaries of American students studying in Russia, Polanyi (1995) finds that female students were systematically denied access to the types of discourses and communicative events whose mastery were required for success on the assessments used to measure their linguistic gains post-sojourn. Similarly, Siegal (1995) finds that American and Australia women studying in Japan often resisted conforming to pragmalinguistic norms (e.g. honorifics) that conflicted with their self-identities as equal partners in dialogues with native speakers of Japanese. Each of these studies offers crucial insights into the impact of extrinsically and intrinsically assigned social identity on language learning in a study abroad context. Polanyi demonstrates that learner motivation and aptitude can be stymied by a more or less ‘hostile’ learning environment,

while Siegal illustrates that learners may willfully compromise their own communicative competence by rejecting the full cultural immersion offered by a term abroad.

In fact, many of the more recent studies I will outline below draw directly on Norton and Kramsch. This is because the issue of learner motivation, long a subject of investigation in applied linguistics/SLA theory and research, takes on a special salience in the kind of qualitative case studies done on study abroad in general, and in American study abroad in particular. As researchers begin to consider study abroad participants' behaviors as "acts of identity" (LePage & Tabouret-Keller, 1985) aimed at enacting more than just the limited social role of a language learner, they have increasingly recognized that sojourners are transferring more than just their first language, psycholinguistically understood (Selinker & Lakshamanan, 1992). Moreover, as the analytical emphasis shifts away from a narrow focus on "interlanguage" (Selinker, 1972), notions of the "intercultural" (Byram & Zarate, 1994; Byram, 1997) have moved to the center of discussions of the types of communicative competence afforded by a term abroad. That is, these studies explore the degree to which certain dimensions of students' culture(s) complicate or even interfere with their communicative practices as ostensible 'language learners' abroad. In this view, students' behaviors and interpretations of experience are understood with reference to the potentially conflicting demands of interpretive and interactional dispositions that are tied to the constellation of social identities subsumed under their American habitus. Generally speaking, this research suggests that there are particular consequences of being an *American* student abroad, and it aims to trace the cultural sources of social practices that are more or less amenable to successful language learning.

### **Contemporary Applied Linguistics Research on American Study Abroad: Qualitative Perspectives**

Celeste Kinginger has emerged as one of the most dominant voices in applied linguistics research on study abroad (2004a, 2006, 2009; & Farrell, 2004; & Farrell-Whitworth, 2005; & Blattner, 2008). In her groundbreaking article, "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Foreign Language Learning and Identity Reconstruction" (2004a), Kinginger reports on a longitudinal case study of an adult learner of French whose motivation to study French in the US and in France was predicated on an explicit desire to transcend her lower-class, itinerant-farmer background. Drawing primarily on learner diary and interview data, Kinginger traces Alice's trajectory from a midwestern junior college to full enrollment in a French university, noting several key developmental episodes along the way.

Her comparison of Alice's in-country learner diary with post-interview data provides a dramatic illustration of the identity-transforming potential of study abroad. When Alice first arrived in France, the disparity between her idealized expectations of immediate integration and her daily reality as a marginalized newcomer traumatized Alice to the point of her contemplating suicide. Moreover, once she began to make friends with the French students, she found herself exasperated by one friend's persistence in discussing

American foreign policy despite Alice's repeated insistence that "*Je fais pas la politique, je m'en fous*" ['I don't do politics, I could care less'] (2004, p. 238). In contradistinction to these *in situ* testimonies, Alice presented an entirely different account of this incident after returning to the US. In fact, she credits this interaction with sparking the beginning of an expansion in her geopolitical awareness, something that she now highly values, and which she feels is somewhat stifled by what she perceives as the insulated focus of the American press (2004, p. 238).

While this article is limited to just one case study, it resonates with other work that suggests that this 'internationalizing' of students' perspectives is a key aspect of their general feeling of having been 'transformed' by their study abroad experience. Moreover, this study lends credence to the analysis of learner narratives for documenting key transformations in learners' evolving sense of themselves as students, social agents, and national/international citizens.

In her more recent work on study abroad, Kinginger has assumed an increasingly critical perspective on both American study abroad program design and the American applied linguistics research on study abroad. Regarding the former, Kinginger questions the educational benefits of those programs that do not include an explicit focus on language learning. Moreover, even in programs ostensibly designed for intensive language learning, Kinginger argues that the curricula allow for too wide an array of educational outcomes by not explicitly addressing the need for students to "negotiate difference" (2008, 2009b, 2010) while abroad. That is, due to many of the issues I outlined in the introduction – such as the uncritical belief in study abroad as an educational panacea, the increased commodification of study abroad on US campuses, and the effects of globalization on travel and communication technologies – today's American study abroad has to work harder to achieve the kind of cultural immersion/contact deemed necessary for language learning and the development of "intercultural" (Byram & Zarate, 1994; Kramsch, 1998), "translingual/transcultural" (MLA, 2007), "symbolic" (Kramsch, 2006b) or "global" (Hunter, 2004; Hunter et al., 2006; Lambert, 1996) competence.

Kinger (2008, 2009) illustrates this variability of learning outcomes through her case studies of five undergraduates studying abroad for a semester in France. As in much of the qualitative work on study abroad, Kinginger's study seeks to understand why some students choose to stay committed to their language learning while others recoil from target language interactions and/or seek the familiar company of their American peers. At the beginning of the semester, all the students identify the desire improve their French as one of their primary motivations for studying abroad. However, when left to their own devices to interpret the intervening experiences of the semester, these students' goals, attitudes, and evaluations shift considerably according to which "textual resources" (Kinger, 2008, p. 47; from Wertsch, 2002) they draw on to frame and evaluate their interactions in French. Some students manage to successfully maintain their focus on language learning by embedding their personal experiences abroad within their larger educational goals of acquiring French for professional purposes ("Liza") or learning a second language for more general global humanist ends ("Bill"). However, other

students elect to drop their language learning goals almost completely. In the case of “Beatrice”, her difficulties in understanding her host family’s heated opposition to the American war in Iraq elicit a vehement rejection of all things French. Meanwhile, another student (“Ailis”) prefers to treat her time in France as a 21<sup>st</sup> century Grand Tour aimed at the leisurely enjoyment of travel and shopping activities. Finally, a certain “Deidre” retreats to the comforts of online interactions with her American friends and family – what Kinginger likens to attaching an “electronic umbilical cord” (2008, 2009a).

Drawing on sociocultural models of language learning and personal development (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 2002, 1998), Kinginger argues in favor of understanding these disparate outcomes in terms of the effects of competing “cultural and textual resources.” Many language educators and study abroad program designers assume that students will interpret their experiences abroad according to the traditional goals of attaining advanced linguistic proficiency, global literacy, and/or intercultural awareness. However, this assumption ignores the fact that equally powerful cultural and discursive scripts are also at our students’ disposal. Citing Gore (2005), Kinginger points out that many of the “dominant discourses” about study abroad in American higher education incline undergraduates (and many educators) to see international education as chiefly designed to attract “wealthy women to academically weak European programs established in a frivolous Grand Tour tradition” (Gore, 2005, p. 24).

In order to understand how learner motivation can be derailed in this way, argues Kinginger, it is necessary to consider the mediating effects of these American discourses about study abroad as well as the power of “collective remembering” (Wertsch, 2002). Today, study abroad programs are decreasingly centered on language learning and increasingly understood as first and foremost an opportunity for personal development and “coming of age” (2008, p. 20; from Levin, 2001). As a result, students are more inclined to see advanced language learning as a secondary product of their term abroad – something that it would be nice to achieve, but certainly not worth pursuing in the face of any significant adversity. Furthermore, when this adversity also challenges their pre-conceived notions of America’s role in world history, students like Beatrice may feel unduly aggrieved and end up walking away from their term abroad with little more than added emotional charge to negative stereotypes of the host community<sup>18</sup>. While other

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<sup>18</sup> In his memoir, *Me Talk Pretty One Day*, the American humorist David Sedaris (2000) describes this kind of erroneous “collective remembering” as the product of the many negative stereotypes of the French prevalent in American popular culture:

“As was his habit, he planned to spend the month of August in Normandy, visiting friends and working on his house. I’d planned to join him, but that first year, when the time came to buy my ticket, I chickened out, realizing that I was afraid of France. My fear had nothing to do with the actual French people. I didn’t know any actual French people. What scared me was the idea of French people I’d gotten from movies and situation comedies. When someone makes a spectacular ass of himself, it’s always in a French restaurant, never a Japanese or Italian one. The French are the people who slap one another with gloves and wear scarves to cover their engorged hickies. My understanding was that, no matter how hard we tried, the French would never like us, and that’s confusing to an American raised to believe that the citizens of Europe should be grateful for all the wonderful things we’ve done. Things like movies that stereotype the

researchers have documented students “encountering an American self” during study abroad (Dolby, 2004), Kinginger points out that this encounter may undermine rather than augment students’ capacity to gain a more objective, hermeneutic, or international perspective on their “imagined community” (Anderson, 1991). Like the student who draws on Grand Tour narrative scripts for organizing their time abroad, Beatrice employs a jingoistic historical narrative of America-as-savior in order to dismiss French criticism of American foreign policy and to justify her refusal to invest any more effort into learning French from the “ungrateful” French.

The solution to this, argues Kinginger, is to provide another mediating resource – the program itself – to align students’ interpretive frames with a more beneficial orientation to their experiences abroad that centers on language learning (whenever possible) and offers systematic incentives for students to “negotiate difference” by forcing them to struggle to understand their foreign hosts on their hosts’ terms. In a recent publication, Kinginger (2009b) provides concrete curricular proposals for how to approach instituting such remediating educational interventions. Rather than allowing the current laissez-faire orientation to study abroad program design to perpetuate the kind of disparate and contradictory learning outcomes so often described in applied linguistics research, Kinginger proposes that language educators and applied linguists assume a more “activist” role in ensuring that program quality increases along with student participation.

Wilkinson (1998b, 2002) also examines how American students more or less successfully transfer interactional habits from their home environment into their dialogues with French interlocutors. Building on the findings of Brecht et al. (1995) mentioned above, Wilkinson finds that American students are inclined to reproduce classroom discourse patterns in their conversations with native speakers outside of the classroom. Through ethnographic and conversation analytic methods, she illustrates how students prefer to interact with host family members who are willing to assume the kind of compassionate teacher role typical of French language instructors in the United States.

Like Brecht et al. (1995), Wilkinson questions the appropriateness of this sort of interactive framing and suggests that these students may very well be denying themselves access to precisely the sort of authentic immersion experiences that are the educational promise of study abroad (see also Miller & Ginsberg, 1995). However, unlike these authors, Wilkinson takes her critique one step further by suggesting that American language teachers consider transforming their pedagogic practices in order to socialize their students into a wider variety of communicative styles and events. That is, rather than simply dismiss student behaviors as overtly manipulative and maladaptive, Wilkinson (2002) recommends that if students are attempting to reproduce the American language classroom abroad, then perhaps it is necessary to change the language classroom as well. She writes:

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people of France as boors and petty snobs, and little remarks like *'We saved your ass in WWII.'* Every day we're told that we live in the greatest country on earth. And it's always stated as an undeniable fact: Leos are born between July 23 and August 22, fitted queen-size sheets measure 60 by 80 inches, and America is the greatest country on earth” (156, italics mine).

Perhaps immersion in a target-language community during study abroad does not always take students as far beyond the classroom as one might intuitively believe. And perhaps we underestimate what classroom learners may actually acquire from the instructional environment. By examining what students do linguistically when they are on their own, we may be inspired to reconsider what we do when they are in our classes. (p. 169)

Pellegrino-Aveni (1997a, 1997b, 1998, 2005) approaches her research on study abroad from a social psychological perspective, using grounded theory analysis to account for why many American students abroad end up avoiding contact with native speakers. Working on the same large-scale project in Russia as Brecht et al. (1995), Pellegrino-Aveni analyzes student diaries, self-reports, and interviews to demonstrate that how learners abroad attempt to maintain their “social psychological security” (1997a, 1997b, 1998, 2005) in their interactions with Russian interlocutors. Pellegrino-Aveni addresses students’ struggles with negotiating their “reduced personality” (Harder, 1980) in target language communicative events: “learners communicating in a second language are often unable to present to others an image of themselves that is accurate and acceptable” (2005:2). Drawing on social interactionist frameworks, especially Goffman (1959, 1974), Pellegrino-Aveni suggests that students abroad must find a way to frame their face-threatening interactions with native speakers in ways that allow them to maintain a sense of security along two social scales: “social hierarchy” and “social distance” (2005, pp. 36-53). In the first case, students must find a way to retain their L1 “social *status* and *control* during interactions”; in the second, they must “feel accepted and *validated* by their communicative partners and *safe* in their social interactions” (2005:5, emphasis in the original).

Like Kinginger, Pellegrino-Aveni (2005) examines several case studies of American students who more or less successfully engage in target language activities and interactions. She shows how students who fail to maintain their “social psychological security” in difficult interactions with their host families and other native speakers often elect to withdraw from all L2 use. In the case of “Bob”, for example, when his host family refused to accommodate his learning needs – speaking slowly, allowing time for him to look up words in the dictionary, and being “approachable” (p. 47) – he elected to spend most of his time at home in his room, emerging only when was certain they were asleep or out. However, unlike Kinginger, Pellegrino places much of the blame for this untenable situation on the Russians themselves, whom she sees as “caretakers” (p. 5). In fact, in Kinginger’s (2008, 2009a) review of Pellegrino-Aveni’s work, she criticizes this “ethnocentric” tendency to only consider the American side of these supposedly ethnographic accounts and points to the latent chauvinism in reducing native speakers to walking dictionaries who should adjust their normal behavior to suit the interactive needs of their American guests.

In my opinion, Pellegrino-Aveni’s vision of communication also “misrecognizes” (Bourdieu, 1991) its own cultural specificity; namely, an American “communication

culture” (Block & Cameron, 2002; Cameron, 2000) that posits all interaction as fundamentally oriented to interpersonal validation and efficient information exchange. As Kramsch (2002) argued in her critique of the research literature on intercultural communication, this view of communicative practice ignores “the inequalities among cultures, the inevitability of conflict, and the tragic dimension of human action” (p. 283). That is, by labeling all conflict and discomfort as disruptions of how communication should operate, and by suggesting that American students abroad must find ways to impose this frame on their interactions with target language speakers, Pellegrino-Aveni effectively argues for another sort of “linguistic imperialism” (Pennycook, 1998) that posits naturalized American communicative norms as universal.

I also question Pellegrino-Aveni’s notion of “self”. While she takes some of her theoretical cues from post-structuralist (Pierce et al., 1993) and social interactionist models of identity, it seems that she fails to fully integrate the anti-essentialist and social constructionist dimensions of these theories. Although I support her call for “safe” and “secure” study abroad experiences, it seems she over-emphasizes the ‘empowering’ potential of self-presentation in a experiential context that is directed precisely at “de-centering” and “de-stabilizing” the students’ established self-identities from their primary socialization into their L1 speech community(ies) (Block, 2002). Moreover, though she takes great pains to provide a definition of “self” (2005, pp. 11-16) that balances psychological and sociological perspectives, she ultimately fails to avoid falling into the kind of modernist essentialism largely refuted by identity theorists today. K. Anthony Appiah (2004), in a critique of philosophical realism (i.e. essentialism), states:

Of course, neither the picture in which there is just an authentic nugget of selfhood, the core that is distinctively me, waiting to be dug out, nor the notion that I can simply make up any self I choose, should tempt us. We make up selves from a tool kit of options made available by our culture and society. We do make choices, but we do not determine the options among which we choose. (p. 155)

However, by positing students’ L1 self as “accurate and acceptable” – i.e. who they ‘really are’ – Pellegrino-Aveni reproduces this essentialist notion of identity and also contradicts the most fundamental tenet of social interactionism: that ‘who you are’ in the social world is in large part a result of what you say (Kramsch, 1989). Pellegrino-Aveni writes: “With imperfect command of a new language, learners’ ability to reveal their true thoughts and identity becomes severely impaired” (2005, p. 4). This is of course an uncomfortable fact about living in a second language, but it is unavoidable; in fact, it is precisely one’s capacity to negotiate new social identities in the second language *on the terms of the second language communities* that study abroad is supposed to develop.

In the studies outlined above, all three authors illustrate that study abroad does not necessarily represent a total ‘immersion’ in a target language and culture. They highlight the fact that even in seemingly authentic target language interactions, learners carry a certain amount of cultural and interactional baggage that can complicate or undermine their ability to recognize and adapt to local norms. Putting a new spin on the Hymesian

(1966a, 1972, 1974, 1987) relationship between linguistic and communicative competence, they show that students' failures to understand and/or recognize local "rules of use" can sometimes negatively feedback into their desire to sustain their study of the "rules of grammar" (Hymes, 1972, p. 278). That is, they point out the insufficiency of a model of language learning that uncritically assumes that learners will consistently "invest" (Norton, 2001) in their language learning, against all odds.

This is not an altogether new critique in applied linguistics research (Giles & Byrne, 1982; Schumann, 1976, 1978), but it is one that has special relevance to language learning in study abroad contexts, given the longstanding belief in a term abroad as an SLA panacea. Drawing on social interactionist and sociocultural views of social action, they demonstrate that learners-as-social-agents bring a wide array of motivations and interpretative frames to bear on their experiences living and learning abroad. Moreover, in Kinginger and Wilkinson, it is suggested that some of the less 'successful' student orientations and behaviors are the product of specifically American discourses and pedagogic practices exerting an enduring influence on sojourners while abroad. In this way, this research aligns itself with the contemporary emphasis on developing the "intercultural" dimension of students' communicative competence.

In what follows, I will provide an outline of how international educators have described the educational products and promise of American study abroad (chapter four), followed by an analysis of how four undergraduate social science majors describe their experiences living and learning in Paris in a semester-long "island" (Goodwin & Nacht, 1988) program (chapters five and six). In the final chapter, I will move to providing some concrete recommendations for how to fill in the curricular gaps in the preparation of American undergraduates to approach their linguistic and cultural encounters abroad more "competently", i.e. with the "full involvement and full detachment" (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008) necessary for these students to fulfill the promise of study abroad to train Americans to recognize and work to alleviate, rather than aggravate or capitalize on, "real-world problems" (Brumfit, 2003; Kramsch, 2005).



## Chapter Four

### The Educational Value of Study Abroad: International Education and Bourdieusian Perspectives

The global changes that have prompted the American university, like its European counterpart, to seek to internationalize its mission and its curriculum are too fundamental to be taken lightly. Internationalization of higher education is not a catchphrase soon to be replaced. It is the next step in American education.

Claire Kramsch, "Foreign Languages for a Global Age," *ADFL Bulletin*, 1993, p. 12

What nations don't know can hurt them. The stakes involved in study abroad are that simple, that straightforward, and that important. For their own future and that of the nation, college graduates today must be internationally competent.

The Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program  
*Global Competence & National Needs: One Million Americans Studying Abroad*  
Report to the President and US Congress of November 2005

Study abroad is no longer a luxury. For students, and the American workforce, to be competitive in the global marketplace, they need experience living in and working with different cultures. (...) Strong study abroad programs are vital to our economic competitiveness, international diplomacy, and national security.

Peter McPherson, Chair of the Lincoln Commission  
President of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges

One of the essential components of education for developing global competence is a high quality study abroad experience.

William B. DeLauder, President Emeritus, Delaware State University  
Executive Director, Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program.

In attempting an overview of the international education literature, it is important to distinguish between policy statements, the actual research that shapes and is shaped by such policy statements, and commentary by individual scholars and administrators. Admittedly, international education does not actually represent a coherent research field;

the majority of scholars who contribute to the literature are program directors and administrators who represent a wide array of academic disciplines. As a result, most of these academics are writing more in the general interest of promoting study abroad in American higher education. Empirical research, when done, is generally limited to participation measures and marketing efforts, typically in the service of calling attention to the glaring mismatch between paltry American participation rates and high student/public demand.<sup>19</sup> This focus on more institutional/administrative and national issues is not surprising given that many of these scholar/administrators, through professional associations such as NAFSA: Association of International Educators (previously the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs), are themselves key agents in developing the state and federal policy statements. There are, of course, notable exceptions, but it is important to consider these against the backdrop of the majority of policy-related international education literature.

### **International Education Policy Statements**

Throughout the history of national policy statements on study abroad (generally within the larger frame of international education) in the United States, the titles of major publications tend to have a tellingly cautionary and/or alarmist tenor. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter's Commission on Language and International Studies issued the report, *Strength Through Wisdom: A Critique of U.S. Capability*. In 1983, the U.S. Department of Education's National Commission on Excellence in Education submitted a report titled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. The 1980s ended with a report by the Higher Education Panel of American Council on Education entitled *What We Can't Say Can Hurt Us: A Call for Foreign Language Competence by the Year 2000*. The reports of the 1990s were more optimistic in tone yet focused on the newest specter, "globalization:" *Educating for Global Competence* (1988), *Educating Americans for a World in Flux: Ten Ground Rules for Internationalizing Higher Education* (1995), and *International Education in the New Global Era* (1998). Most recently, published policy statements include *Beyond September 11: A Comprehensive National Policy on International Education* (2002) and *Securing America's Future: Global Education for a Global Age, Report of the Strategic Task Force on Education Abroad* (2003). The latter warns:

The challenges of the new millennium are unquestionably global in nature. This reality imposes a new and urgent demand on Americans, one this country has been all too quick to ignore: international knowledge and skills are imperative for

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<sup>19</sup> A typical example, found in the "Action Kit" materials from the Lincoln Commission's "2006: The Year of Study Abroad" website: "The Commission recognized the signs of a "tipping point", capitalizing on readiness revealed in such surveys as The American Council on Education's Public Opinion Poll 2002 which stated that 50% of college-bound high school students express interest in studying abroad and 75% of students think it is important to study or participate in an internship abroad during their academic career, and NAFSA: The Association of International Educators' 2005 poll which indicated that the American public believes that international education is key to preparing the next generation. Yet, according to the 2003-4 IIE Open Doors report, just slightly over 1% (191,321) of our enrolled undergraduates actually study or intern abroad."

the future security and competitiveness of the United States. The rhetoric of a decade attests to the widespread recognition of this fundamental truth, yet concrete steps to fulfill this need have been few. Strong leadership and a coherent policy are still lacking, and the cost of inaction grows ever greater. (...) We strongly believe that the events of September 11, 2001, constituted a wake-up call—a warning that America’s ignorance of the world is now a national liability. Americans in vastly greater numbers must devote a substantive portion of their education to gaining an understanding of other countries, regions, languages, and cultures, through direct personal experience (2003, p. iv).

The most common theme across all of these policy statements is American unpreparedness vis-à-vis the various perceived threats and opportunities of an increasingly globalized world. Moreover, in terms of recommended solutions, these reports consistently call for both an increase in study abroad and a diversification and/or democratization of study abroad demographics. Just as higher education shifted from a privilege to a right following the economic transformations after WWII and the GI Bill, many policymakers argue, the drastic economic changes brought on by globalized capitalism now require a globalized (internationalized) undergraduate curriculum. “Study abroad is no longer a luxury,” said M. Peter McPherson, Chair of The Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program ([www.yearofstudyabroad.org](http://www.yearofstudyabroad.org)). Most reports decry the limited depth and breadth of program offerings, insisting that more efforts be made to incorporate international experiences into underserved majors in the hard sciences and pre-professional degree programs. Furthermore, under the banner of ‘critical languages,’ most reports also critique the Eurocentrism of study abroad destinations, to the detriment of the American capacity to adapt to economic and security developments on a truly global scale. As I will discuss in more detail below, some researchers take issue with such recommendations, arguing that they imply that study abroad has been and still is an “old Grand Tour experience, a leisurely trip for the purpose of absorbing culture, enjoyed by the wealthiest of students, primarily women” (Gore, 2005, p. 12).

While study abroad is consistently touted as an educational necessity, the particular learning outcomes associated with such essential educational experiences have shifted noticeably since the 1980s. Most conspicuous is the decreasing emphasis on language learning with the advent of the focus on “global competence” and/or “global literacy.” In the 1970s and 1980s, policy makers still positioned language learning as one of the primary means of internationalizing American undergraduate education. Taking their cue from the declarations of the Helsinki Accords<sup>20</sup> in 1975, President Carter’s Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies scathingly declared:

American’s incompetence in foreign languages is nothing short of scandalous, and it is becoming worse. Historically, to be sure, America’s continental position

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<sup>20</sup> The final act of which committed the signatory states “to encourage the study of foreign language and civilization as an important means of expanding communication among peoples” (Chapter 4, “Co-operations and Exchanges in the Field of Education”: Section d, “Foreign languages and civilizations”).

between vast oceans was a basis for linguistic as well as political isolation, but rocketry as well as satellites render such moat mentality obsolete. (...) Our vital interests are impaired by the fatuous notion that our competence in other languages is irrelevant. Indeed, it is precisely because of this nation's responsibilities and opportunities as a major power and as a symbol of ideals to which many of the world's people aspire that foreign languages, as a key to unlock the mysteries of other customs and cultures, can no longer be viewed as an educational or civic luxury (1979, pp. 5-6).

A similar chord was struck in the 1989 policy statement from the American Council on Education, *What We Can't Say Can Hurt Us: A Call for Foreign Language Competence by the Year 2000*. Under their second imperative recommendation, "Stress language competence as a vital educational outcome," the commission insists that: **"Foreign language training should be considered a normal part of the education of every American.** At least minimal levels of competence should be expected for every bachelor's degree. Foreign language and international competence should not be only for language and international studies majors" (1989, p. 5, bold in original).

Paradoxically, at the turn of the century and the dawn of the era of globalization as a buzzword, linguistic competence began to take a backseat to "intercultural competence/sensitivity", which in turn collapsed into "international" and/or "global competence" and/or "literacy."<sup>21</sup> In the most recent federal policy statement published in 2005 by the Lincoln Commission, one encounters a sort of policy discourse palimpsest in which each decade's favored competence (albeit reshuffled and re-prioritized) figures into their recommendations. That is, in this commission report entitled *Global Competence and National Needs: One Million Americans Studying Abroad*, it states that college graduates "must be internationally competent" (2005, p. ii) while institutions of higher education "must ensure that many more undergraduates experience, study in, and *communicate with other cultures* so that they can learn to 'hear' what others are saying, *speak with them in their language*, and continue to serve as goodwill ambassadors throughout their lives" (p. vii, italics mine) and in order to effect "a massive increase in the *global literacy* of the typical college graduate" (p. ix, italics mine).

### **International Education Research and Commentary: Critical Perspectives**

Although this is never mentioned explicitly in these reports, it is reasonable to assume that the relaxing of foreign language proficiency goals is seen as an inevitable consequence of the democratization of access to study abroad. That is, in the interest of boosting participation figures, study abroad programs have become increasingly diversified in order to better accommodate a wider spectrum of students. In the process,

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<sup>21</sup> After reading dozens of similar policy statements, it seems that the terms within both pairs "international"/"global" and "competence"/"literacy" are semantically interchangeable, provided that one term from the first pair precedes one term from the second (e.g. 'international competence' = 'global competence' = 'international literacy' [theoretically, as I have not in fact seen this combination] = 'global literacy').

as I mentioned in the Rationale, short-term (one semester or less, by my definition) study abroad programs have become the norm, accounting for 95% of total participation in 2009 (Open Doors Report). In fact, the overwhelming popularity of programs of limited duration has led international educators to redefine “short-term study abroad” as that which is less than one semester or 15 weeks (Woolf, 2007, p. 501). Also, to serve the vast majority of undergraduates who do not study a foreign language, the number of “island” or “independent” (Woolf, 2007) programs with English instruction has grown exponentially. This shift has not gone unnoticed by foreign language professionals like Gorka and Nussbaum (2001) who criticize such “‘English Only’ internationalization.” They write:

One might think that to become truly *internationalized*, all students—not just those who are language majors—should achieve a high level of competency in a second language (Kreuger & Ryan, 1993). This would suggest that the focal point for international education would be the foreign language department. However, the increased attention for international education has paralleled a decrease in internal support for foreign languages (Goodman, 1998). Many of us find that despite the apparent support of internationalization from the administration and colleagues across disciplines, we must continually justify foreign language requirements. (2001, p. 100)

In a bizarre combination of these elements, in 2001 Drake University’s Russian-professor-turned-president eliminated all the university’s foreign language departments with the idea that it is in study abroad (albeit language-intensive) where real communicative competence develops (<http://chronicle.com/free/v47/i26/26a01401.htm>). This strategy of course ignores the findings of most Second Language Acquisition research on study abroad (Brecht et al., 1990, 1993, 1995; Freed, 1993, 1995; Huebner, 1991). However, the fact that such administrative action is even feasible may account for how the same unreflective and under-researched faith in study-abroad-as-linguistic-panacea has been somehow transformed into a similar confidence in study abroad as a cure-all for American “global incompetence”.

Seen from a distance, American efforts at internationalizing higher education may seem rather misguided. Indeed, in recent years many university professionals and educators have begun speaking out against what they see as an alarming increase in educationally suspect approaches to study abroad. Two of the most polemical and often-cited indictments of the current state of American study abroad come from Feinberg (2002) and Engle and Engle (2002).

Like many of the international educators cited above, Feinberg’s primary emphasis is on how study abroad can positively influence American undergraduates’ capacity to respond appropriately to globalization. However, the thrust of his argument, based on an analysis of 30 recorded interviews with study abroad returnees at his small, private liberal arts college, is that the narcissism and consumerist chauvinism of college-age Americans in

the era of globalization are as likely to be exacerbated as ameliorated by study abroad. He writes:

Students return from study-abroad programs having seen the world, but the world they return to tell tales about is more often than not the world they already knew, the imaginary world of globalized, postmodern capitalism where everything is already known, everyone speaks the same language, and the outside world keeps its eyes on those of us who come from the center. (...) The question for colleges and universities is, can our programs challenge that perception of the world, instead of allowing it to sink in more deeply? The answer is probably not. (2002, <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v48/i34/34b02001.htm>)

This is a different spin on the perils of globalization unique to Americans, and one that is echoed across the recent work of several international educators, especially those who contributed, along with Engle and Engle, to the 2002 edited volume, *Rockin' in Red Square: Critical Approaches to International Education in the Age of Cyberculture*. Again positing the source of dysfunction as much in the students themselves as in the study abroad programs, Engle and Engle argue that the conditions of globalization work against young Americans' already impaired capacity and *inclination* to recognize and understand cultural differences:

The Ugly American is, of course, not a recent invention, and forms of cultural imperviousness abroad have never been a Yankee exclusivity. For Americans on the international scene, though, given the rampant success of the U.S. economic model, the hot cakes exportability of our pop culture, the umbilical availability of instantaneous electronic communication, and confusion about the very existence of real cultural differences, it is certainly easier than it has ever been to believe that adaptation is a one-way street. Indeed, it may no longer simply be a question of students resisting fundamental changes in cultural attitude and behavior but of them proactively imposing their cultural references upon their host environment. (2002, p. 30).

Turning their sights on the program curricula, they denounce what they see as a deliberate and pernicious mass-marketing strategy of concession to the wants of student-customers, to the evident detriment of educational quality. That is, in the laudable drive for increased participation and democratization, program designers and university administrators have created study abroad programs that are increasingly devoid of the most essential, yet admittedly unpalatable, component—the struggle, discomfort, deference, and disequilibrium of an active, empathetic engagement with a foreign culture. The bottom line, according to Engle and Engle, is plain: “What we need is not further, unconsidered growth in study abroad numbers but the facilitation of better study abroad” (2002, p. 37).

The implicit and/or explicit suggestion of the critiques of Feinberg (2002) and Engle and Engle (2002) is that American study abroad should reclaim the goals and methods, if not

the durations, of the (golden) era of the full-immersion Junior Year Abroad. In other words, the problem with American study abroad is its increasing ‘American-ness,’ and the more students are made to grapple with functionally integrating into the host culture/community, the better.

### **International Education Research and Commentary: Optimistic Perspectives**

While it is hard to disagree with the reformatory intentions of such critics, some international educators take issue with the (reactionary) idea that American study abroad can or should reverse its present course, and/or that a total purging of study abroad *and study abroaders* of American-ness is appropriate for every program or every student.

For example, Vande Berg (2007) puts a positive spin on the growing influence of consumerism on the design of study abroad as well as the increasing ‘Americanization’ of study abroad curricula. According to Vande Berg, clinging to a total-immersion model is not only bad business, but bad education as well. He recognizes the potentially stifling impact of American consumerist culture where the student/parent customers dictate which programs-as-commodities succeed on the study abroad market. However, Vande Berg welcomes heightened customer demand for increasingly customized study abroad programming. In direct contrast with Feinberg (2002) and Engle and Engle (2002), Vande Berg questions the utility of immersion for the majority of American undergraduates studying abroad. Very few students can (or ever did) succeed in such a learning environment; and, once more, the quality of instruction in most destination countries is often inferior to the more student-centered, constructionist American pedagogy:

Cognitive psychologists and educational researchers have provided compelling evidence in support of the view that students learn by constructing, rather than simply passively absorbing, knowledge. (...) They [faculty and study-abroad professionals] understand more clearly than their counterparts did two decades ago that higher education systems in other countries are based on values that are often significantly different from those that inform the teaching practices that U.S. students have come to accept as ‘appropriate’ at their home colleges and universities. Students whose home institution faculty are working to provide them with opportunities to learn actively are predictably going to reject as ineffective—and boring—classes led by professors who lecture all the time. (2007, pp. 396-397)

Thus, argues Vande Berg, to maximize the learning outcomes of a greater majority of American students abroad, most programs require more American-style pedagogic practices. Or, more accurately, program administrators and faculty should anticipate which intercultural blend between host and home country academic cultures is appropriate for whichever student demographic(s) they serve. Vande Berg’s position represents a sort of critical realism vis-à-vis the state of contemporary American study abroad. On the one hand, Vande Berg agrees that many American students are failing to

gain the kind of knowledge and insight hoped for by program designers (and policy makers). However, on the other hand, he suggests that the rise of U.S. consumer culture and advancements in American higher education have in fact created optimal conditions for creating best pedagogic practices and maximizing desired learning outcomes. To do so, says Vande Berg, American educators cannot allow most students to sink or swim in a full immersion; instead, they should, more often than not, play intercultural lifeguard throughout a student's entire term abroad:

We are no longer accepting the isolationist's role that the Junior Year Abroad paradigm offered us: we have become interventionists, convinced that if our students are to learn effectively, we need to intervene, before, during, and after their experiences abroad to shape and support their learning. (2007, p. 394).

Woolf (2007) supports this interventionist approach to study abroad. Setting out to debunk what he sees as pervasive "myths in education abroad" (2007, p. 496), Woolf defends the oft-maligned "island," or in his terminology "independent," study abroad programs (p. 500). He writes:

There are many reasons to see these models [island/independent] as better serving the needs of U.S. institutions and their students. Crucially, they offer an environment where curriculum can be developed in an innovative fashion (free from the imperatives of the host country). Thus, courses can better address the needs of U.S. universities and their students by, for example, maximizing experiential learning and creating comparative perspectives. An independent programme escapes the tyranny of the foreign academic year and creates, paradoxically, conditions in which students can be guided to better comprehend the host culture. (2007, p. 500)

Woolf argues in favor of a continuum of program types, on a sliding scale of degree of home-institution intervention in the design and delivery of program curricula. Full immersion programs will endure; however, the majority of students and *institutions* will benefit most from more home school involvement in the program execution. That is, Woolf contends, increased intervention will also facilitate the development of a frequently overlooked component of internationalization: American faculty involvement. In this vision, as a university exerts more control over a wider network of programs, the resulting global flow of students and faculty will ultimately make all involved (including the institution) more attuned and connected to the global dimensions of their respective existence.

All in all, both Vande Berg and Woolf agree that American study abroad needs large-scale reform. But, they insist, many critics have misdiagnosed what 'ails' education abroad. They reject any critiques that posit the source of contagion in the historical departure from the immersion model. That is, they recognize that American study abroad is 'not what it used to be,' but they welcome this fact and insist that such changes, if well managed, will make education abroad better 'than it ever was.'



William Hoffa, who recently published a history of American study abroad (2007), offers a different type of optimism regarding the state of this hotly debated educational practice. Most significantly, Hoffa (2002) questions the notion that there is anything fundamentally ‘wrong’ with American study abroad today. He suggests that many of the harshest critics – especially language professionals who themselves studied abroad as part of their education – may be inappropriately and anachronistically mapping their own experiences abroad onto their perceptions of the experiences of today’s undergraduates. Like several other international educators mentioned above, Hoffa points to the considerable changes most developed, Western nations (still the preferred destinations for most U.S. students) have undergone since the 1970s and 1980s. However, he embraces the conditions of ‘global culture’ insofar as they help study abroaders become aware of the complex multiculturalism obscured by a homogenizing nationalist perspective that is no longer (and perhaps never was) accurate. Moreover, he contends, nations with strong cultural traditions may be far less impacted, ‘diluted’, or ‘distorted’ by the forces of globalization than some commentators suggest. He writes:

It may be that over time, traditional cultures may indeed merge into one super-culture, but that time is not yet upon us. London may seem (and be) more cosmopolitan than it seems ‘British,’ compared with a quarter- or half-century ago, but it is still more British than anything else (...) These places have not so much been transformed by a single new cultural imperative as transformed by yet another sub-cultural component, changing the dynamics, but not the central essence. For students and programs, the challenge is to distinguish between the enduring cultural uniqueness and the evolving present. (2002, p. 68)

Likewise, American undergraduates abroad are at once increasingly culturally diverse and inescapably ‘American.’ In this late-modern, globalized context, then, study abroad offers a unique and invaluable opportunity for American students to experience firsthand what cultural theorists call “glocalization” (Risager, 2006, p. 26; from Robertson, 1992, p. 173) and Hoffa describes as: “personal experiences that provide glimpses into the intersections of their American-ness, the local culture, and the *global* culture” (2002, p. 68, italics in original).

Hoffa’s most spirited criticism is leveled at those critics, like Feinberg (2002) and Engle and Engle (2002), who depict contemporary study abroad as a worst-case scenario of self-absorbed, cliquish students and “neither international nor educative” curricula (Engle & Engle, 2002, p. 25). Hoffa recognizes the considerable limitations, in terms of linguistic and intercultural gains, of the trend toward shorter programs (2002, p. 61). However, as I mentioned in chapter one, Hoffa is encouraged by the increasing word-of-mouth popularity of study abroad to explore what kinds of substantive learning experiences might be being overlooked in the rush to condemn as ‘superficial’ students and programs alike. For example, Hoffa suggests that the very separation of most American students from their hosts, due to “insufficient linguistic and intellectual preparation” and the “brevity and circumscribed conditions of most programs” (2002, p.

71), may very well provide undergraduates with an invaluable experience of the “social and cultural alienation” endemic in all societies: “Ironically, therefore, being away from U.S. society, but being prevented from fitting fully into their new surroundings, teaches U.S. students about alienation, the need to reach out and empathize with those who are ‘different,’ when they return home” (p. 70).

In the end, Hoffa calls for a more open-minded and in-depth investigation of how and why American undergraduates continue to insist that their term abroad was ‘the best experience of my life.’ He does not pretend that American study abroad is by any means a perfected practice; he simply asserts that international educators include the students themselves in the discussion of its merits. He writes:

The fact remains that students return today from study abroad no less satisfied than they have ever been, though their satisfactions may be somewhat different than those of past decades. Our ‘Paris’ and their ‘Paris’ may not be the same, but who can say objectively and conclusively that one was in fact ‘better’ than the other place to live and learn at the age of twenty? Students continue to praise the opportunities they feel they have had to challenge, test, and get to know themselves, and to get to know other people and places. (...) Almost to a person they recommend the experience to others. There are few reasons why we should doubt these assertions. (2002, pp. 71-72)

Joan Elias Gore (2005) offers another critical yet optimistic perspective on the realities of American study abroad, then and now. Put directly, Gore rejects what she sees as historically tenacious yet baseless “dominant beliefs” in the study abroad policy discourse of that the last half-century. She writes, “To be blunt, international education policy discourse often reflects a perception that study abroad programs attract wealthy white women to academically weak European programs” (2005, p. 20). For example, she explains, it is because of such dominant, yet erroneous, beliefs that policy statements since the 1960s have called for efforts to diversify the study abroaders (i.e. more middle/working class), to incorporate more professionally-focused academic programs (i.e. more men), and to globalize study abroad destinations (i.e. non-European).

However, she does concede that these beliefs are in some cases grounded to a certain degree in historical and statistical reality. For example, she recognizes that throughout the history of study abroad most participants have, in fact, been women. However, she insists that this present-day fact is saddled with the historical residue of a sexism that, in the 1920s and 1930s, dismissed as frivolous the intellectual pursuits of students at the private women’s colleges where study abroad in Europe first became popular.<sup>22</sup> As a result, Gore argues, policymakers are blind to the historical counter-evidence that shows that even these earliest programs for the elite did in fact offer rigorous and austere (especially in the inter-war years) academic training (2005, p. 83).

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<sup>22</sup> Even though, in fact, the very first American study abroad program in 1923 at the University of Delaware consisted exclusively of male students (Gore, 2005:38).

Furthermore, Gore denounces the persistent American perception of study abroad as an elite activity “designed not to gain purposeful knowledge so much as to gain social standing and enjoy private pleasure” (2005, p. 32). The roots of this enduring stigmatization, Gore argues, lie in the historical devaluation of the liberal arts curriculum and an American ideology that associates travel abroad with the bygone Grand Tour of the (East Coast) leisure class. As the American university has moved toward a more utilitarian orientation to undergraduate education (Kerr, 1963), educational programs perceived as not advancing specialized scientific or professional knowledge have become increasingly suspect. Moreover, because of its persisting (erroneous) association with the ‘finishing school’ practices of elite, Eastern women’s colleges of the 20s and 30s, study abroad is seen by many Americans as “leisurely cultural acquisition at best and a great shopping trip at worst” (2005, p. 11).

Such dominant beliefs about study abroad are patently false, argues Gore. First of all, even in the early days of study abroad when its participants were primarily from wealthy backgrounds, study abroad was restricted to the most accomplished, professionally-oriented students (2005, pp. 83-90). Second, regardless of its elite private school origins, study abroad today is most popular at research universities, a growing number of which are public and lower-cost institutions (2005, p. 57; Open Doors, 2003). Nevertheless, Gore points out, many professional and lay commentators continue to malign study abroad as the domain of ‘spoiled rich (white) kids.’ Glen Arthschuler (2001), professor and dean of Cornell University’s School of Continuing Education, wrote in the *New York Times*: “The programs, featured prominently in college admissions literature, have become nothing less than an expectation among upper-middle-class teenagers, like braces and a car” (“College Prep: La Dolce Semester,” April 8, 2001). And the 2003 NAFSA Study Abroad Task Force proclaimed, “We underscore the importance of making study abroad a reality for all college students, not just the white and the wealthy.”

Drawing on Foucault, Gore suggests that such dominant discourses have coalesced into an “episteme” which limits the sayable in study abroad discourse(s) by excluding the historically accurate “alternative voices” (2005, p. 109) that “have envisioned the education they attain abroad to be unique, unavailable in the United States, and of the highest quality” (2005, p. 161). That is, while she in no way disputes the call for increased access and diversification of American education abroad, she wants to make sure contemporary efforts recognize the considerable progress already accomplished by the quality programs of the past.

### **American Study Abroad and Social Class: Impacts of Consumerist Culture**

Mel Bolen, in her 2001 article, “Consumerism and U.S. Study Abroad,” provides a different interpretation of the relationship between class and study abroad across the social, cultural, and economic changes since World War II. Bolen’s main argument is that the advent of American consumerist<sup>23</sup> culture both helps and hinders the educational

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<sup>23</sup> Citing Robert Bocock, Bolen defines consumerism as “the active ideology that the meaning of life is to be found in buying things and pre-packaged experiences” (1993:50).

potential of study abroad. On the one hand, she argues, just as higher education has become a “prepackaged experience” expected to “enable students to discover who they are and how they wish to live” (2001, p. 184), study abroad is increasingly seen as ready-made commodity to be passively consumed. She writes:

Typically, like tourist packages, study abroad programs include arrangements for food, lodging, and visits to popular attractions in the country, and then add the educational components. Participants buy the program to experience the full flavor of the country they study. The passivity embedded in this process relates to the way some study abroad participants view programs as serving them the foreign cultures on a plate, laid out like fast food all ready to eat. Consumerism’s message of instant gratification lead participants to expect that a culture that took thousands of years to form will be quickly and easily available to them. The effort needed to truly integrate into and begin to understand a culture seems an imposition for some students. They purchase this knowledge by buying, and so the program gets blamed if cultural understanding remains elusive. (p. 186)

On the other hand, higher education and study abroad have only developed into mass market commodities because of the democratization of access to both of these educational ‘products.’ That is, since the transformations wrought by the G.I. Bill, *Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education*<sup>24</sup>, and federal financial aid<sup>25</sup>, higher education has become attainable by an ever-burgeoning proportion of the American ‘masses.’ Moreover, consumerism, with its ‘you are what you buy’ ideology, seems to serve the educational aims of study abroad program designers and international educators. Bolen writes:

On a more positive note, because consumption is linked to identity, students already expect that consuming this culture will assist them in making decisions about who they are as Americans, workers, and human beings. Therefore, educators’ wish to improve student attitudes toward other cultures meshes with consumer-driven identity changes. This places heavy burdens on program providers, but keeping these in mind may help in designing programming to challenge or encourage these mind-sets. (2001, p. 186)

However, Bolen cautions against taking on all of the business practices associated with the rise of American consumerist culture. The labor struggles of the early 1900s established the ideology of the American standard of living, in which better wages and reduced hours “meant earning enough money and enjoying enough leisure time to spend this money on material comforts and pleasurable activities” (200, p. 187; Glickman, 1993). However, some historians (Rodgers, 1978) contend that this ideology has given

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<sup>24</sup> In *Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education* (1961), the Supreme court ruled that to deny higher education to someone is a denial of liberty and property and needed due care before it could be done (2001:185).

<sup>25</sup> Federal financial aid became explicitly available for study abroad students in 1992, which accounts in part for the strong growth in programs throughout the 90s and beyond.

rise to a distorted leisure-time focus that asserts that “real life only happen[s] in leisure time” (Bolen, 2001, p. 187). Furthermore, Bolen argues, the “hip consumerism” marketing strategies of late capitalism have no place in the design, promotion, and consumption of quality education, international or otherwise. She writes:

Hip consumerism, a marketing strategy constructed by businesses starting in the 1960s, does not provide a solid foundation to run a quality study abroad program. Hip consumerism means expressing oneself by buying products to show one’s difference from the conventional crowd (Frank, 1997). It includes experimenting with different lifestyles through travel, especially to exotic new locations, and business people welcome it because it provides an acceptable rationale for planned obsolescence. (...) Programs presumably want students committed to being in a place because they want to learn in-depth about that place, not because they will be cool by hanging out there. (pp. 189-90)

Bolen’s discussion of class issues is characterized by the same sort of optimistic realism found in Vande Berg (2007) and Woolf (2007), with a touch of the historical criticism found in Gore (2005). In the final section of this literature review I would like to step out of the field of international education and explore the potential relevance to American study abroad of Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological treatment of class and “taste” in France.

### **American Study abroad and Social Class: Sociological Perspectives on Class and Taste in American Study Abroad in France**

According to the “ideology of charisma”, taste is something you are born with or without, it’s “a gift of nature” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 1). Bourdieu contends, and statistically documents, that taste is in fact “the “product of upbringing and education” (p. 1). These two factors – upbringing and education – operate in the social world to produce stratifications that are roughly mirrored in the cultural world such that: “To the socially recognized hierarchy of the arts, and within each of them, of genres, schools or periods, corresponds a social hierarchy of the consumers. *This predisposes tastes to function as markers of ‘class’*” (p. 1, my emphasis).

The haute bourgeoisie’s taste is grounded in what Bourdieu calls a “pure aesthetic” that is characterized by an exclusive focus on form in the consideration of art. That is, the pure aesthetic considers art objects as fundamentally divorced from any referentiality or sensuality – art does not point to things in the outside world nor does it exist to excite the body through any ‘base’ emotions. This is all in contrast to the “popular aesthetic” that demands functionality from art and has no patience for formal experimentation or ‘art for art’s sake.’ Moreover, like illegitimate linguistic practices, popular cultural production and consumption is an unwitting accomplice to its own symbolic domination insofar as the very terms of its rejection of high cultural products actually reproduce the symbolic ascendancy of ‘high art.’ For example, the popular dismissal of ‘high art’ as ‘pointless,’ ‘useless’ or ‘incomprehensible’ is in fact a reinforcement of the pure aesthete’s distinctive taste for art that has been purged of any ‘vulgar’ intentionality, functionality,

or symbolism. With its genealogical roots in the court society of the French nobility, the pure aesthetic of the haute bourgeoisie is inherently disinterested and impractical, 'untainted' by the 'naïveté' of moralism or the 'pettiness' of mercantilism. Furthermore, this pure aesthetic generates homologous judgments across a broad range of domains of life 'styling' – from clothing and cooking to furniture and home decoration. In this way, the haut bourgeois observer is equally (and *distinctively*) offended and viscerally disgusted by 'tacky' shirts and 'trashy' dwellings (1984, p. 486).

Of course, this pure aesthetic requires an especially privileged social position in order to operate successfully. Bourdieu demonstrates, in a systematic and statistically grounded fashion, how the disinterested and distanced perspective of the haute bourgeoisie is but one of the many luxuries of this dominant class. For example, among other social and economic conditions of possibility, the pure aesthetic is metonymically shaped by a very particular relationship with *time*. In an analytical move that echoes his dissection of the socio-cognitive mechanisms driving the symbolic violence that the dominated class visits on itself, Bourdieu shows that just as the oppressed must "make a virtue of necessity" (1991, p. 54), the dominant class seems to 'make a virtue of affluence.' In the symbolic constitution of the pure aesthetic, the extravagance of 'wasted time' is invisibly normalized through the symbolic capital that one accrues through the practices and products of leisure. That is, in stark contrast to the working class whose lives as wage earners engender a utilitarian pragmatism toward how one 'spends one's time,' the haute bourgeoisie value activities and art forms precisely according to their gratuitous (but never 'showy') expenditure of time 'freed' from any 'coarse' considerations of utility or monetary value. In this way, the deep, class-specific structuring principles that remain misrecognized in everyday practices of 'good taste' effectively reproduce as 'natural' ("doxic") the unequal social structures that endow the leisure class with enough free time to stand, as it were, outside of time altogether.

While I make no claim of comparability of class relations within France and the United States, it does seem that 'class' as Bourdieu describes it figures rather prominently in many widely held American stereotypes of France and the French (Levenstein 1998, 2004). However, these stereotypes, while essentialisms all, seem to operate both negatively and positively; that is, the same stereotype can animate equally zealous francophobia or francophilia (cf. Miller & Molesky, 2004). Moreover, as my findings suggest, these same stereotypes feed into the marketing and consumption of American undergraduate study abroad programs in France. But, as I hope to demonstrate in my discussion, the story does not stop there. While it is tempting to dismiss as naïve romanticism the kind of longing and imagining that animate such francophilia, my data suggests that to do so would be to ignore the myriad unanticipated effects of a 'class-anxious' francophilia that motivates four American undergraduates to spend a semester studying and living in France.

As I outlined above, Bourdieu offers a social critique of "taste" that exposes class divides that pit the "pure aesthetic" and the privilege of 'wasted time' (1984, p. 295) of the haute bourgeoisie against the "popular aesthetic" and wage-earner utilitarian pragmatism of the

petit-bourgeois on down. In the United States, this divide is symbolically recapitulated in the perceived differences between commonly “flagged” (Billig, 1995, p. 6) American cultural values of pragmatism/utilitarianism and the snobbery, elitism, frivolity, and *effeminacy* (Levenstein, 2004, p. 278) of the French appreciation for ‘extravagant’ high cultural forms. Also, there is the divide between those Americans who embrace (or struggle with, yearn to comprehend) or dismiss “the Parisian version of the art of living (which) has never ceased to exert a sort of fascination in the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ world, even beyond the circle of snobs and socialites” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. xi). Similarly, study abroad has been positioned in the American consciousness as a fundamentally frivolous, effete, and effeminate activity – a sort of 21<sup>st</sup> century ‘Grand Tour’ only fit for upper class debutantes, soft-brained artists, and others with the luxury of an unserious, impractical approach to their undergraduate education (Gore, 2005; Kinginger 2004, 2008). With this in mind, it is clear that ‘*study-abroad-in-France*’ potentially represents an especially condensed symbol for all that is ‘wrong’ and ‘unAmerican’ about both France and study abroad.

The British sociologist Beverly Skeggs (2004) has directly applied Bourdieu’s notions of “taste” and the “pure aesthetic” in her critique of the rise of popular and scientific conceptualizations of self-identity construction among the “cosmopolitan elite” and other late-modern subjects (cf. Giddens, 1991). That is, in both scientific and popular discourses on identity, there is an increasing emphasis on the individual’s capacity to decide for him/herself which “identities” and “lifestyles” he/she will adopt throughout his/her life. Skeggs sees these perspectives as willfully ignorant of the their own class-based conditions of possibility; that is, the ability to appropriate for oneself the cultures and lifestyles of diverse communities is the restricted domain of the affluent, i.e. those with enough economic capital to unmoor themselves from the constraints of tradition and social structure. Just as the *haut bourgeois* in Bourdieu’s model orients him/herself to the pure aesthetics of high cultural forms, members of the internationally mobile elite objectify and aestheticize the cultural markers of others in a “prosthetic” (2004, p. 138; Lury, 1999) process of choosing for themselves how to appropriate these surface details into their self-identity. As such, Skeggs argues, both this mobility and its related capacity to choose are grounded in a structurally-determined privilege: “The whole process is predicated on the power and ability to move, to *access* others, to *mobilize* resources. Yet we do not have equal access and ability to mobilize resources” (p. 140; emphasis in original).

Moreover, by emphasizing the individual nature of these processes of identity shopping, some theorists of identity are themselves reinforcing the “misrecognition” (Bourdieu, 1991) of the classed (and in some cases racialized and gendered) identities – thus collectively and structurally enabled – that are the necessary prerequisites for the ability to conceptualize identity-work as a purely individual phenomenon. In other words, the capacity to see cultures and people as non-essentialized (i.e. as signs and commodities freely appropriable), though theoretically appealing, in fact only reproduces and renders invisible the unequally-distributed class privileges that endure in late-capitalist societies. Skeggs (2004) writes:

Those who suggest that choice is universal betray the social position from which their perspective emerged. Choice is a resource, to which some lack access and which they cannot see as a possibility; it is not with their field of vision, their plausibility structure. (p. 139)

However, Skeggs argues that, paradoxically, the “prosthetic” or “possessive” (2004, p. 135) self concerned with accruing distinctive forms of “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1991) is also equally interested in displaying his/her symbolic rejection of distinguished behavior. That is, today’s cosmopolitan elite, though eminently concerned with matters of ‘good taste’, are also inclined to engage in social practices, e.g. excessive drinking, that ostensibly contradict their exalted social status and self-image. As “calculating hedonists with strategic de-control” (2004, p. 135; Featherstone, 1991), these social agents reserve the right to distance themselves from the constraints of the symbolic markets in which they are so successful. As in Bourdieu’s (1991) discussion of the *haut bourgeoisie*’s “interest in disinterestedness” vis-à-vis linguistically “correct” speech, the cosmopolitan elite is free to flout the very rules that invariably ensure their distinction.

Viewed from this critical perspective, American study abroad seems an especially ripe context for privileged and superficial identity-shopping. As I will address in more detail in the proceeding data analysis chapters, many of the students I interviewed understand their term in Paris as an opportunity for appropriating for themselves various aspects of rather stereotyped French high culture and lifestyle. Moreover, many of these seemingly class anxious individuals also freely admit to occasionally reveling in their Ugly American persona, typically described in reference to wild nights of binge drinking among their American peers. What remains to be determined, however, is whether the structuralist perspective espoused by Bourdieu and Skeggs sufficiently accounts for these social practices. That is, are these students merely reproducing the “tastes” and “strategic de-control” of the American middle class, or do their testimonies suggest a more complicated and deeply personal orientation to their experiences living and learning in France that transcends the “compulsory individuality” (Cronin, 2000b; Skeggs, 2004, p. 55) of the cosmopolitan elite?



## Chapter Five

### Student Voices

In this chapter, I will provide case studies of four American undergraduates who spent a semester studying abroad in Paris in a non-immersion program designed and run by their home university. As I mentioned in chapter one, this program was originally designed to provide first and second year undergraduates with an international education experience early on in their degree progress, with the hope that these students would be inclined to include a more defined international component (via foreign language and/or area studies majors/minors, additional study abroad, etc.) in their academic majors later on in their studies (Smith interview). Designed as a teaser rather than a capstone, this program provides an intentionally insulated or “island” experience (Goodwin & Nacht, 1988; Woolf, 2007), with all the non-language courses instructed in English by either American instructors or French faculty who had agreed to conform to the prescriptions of the academic culture of the American host university (i.e. syllabus, weekly reading assignments, regular assessments throughout the semester, teaching assistants with separate sections, etc.). However, the program never succeeded in attracting its target demographic; even during its first year, the vast majority of participants were juniors or seniors for whom the convenience and accessibility of the program were of primary importance (Smith interview).

Looking back on the previous two chapters, one might expect that the students who choose this program are fundamentally incapable of developing either the communicative competence applied linguists describe or the global competence international educators suggest is the desired outcome of study abroad. Moreover, following the sociological critiques of Bourdieu (1984) and Skeggs (2004), one might also assume that these students are using study abroad primarily to validate and reinforce their status as members of a cosmopolitan elite who view study abroad in Paris as an opportunity for a 21<sup>st</sup> century Grand Tour, i.e. a type of ‘edutainment’ whose educational outcomes matter much less than the symbolic capital that one accrues by participating in such a conspicuously costly yet practically superfluous educational experience.

Indeed, in the early stages of my data analysis, it seemed to me that these students represented exactly the kind of self-obsessed, interculturally indifferent American undergraduates so scathingly critiqued by applied linguists and international educators alike (Citron, 2002; Engle & Engle, 2002; Feinberg, 2002; Kinginger 2008). During our first in-country interviews (see below), all four students indicated that none of them had come to Paris with the primary goal of improving their French. In fact, most admitted to having arrived with few or no concrete learning goals tied specifically to the study abroad program itself. Studying abroad in Paris, for them, was neither about language learning nor any specific academic coursework; instead, it was about learning about French “culture” firsthand, with culture generally understood in a hierarchical and collective sense (Risager, 2006) as a blend of French high culture (especially aesthetic, high art

forms) and an essentialized and romanticized notion of the French way of life (cf. Kramsch on those who see culture as “food, fairs, and folklore”). Indeed, most had selected this particular program for both its logistical accessibility and the degree of freedom it allowed its participants to explore France on their own terms without the academic exigencies typical of their home universities. They could spend a semester in Paris, take “easy” classes in English, live on their own in an American dormitory, and decide for themselves how to occupy their extensive free time. All in all, this seemed like an American study abroad worst-case scenario: directionless, unchallenged undergraduates living in an “American bubble” (Ross, 2007) with only the most stereotypical understanding of French culture. Admittedly, my initial assessment of these students’ motivations for spending a semester living and studying in Paris was very much line with what Gore (2005) identifies as a “dominant discourse” about American study abroad; namely, that American undergraduates study abroad “not to gain purposeful knowledge so much as to gain social standing and enjoy private pleasure” (p. 32).

However, as the study progressed, I found that my focal students described their study abroad experiences in ways that suggested that, despite the diminished focus on language learning, their experiences abroad impacted them in relatively profound yet deeply personal ways. For these students, studying abroad in France triggers something of an identity crisis wherein the need to set themselves apart from familial and peer identity pressures often triggers an emotionally-laden urge to re-imagine themselves in a manner of their own choosing. Some researchers have dismissed this as the unfortunate consequence of the shift in American study abroad away from intensive language learning and toward a “coming of age” model (Levin, 2001) that merely reinforces American undergraduates’ inclination to resist the more challenging aspects of “negotiating difference” in immersion settings (Kinging, 2009b, 2010; Papastergiadis, 2000). However, it is important to note that even in this more recent, qualitative, identity-focused research on study abroad, these researchers maintained a fairly narrow focus on language learning as the primary purpose of a term abroad. Moreover, despite their call for an expanded and diversified conceptualization of learners’ identities as multiple, changing, and potentially contradictory, these scholars still retained an eminently *structuralist* understanding of identity as correlated with recognizable communities into which learners have been differentially socialized across the lifespan. Furthermore, the nature of the “differences” that learners were seen as more or less successfully “negotiating” remained, for the most part, fairly essentialized according to a “linguistics of community” (Pratt, 1999) in which one-(national)-language is mapped onto one-(national)-culture. To be sure, as their testimonies often demonstrated in rich detail, the salience of these “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983) was often interactively accomplished by the learners themselves in their retrospective and in situ ‘linguaging’ of their study abroad experiences (Dolby, 2004; Kinginger, 2004a, 2008, 2010; Pellegrino-Aveni, 1998b, 2005; Wilkinson, 1998, 2002).

In the present study, however, I have adopted a more *poststructuralist* orientation to identity. I do this for two main reasons. First, my participants do not, for the most part, focus on language learning experiences; instead, they see study abroad as a primarily

cultural activity, with culture understood as both something that ‘nations’ have and as something that individuals can ‘cultivate’ through a re-imagining and re-alignment of one’s personal priorities, lifestyle choices, and autobiographical self-understanding. Second, given my participants’ lack of linguistic proficiency and their enduring remove/distance from interactions with French native speakers, their ways of speaking about their experiences abroad tend to focus quite squarely on *themselves*, i.e. their inherently subjective perspectives on the impact of their term abroad. While a structuralist orientation to these data would have led me to dismiss these personal accounts and ruminations as “too trivial to bother with” (Rampton, 2006, p. 23), a poststructuralist perspective, which sees identity as an interactive achievement of *identification* in which individual agency and subjective (emotional, affective, and imagined) resonances are understood as operating in tension with more objective constraints, affords a consideration of these students’ accounts as offering insights into the more subjective dimensions of “when individuals move across geographical and psychological borders, immersing themselves in new sociocultural environments (...) find[ing] that their sense of identity is destabilized and (...) enter[ing] a period of struggle to reach a balance” (Block, 2007, p. 864).

However, as the ensuing case studies will demonstrate, a poststructuralist view of identity as “subjectivity” does not suggest that individuals are free to adopt any identity they wish, nor does it claim that an individual’s attempt to re-imagine him/herself is a purely risk-free and unencumbered self-construction. That is, post-structuralist does not mean anti-structuralist (McNamara, 2010); rather, a poststructuralist approach merely emphasizes the ways in which human beings more or less successfully negotiate the tension between invention and convention in concrete discursive practices through which they attempt to reconcile “the uncertainty of feeling a part and feeling apart” (Block, 2007, p. 864). Moreover, given the role of desire and imagination in this process, these self-constructions draw heavily on stereotypes, “myths”, “desire” (Kramsch, 2006, 2009), and other essentializations that are clearly embedded within a symbolic order that these individuals perceive as assigning, *from without*, varying degrees of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) or “purchase” (Rampton, 2006) to subject positions that seem to originate *from within*.

In the end, then, what I intend to argue is that these students’ accounts of their experiences studying abroad in Paris, while decidedly self-centered, provide a glimpse into dimensions of identity-work that are typically excluded from consideration in the existing SLA research on study abroad, but, if included, could help researchers and program designers better understand the range of symbolic resources that “learners” draw on as they attempt to reconcile their study abroad experiences with the totality of their life experiences as “whole people” with “whole lives” (Coleman, 2010).

## Case Studies

### Lola.

Lola was a 21 year-old fifth year senior interdisciplinary studies major working on a self-constructed degree drawing on anthropology, linguistics, and psychology. Given her advanced stage in the degree progress, Lola had already satisfied all of her course requirements for her major. That is, none of the courses Lola was taking in Paris counted directly toward her degree. As a result, Lola deliberately enrolled in the fewest number of courses allowed by the program requirement. For Lola, the semester in Paris was, academically speaking, more or less irrelevant: “It’s *just* for fun, it’s all for personal enjoyment” (Interview 1). However, Lola had done a considerable amount of research prior to choosing this particular program: in addition to attending information meetings held by study abroad staff, she also contacted former student participants from two of the Paris programs offered by her home university system. She credits the conversation she had with one of these students for helping her make her final decision:

L: (...) so, but then I researched UC programs in France and they had two in Paris for liberal arts you know you didn’t have to be any particular major, so I um, I got a list of emails from the EAP office for both programs, you because I was comparing which one to do, and um, I talked to a few kids and I said you know why did you do AUP and why do you think it might have been better than UC Center, and then same with the UC, kids who had done the UC Center program, and I pretty much only got one re, one or two responses from the UC Center program, but one of the people who responded was like ‘if you want to meet up and talk about it’

T: uh huh

L: ‘I’d be happy to talk to you about it,’ and she kind of, um, convinced me, not that it was better, but I just agreed with her that it would work better for me because AUP you have to do a *homestay*:, it’s over in the 7<sup>th</sup>, like by the Eiffel Tower, which like would have been fine, it’s a nice part of town, but it’s just, I didn’t really know much about the Bastille neighborhood, in particular, but I knew a lot about the geography of Paris, and um, it’s just a really *posh* neighborhood you know, you have to do a homestay so you can’t live in like in the dorms, at the UC Center. (Interview 1)

For Lola (and her interlocutor), it seems, the chief criteria for selecting a study abroad program in Paris are the desirability of its arrondissement and the degree of freedom its living arrangements afford. Indeed, in this excerpt, Lola emphasizes her control over her study abroad experience – like a well-informed consumer, she knows what she wants (“I knew a lot about the geography of Paris”) and is merely selecting the product that will “work better for [her]”. She is the agent of her own study abroad destiny who is “not convinced” but who “agrees” that this program is right for her. In keeping with this desire to remain in control of her study abroad experience, Lola eschews the program that requires a homestay housing arrangement.

Personally, I was surprised by her aversion to homestays; in my own experience doing a Junior Year Abroad in France in the mid 1990s, my host family played a vital role in my language learning and acculturation, and I was shocked to hear a student speak of

expressly avoiding what I saw as an invariably enriching living arrangement (cf. Wilkinson, 1998, 2002). When I pressed her on this topic, Lola's response both continued along the familiar lines of neighborhood shopping and opened up a hitherto unknown aspect of her biography:

T: Why didn't you want a homestay?

L: Um (.1) because I, I have, family friends in Paris, my mom lived here for ten years on and off in the seventies, I was staying with them, it was, you know if I would've done a homestay I could've done it with someone I *knew* already, I didn't *need* like a French family to teach me French, I felt, I didn't want to take the risk of being in a crappy place with um, people who weren't nice or who didn't work for me

T: Did you hear that from some of the people you talked to? Who'd done homestays?

L: Um, well, I just, I had actually heard goo-, positive stories from people who did homestays, but at the same time they were like, it's always hit or miss, you know, and coming here and seeing the people who have homestays, some of them are the 2<sup>nd</sup> and in Montparnasse and right by here, or in like, Place de la République, but um, some of them are in like the suburbs and in the 16<sup>th</sup>, I just didn't want (.1) in Berkeley I never lived in the dorms I always lived off campus, up on north side, like on rose street, pretty far away from campus, and I uh, I didn't want to be far away from so, I wanted to have the experience of being right down the street from school, walking distance to school, just not have to like take the metro to school everyday, not have to have anybody that I have to *come home* to, not have anybody to *answer* to really, I'm just a very, *very* independent person in general, and I thought that uh (.1) I just thought I don't need to meet a French family to, to know France, I already have so, so many connections, um. (Interview 1)

So, on the one hand, Lola doesn't want the demands of a homestay to impinge upon her autonomous exploration of Paris on her own terms. For Lola, a host family, like the study abroad program itself, must "work for [her]". On the other hand, Lola's reasons for this housing choice go beyond merely wishing to do what she pleases in Paris and delve into more personal and biographical issues: Lola was conceived in Paris, but her mother separated from her French father immediately afterwards, moved back to the United States for Lola's birth, and Lola grew up with almost no contact with her Parisian father. However, as she explains, her mother's contacts in Paris represent a local network for her that she feels is a more than adequate substitute for the dubious potential of a homestay. That is, unlike a host family who may impose itself on her autonomy ("anybody that I have to *come home* to [...] to *answer* to"), her Parisian contacts are ostensibly risk-free and optional, i.e. under her control. So it seems that, for Lola, selecting this particular study abroad program is merely a risk-free means to her pre-determined ends of "personal enjoyment" and deepening her already substantial knowledge of Paris.

However, Lola's goals for her term abroad extend far beyond 'consuming' Paris according to her own itinerary. Indeed, while it may seem at odds with her decisions to enroll in an English-language program and live in an all-American dormitory, Lola has come to Paris to "be French" (Interview 1). Moreover, Lola's decision to study abroad in Paris is in fact a much more 'risky' endeavor than the previous excerpts suggest. Haunted by the specter of her absent French father, Lola has come to Paris to reconcile herself with a French ancestry that she has spent most of her life actively ignoring:

T: Yeah (1.5) ok, so::: um, ok, so the first question's pretty straightforward, why did you decide to study abroad in France?

L: Ok, I always knew I wanted to study abroad

T:Uh huh

L: Part of the college thing, um, so I was taking Italian at community college, I took Italian for a year, and I thought I wanted to study in Florence cuz that's where everybody goes, um, I had come to Paris when I was nine, and didn't really like it, my dad's French and we never had a relationship, he always lived in Paris, so like um, I was really against it a lot, like for most of my life, like didn't want to come to Paris didn't want to learn French or anything, um, and then when I was 18, um I was studying Italian, I started having all these like *weird dreams* about my *dad* like showing up and being like 'Don't want to see you!' so I was like damn I need to like (.2) deal with this (.1) situation you know and just go see him, and get it out of the way you know, if I want these dreams to go away (.1).

(Interview 1)

Clearly, studying abroad in Paris holds a far greater significance – and presents far more considerable risks – for Lola than her previous comments suggest. However, over the course of our interviews, Lola rarely raises the subject of her father in direct terms. When she does, however, a theme emerges: while she may not be able to fully reconcile with her French father, this does not preclude the possibility of re-connecting to her French roots on her own:

T: Did you stay, so wait, does your dad live in Paris?

L: He does live in Paris

T: Ok, and you said that part of your motivation was to see him?

L:Um

T: But you didn't stay with him?

L: No, it was just like, um (.2) I, if had ever said 'mom, I want to go to Paris' it would have been 'well, you have to see your father'

T: uh huh

L: So in 2004 I saw him, and it was the same old, like no, no good vibes, no connection really, just like when I was little, just the same, it wasn't any different, so 2005 I was like well I *don't* want to see him and you know I can go and *not* see him, and my mom was kinda freaked out, like 'well, you know, what's gonna happen,' but it was fine, I didn't see him, maybe he knew I was here, I just didn't, I didn't see him, um (.1) and then (.1) I started taking French only, I researched

like which *program*, I knew there, there are tons of programs in paris that you can do, (Interview 1)

That is, she can have Paris *on her own terms*, whether or not her father – or her *mother* – is a part of the situation. Indeed, Lola not only distances herself from her father's hold on her relationship to her French inheritance, but she also rejects her mother's attitude toward Lola's nascent francophilia as inherently self-serving:

T: How many times have you been to France?

L: I had been when I was nine and then in 2004 and 2005, I just=

=T: (unintelligible)=

=L: Yeah, I didn't like it, I didn't get anything out of it, after 2004 though I was like I *can't stay away*, I need to go back as soon as possible, I just *love* Europe, I *love* travelling, I *love, love love* Paris

T: ] But you said your mom lived in France but you didn't grow up with French in the house because your father, who was French, was living in France? =

=L: Yeah he was living in Paris yeah (.1) and if *she* had tried to speak French to me I would have been like *shut up* I don't want to hear it I don't want anything to do with France and French (.1) um (.3) but then I came and I was like *oh my god* I'm a part of this *great amazing* (.2) thing, that's so big and wonderful and that so many people have loved=

=[TW: Would you consider your mom a francophile, though?

L: Yeah, absolutely, she con, she ((laughs)) I uh, she considers herself a francophile.

T: So did you grow up with her sort of saying, you know

[ L: (high pitch) 'Oh France is so wonderful, Paris is so amazing, it's so much fun to live there' but now that *I* want to live here she's like 'well, you'll get sick of it, just like I did,' just cause she wants me to be closer to her but um (.2)= (Interview 1)

Clearly, Lola is intent on deciding for herself how to embrace her French identity. While this may suggest a fundamental conflict for her to resolve, in the majority of her comments about her experiences in Paris, Lola makes no mention of any difficulties or struggle. On the contrary, during our interviews she describes the French people, culture, and language in only the most glowing terms. However, the issues of ancestry and inheritance permeate many of Lola's comments about her experiences in Paris. In the absence of getting in touch with her French-ness through her French father, Lola emphasizes her capacity to personally activate her French genetic endowment. For example, although she had only taken one undergraduate French course prior to her term in Paris, Lola feels that the language is coming naturally to her due to her "genetics":

I just waited until the semester before to take French (.1) and I got a really great recommendation from my French (one) teacher who I just *adored*, L.M. (.1) so I took it with her last spring and was just *so good*, it was like I did better (.1) *maybe*

it was the Italian that helped, but I felt that French came more natural *naturally* to me than even Italian (.1) whereas it's supposed to be one of the harder languages to learn because of the pronunciation, the rules about how you pronounce words and everything but um (.1) it *wasn't* and issue for me at *all* (...) But yeah I probably get it from her [her mother] (.1) and from being French just by genetics but (.1) when I was here in 2005 and 2004 I kinda felt like (.1) knowing the Italian (.1) and um, listening a lot to people speaking French that I *had it* already in my brain and maybe because of genetics but I *had it* already in my brain and like I just needed to kinda *tap into it* like if I just took a class and learned the rules and learned the words (.2) that it would like *come very naturally* and it *totally did*. (Interview 1)

However, despite her assumption that her proficiency would emerge organically due to her genetic endowment, Lola actually worked quite hard in her French classes. In fact, half way through the semester she requested to test into a higher-level French course as she felt that she had progressed beyond the level she had been assigned during the initial placement exams. Indeed, in my own experiences as chaperone during the initial weeks of the program, I had been impressed by Lola's dogged determination for learning French. During a mandatory field trip to the Père Lachaise cemetery, which was conducted in English, she regularly asked the tour guide to repeat any biographical or geographical names uttered in French, much to the annoyance of the guide and the snickering of her peers (Field Notes, 08/23/06). Furthermore, Lola's emerging proficiency – both linguistically and pragmatically – becomes a point of pride for her in contradistinction to her mother's dysfluencies and intercultural gaffes when she visits Lola in Paris:

L: [...] so what happened at the restaurant was, the people let her use the phone, we were leaving, I wanted to eat somewhere else, she, takes, like a two euro coin and like holds it up in the air and is like *merci! merci monsieur!* Like showing him like I-am-going-to-leave-you-tip-because-you-were-nice-to-me, I was like, and she like *slams it down* on the bar, so as we were leaving I was like mom, you know, when you tip in France tipping in France is a very, you know *discreet thing*, you just leave it on the table, they'll find it, they'll appreciate it, you know, you don't have to show them, you know, you can say thank you very much for letting you use the phone, as if she like, it's *just so American* and like *obnoxious*, and, we go into Galerie Lafayette and she's like, and, she's like yelling at the top of her voice, I'm like [quietly] *sh:::*, but even that, that would upset me if someone was like *sh!* all the time you know=  
 =T: uh huh=  
 =L: but there's no, way to be po-, like, I'll try not to lose my temper but, either way, or like when I correc-, she lived in Saint Germain des Pres like in five different apartments, like during the seventies, yet we get in the cab and she like um, oui, she's like on va à Saint Germain *du Prés*, and I'm like mom it's *des prés*, and she's like *don't correct me alright! Don't correct me! You make me feel horrible*, like *don't* correct me, I'm like but mom, first of all you lived there, and



second, it changes the meaning, it's Saint Germain *of the fields*, it's plural, like you can't go around saying *du pres* it changes the meaning of what you're saying, she's like *don't correct me or I'm gon-, I'm leaving, or I won't see you*, yeah! I'm like but *you speak French!* I shouldn't *have to correct you!* Just a whole bunch  
[T: ((laughs))]

of situations like that, it's been *awful*=  
=T: Oh man= (Interview 2)

So, between her absent French father and her bumbling American mother, Lola sees no chance for a reliable familial role model for her emerging French identity. Instead, Lola seeks authenticity in the streets of Paris. She is particularly enchanted by French children, as they seem to offer her a glimpse into the life she *could have had* if her parents had stayed together in France:

L: [...] one day I was walking back from the Petit Palais which is the museum I'm doing for my paper in Art (.1) and um (.1) which was *gorgeous* I fell in love with it when I went in that's why I decided to do it (.1) and I was walking across the street and it was a *beautiful* day and I looked over at the Invalides and I was like *ah* (.1) *Paris* you know (unintelligible in French) *so*: beautiful and then I go back to the metro and right outside the metro there were these little puddles from where it was raining (.1) and these *little* kids are going around on their tricycles and like going through the puddles and making this kind of *spiral* design with the water (.1) around the puddles I was like (.1) [higher pitch] *that is SO beautfiul* (.1) French children, I don't I'm not a big kids (.1) little kids person but (.2) French children, that makes me really happy they're *so*:: *cu::te* and then they speak their with their little French voices and the little kids who play ball in the courtyard and they're all speaking French I'm just like (.2) they're French is so *good* you know ((laughs))

[305] T: ((laughs)) totally=

L: I just, I don't know, part of me wishes (.1) cause we were *supposed* to come, to live in Paris I was supposed to be raised French (.1) and it like changed all at the last minute, my mom and my dad split up when I was like two weeks old, but she had bought an *apartment* and had it all *furnished* and ready to go, and we were all supposed to come back to France (.1) and then they split up, and we stayed in California but I would have *been* like (.4) I would have been a French person like going to bilingual school, you know, so it's kind of like=

=TW: How old were you when this happened?=-

=L: I was like just a day, I was like just born [sips water] I was a new-born when they split up but I found out *later*, like she told me later on, 'you know you were supposed to, we were supposed to live in *France*,' and I was like 'oh great' but now I'm like *WHOA* what if *I* had been a *French person!* (.2) and I'm kinda happy that I, that I've had English as my first language just cause it's such an advantage (.2) um, internationally, and you know, just makes everything a lot easier (.1) um (.2) and also I can still *be French*, I can still take advantage of everything, that it has to offer, and=

=T: What do you mean by that?

L: Well I'm going to get my citizenship

T: Or you are? You can?

L: Yeah (.2) yeah I just have to do it, I just have to go to the consulate and get the papers from my dad. (Interview 1)

Clearly, Lola's connection to Paris – however imaginary – motivates her beyond checking off tourist attractions on a to-do list; she has elected to actively seek French citizenship and make plans to live some version of the French life her life circumstances denied her as a child. Moreover, this feeling of connection engenders a level of fascination with the city and its inhabitants that seems to transcend the detached observations of the typical “tourist gaze” (Urry, 2002). The most striking example of this is a story that Lola repeats across all three interviews about the day she “started crying in the Tuileries” (Interview 3). The following is the version of the story she provided during our first interview in Paris:

T: Did you have, like, can you tell me about like, when you first got here, like any kind of especially memorable kind of experiences you had, you know in Paris?

L: Sometimes I would find myself in places were it would just be *so::* (.1) *beautiful*, not the scenery, but I'll give you one example (.4) I was in the (.1) I was meeting my mom's friend one day in the Tuileries (.2) (or at the) Tuileries station and I walked into the park while I was waiting for her (.1) and I was sitting on the (.1) fountain and they you know the kids that go around with their um (.1) the sticks to push the boats in when they come to the edge (.2) and it was just *so:: beautiful* I like started *crying* I was like [higher pitch] ‘this is the most beautiful place on earth!’ cause it was just=

=T: What was it about it that was so beautiful? =

=L: Just the *people* it's not even like the fact that the Tuileries is so beautiful it's the *people IN the city* it's the (.1) the city's *gorgeous* obviously and the people can be *dicks* but you know in the way they treat if you know, if you don't (.1) my thing is you have to know these like (.2) you have to follow their rules if you want them to be nice to you (.1) they have very *high* standards for politeness but if *you* don't follow the rules *they* won't follow the rules back so if you don't say (higher pitch) ‘excusez-moi monsieur’ you know if you go up to someone and say (higher pitch) ‘excusez-moi de vous deranger’ they're like what can I do for you, you know? ((laughs)) (Interview 1)

Lola offers a perspective on her experience that maintains a tension between touristic objectification and deeply personal and aesthetic epiphany. On the one hand, the Parisian children are presented as nameless and eternal objects of her privileged scrutiny, akin to actors/reenactors in a staged tourist attraction or amusement park (“they you know the kids that go around with their um (.1) the sticks to push the boats in when they come to the edge”). On the other hand, Lola is so deeply touched by the beauty of the situation that she is moved to tears in public. Moreover, she consciously links her aesthetic response to a more rational – if rather essentialized – understanding of French cultural

codes of conduct (“you have to follow their rules if you want them to be nice to you (.1) they have very *high* standards for politeness but if *you* don’t follow the rules *they* won’t follow the rules back”). While Lola’s insights may very well amount to a kind of “descriptive romanticism (Nussbaum, 1997a), it seems that she is also demonstrating exactly the sort of “myths” and “desires” that Kramsch (2006, 2009) argues are typical of eager beginner language learners. As extreme outsiders, these beginner learners relate to the linguistic and cultural forms (i.e. the sounds and surfaces) in much more personal, emotional, and aesthetic ways.

For Lola, who yearns to see what her life would have been like as a French child, the actual Parisian children she encounters become condensed symbols of an idealized ‘French Childhood-ness’ she can now only imagine as an American English monolingual adult. The actual biographic details of who these children really are is not of primary importance for Lola; instead, they function as signifiers to be emptied of their historical specificity and re-filled with Lola’s a-historical “myth” of pure, quintessential ‘French Childhood-ness’. That is, these French children act as signifiers for the French childhood Lola did not, or rather, *could not* have due to her biological parents’ inability to sustain their relationship in France (see excerpt above: “I was supposed to be raised French”). As such, these children signify an imagined past that exists not historically but *symbolically* (Kramsch, 2006b, 2009; Kramsch & Whiteside, 2007, 2008); therefore, Lola draws on their objective reality, i.e. their forms, only in order to imbue them with a deeply subjective symbolic content.

Interestingly, the temporal structure of her narrative further reinforces this “mythic” timelessness. First of all, by embedding the children’s actions within the past progressive action of Lola’s “waiting”, they are framed within an elongated and suspended moment of non-action within the overall minimal narrative sequence (Labov, 1972; Linde, 1993) of Lola’s simple past tense actions (“I walked into the park”/“I like started *crying*”). Furthermore, the children’s own actions are presented in the simple present tense, thereby casting their actions as habitual, perhaps perpetual (e.g. “the kids that go around” versus “the kids that went around” versus “the kids that were going around”). The overall effect of this temporal structuring of events removes the children’s actions from an historic, verifiable event with specific children on a specific day and time and imbues their activity with a timeless quality (i.e. “the kids that are *always* going around”) that further reinforces their “mythic” status in Lola’s account. Closely related to the notion of myth is “desire” (Kramsch, 2006, 2009). Desire drives language learning and cultural adaptation – it is the learner’s deep motivation to identify with another linguistic and cultural reality.

It is undeniable that desire is a driving force in Lola’s attachment to Paris. During our discussion about the feasibility of her returning to live and work in Paris after graduation, Lola explicitly equates the city with a *lover*:

I feel *so at home* here and so comfortable and really I do not miss California at all  
(.1) uh, I just miss my dog, if I could bring my dog I feel like my life would be

*complete* like (.1) I don't even *care* that like I don't have a *boyfriend* and like (.1) I'm *happy* that I don't have a boyfriend to *miss* but (.1) like, eh, just *being here*, I'm *fine* being single, I'm, it's like this *great* feeling of *independence* and like, *Paris* as my *lover*, you know, I just *love* living here so much I don't need anything else (.1) I just need some, I just need something do, I need some money to earn ((laughs)) you know and I need my dog and I just want to be here  
[T: Paris as your *lover*, that's great. (Interview 1)]

Seen in this light, and in light of the deeply personal significance of her time spent studying abroad in Paris, Lola's self-centeredness and her exaggerated, highly affective appraisals of France and the French take on added meaning. Yes, she is trying to 'have Paris' on her own terms, but she does not simply remain within a privileged and cocooned vantage point from which she alone can decide how her time abroad will impact her. Not altogether unlike a student in full linguistic and cultural immersion, Lola has begun to understand that France offers a way of life that cannot be replicated in English and/or in the United States. Of course, her appraisals remain largely on the surface of things, but this overflowing enthusiasm can perhaps be seen as positive early indicator of Lola's potential for eventually becoming, in her words, "a part of this *great amazing* (.2) thing, that's so big and wonderful and that so many people have loved" (Interview 1).

### ***Post script.***

In the end, Lola chose not to pursue French citizenship as her efforts to contact her father were complicated by his financial and health problems. She did return to Paris during the summer after graduation as part of a month long trip across several countries in western and eastern Europe that culminated with Lola spending two months studying Spanish in Spain. Following that, Lola briefly returned to the United States before deciding to move to New Zealand then Australia, where she still lives at the time of this writing.

### **Veronica.**

Veronica entered the fall semester of 2006 as a twenty-year old junior majoring in communications. Although she was born in Romania to Romanian parents, her family immigrated to the United States immediately after her birth. Aside from a two-day jaunt to Mexico one spring break, Veronica had never left her home state of California prior to her semester in Paris. She was bilingual English-Romanian; however, her parents had insisted on English in the home, so her knowledge of Romanian was passive and she was not literate in the language. She had studied French for four years in high school, but she had not taken any undergraduate French classes prior to the term in Paris.

Like many of the other students in the program, Veronica was not primarily motivated by language learning goals. For Veronica, studying abroad in Paris was seen as an opportunity for a break from the rigors of her home university; in fact, she admitted to

having selected Paris largely due to the portrayal of France and the French on American television:

V: Um, well I definitely wanted to do, um I decided to do France because it's like the cultural capital of Europe, like whenever you see people on *TV* going abroad they go to *France*, and um, I figure, uh Paris, you know everybody talks about Paris, it was really mostly just um, I just thought that it would be interesting cause everyone goes on about Paris, I didn't have any, I didn't *research* it too much honestly, but, um, this program went well with my major just because it's so flexible about the classes, and it was *English speaking* which I *definitely* wanted to do because I, I was=

=T: You hadn't taken the French=

=V: Right, and I, I wasn't up to the challenge of having like, of like studying at the Sorbonne or anything like that so, it seemed like something that wouldn't be too strenuous, cause I wanted to enjoy the time here, not just have it be really rigorous academic work. (Interview 1)

Like Lola, and the other students I interviewed, Veronica equates culture with the degree of cultivation and refinement that both nations and individuals differentially possess (cf. Risager, 2006). Moreover, she also tacitly assumes that an individual may enrich his/her own culture in contact with a new and more 'cultivated' community. However, unlike Lola who charges forth into the cultural fray, Veronica's high regard for French culture actually holds her back from engaging with her environment. For fear of coming off as an 'uncultured' provincial, Veronica admits to avoiding any engagement with the French on their terms, i.e. in French:

V: Yeah, sort of, um, I sorta had this crazy idea in my mind that I was going to become really fluent ((laughs)) but it was kind of like wishful thinking and, but I, I blame myself, I should've uh (.1) the first words out of my mouth here usually when I go ask someone, is 'parlez-vous anglais?' so it's kinda my fault that I don't, uh, push myself more=

=T: You do that? =

=V: Yeah I totally do that ((laughs)) =

=T: Ha ha! =

=V: ((laughing)) I'm *weak*, but uh, yeah it's really hard, but I *know*, I know the French, I, I know how to speak it, but I just really, you know the French are very *proud* people so I'm really self-conscious of how my accent sounds? but if I *drink* or something then I'm really confident, ((laughing)) and I'll try to speak more French, you know (.2) but um, (Interview 1)

Indeed, Veronica seems to have taken yet another cue from American popular culture stereotypes of the French: yes, they are extremely cultivated people; unfortunately, they know it all too well and are rude, condescending snobs (Levenstein, 1998, 2004; Sedaris, 2000). During our first interview, Veronica describes most of her run-ins with the French as emphatically negative – from waiters who mock her to a baker who pretends not to

understand the French of one of her American peers. Like the students in Kinginger's (2009) study, Veronica reacts to this perceived rudeness by withdrawing into her 'American-ness': "I was just like pissed off when I was there, I was like wearing my Berkeley sweater when the accent people were like do not wear things that say American things on them, I'm like *fuck everybody! This is my shirt with letters on it!*" (Interview 3). Furthermore, turning her attention to her peers, Veronica suggests that those students who insist on speaking French are doing so more in effort to put on haughty, elitist airs than truly to work on their linguistic proficiency:

V: Ok, there's one group we call the faux pas's ((laughs)) because=

[T: Who are the mean girls?

=T: Oh that's awesome! ((laughs))=

=V: Because, because [whispering] they're *douchebags* and they speak French in class and it's just you can't play this back to anyone, but they speak French in class [back to normal volume] and they try to show off, they seriously think they're better than other people just because they speak French, it's ridiculous, and they look down, you can tell, they're speaking French and that's fine but when they're ignoring other people just because they don't, I think that's pretty shitty you know. (Interview 1)

Clearly, for Veronica, adjusting to life in Paris was extremely difficult, and this caused her to assume a defensive position vis-à-vis both the French and her more successful peers. In fact, like many of the students I interviewed, most of Veronica's interview comments center on evaluating the peer dynamics of her fellow Americans. Critics of American study abroad suggest that this is typical of American undergraduates' narcissistic incapacity to consider the 'Other' on its own terms (Engle & Engle, 2002; Feinberg, 2002; see chapter four and discussion below).

However, while Veronica does focus much of her discussion on her peers, she does this primarily to set herself apart from them and to highlight her struggle to successfully negotiate her social identity and status in her peer interactions. According to Veronica, due to the vagaries of the rapid clique formation in the early weeks of the program, she received an "imposed identity" (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004) that pigeon-holed her as a social outcast:

V: And then, um, yeah, and you can tell here who was popular back at their school and then who was just like the quiet people and all this, you know what I mean? But, at the, like now that I hang out with like cool people here and stuff I feel like I'm more like myself, but at the beginning I was like, I'm not, I'm so out of character right now, because=

=T: I hate that feeling=

=V: You know, I know and I was like everyone here thinks I'm like this quiet, little like nerdy person I was like nobody has any idea what I'm really like and then I was kinda like I don't care because I was still talking to my friends from home a lot? Like my friends from=

=T: You think people thought you were nerdy?

V: Well not nerdy, just like, you know like you think people are quiet

[T: like (weak) or something=

=V: Boring, yeah, like people they just don't know what you're really like, and I was telling my, I would talk to my best friend from home and she'd be like who cares like you talk to me and I know how you are, but it still bothered me so much cuz I was like, no like, I'm not saying they were like shortchanged but I felt like I was, I was like no, like I'm, it's, it's frustrating not being able to be yourself you know, and I was like I know I'm in a different country but I'm still hanging out with American people in an American dorm, I shouldn't be like this you know, but now I feel like a lot better about it, I don't know, (Interview 1)

While this differs in many respects from the kind of identity negotiation (Pellegrino-Aveni, 1998b, 2005) and “reduced personality” (Harder, 1980, p. 268) associated with second language learning in immersion contexts, there are some key similarities. Like the language learner abroad who finds that his/her L1 self must be re-negotiated in L2 social interactions, Veronica feels like a “blank slate” (Interview 1) whose social ‘markings’ she does not totally control. Furthermore, Veronica’s discomfort in being socially positioned in ways she does not prefer is not altogether unlike the language learner’s embarrassment of feeling like a “coarse and primitive character” (Harder, 1980, p. 268) in interactions with native speakers. From an SLA perspective, however, Veronica’s retreat to ‘safer’ online interactions with her friend in the United States would at best amount to a failure to persevere through the difficulties of negotiating a communicatively competent social identity in the L2 speech community (Pellegrino-Aveni, 2005; Kinginger, 2008; Citron, 2002). Or rather, since Veronica’s identity struggles occur in English within the American study abroad program, SLA researchers concerned with language learning would most likely dismiss Veronica’s fixation on peer relations as indicative of a intransigent monolingualism in the face of the potential bilingualism offered by a term abroad in France.

In Veronica’s case, however, her preference for interacting with her American friend online suggests more than a preference for English, but for a preferred “subject position” wherein she is “cool” – a desired self denied her by her peers thus far. Moreover, while she does not state this directly, her struggles to ‘be herself’ in this new social milieu underscore the central tenet of Kramsch’s view of the subject “as decentered, historically and socially contingent – a subject that defines itself and is defined in interaction with other contingent subjects” (2009, p. 20). That is, by withdrawing into a familiar relationship, Veronica defends a subject position that has been put peril by studying abroad in this particular program. Like Lola, Veronica wants to retain control of her own subject positioning: whether by switching to English in interactions with the French (see excerpt above) or by avoiding any face-to-face peer interaction whatsoever.

Veronica draws on another potent symbolic resource for maintaining her desired subject position while abroad: narrative. Before moving to Paris, Veronica started a web log, or

'blog', with the intention of chronicling her "personal growth" (Blog entry, 07/26/06, see below) during study abroad:

T: So, I see, so is writing? You said you've been blogging, how long have you been blogging?

V: Um, about France? Or in general?

T: In general

V: I:: just starte:::d, this:::, right before this summer, because I knew I was gonna be coming here and I wanted to like, have some way of documenting it, cuz, I knew that I'd be like going through all these different you know, emotions, all that sort of thing, and I wanna, I wanna be able to remember it and maybe one day my kids will like want to see what it was like, and I think, even right now it's really cool, when I look back to like, posts I wrote in like, I wrote, I remember in may I was writing something, like right after finals, I was like, *oh* I'm so glad finals are over but, my life is, or before, right as I was applying for study abroad I was writing about how boring I felt like my life was, and I was like every day I go to, you know every semester isn't that different, I have different classes but, it's just, I'm just going through the motions, you know classes, midterms, finals, you know, like drinking on the weekends, just going to the same places, seeing the same movies, all this sort of thing, and then here, it's just, everything's been turned completely upside down and I really like that, but at the beginning I had like, if you read my blog you'll see like,=

=T: Oh I will=

=V: the first post, like, I had *such a rough time* at the beginning=

=T: I remember!=

=V: Remember when I was digging in the trash! For my keys! ((laughs)) You remember my keys!=

=T: ((laughs)) Yeah! You have that story on your blog?!

B: Um, no cuz it's embarrassing ((laughs))=

=T: Oh dude! You have to tell that story!=

=V: Oh my god, I'll retell it someday ((laughs))=

=T: Write it up, ok, if you have time write it up for me sometime=

=V: Ok ok I'll write it up and I'll make it funny=

=T: Yeah=

=V: But just stuff like that, like everything. (Interview 1)

In this excerpt, Veronica begins by suggesting that her blog will act as a kind of narrative heirloom, an historical account of her life to be passed down to future generations ("maybe one day my kids will like want to see what it was like"). She then references an actual blog post she wrote at the end of the semester prior to her term abroad. In this post, entitled "Endings, and Beginnings" (see below; Appendix 3), she contrasts the tedium of her undergraduate routine with the promise of life-altering transformation offered by study abroad in France. Although she mentions her tendency to cling to the familiar ("I take the most comfort in the things that I am most familiar with"), the dominant theme is the familiar American ("fast capitalist", Gee et al., 1996) adage:



“Change is always good – I firmly believe that” (Appendix 3). Most striking, given the preceding discussion of Veronica’s difficulties in adjusting to dormitory life, is her proclamation to “completely reinvent myself for a semester”:

[...] I'm content with my life right now, but maybe it's naive to think there isn't something better out there. There has to be! Change is always good--I firmly believe that. Everyone complains that work and school are routine, but it's so much more than that. Life itself becomes routine when you don't switch things up every now and then. I have a few solid friends from high school, so I know that that part of my life has stabled out. College is a different story. On one level, I feel like it's so incredibly static--I'm in the same seat at the same time on Tuesdays and Thursdays, I write the same type of paper every couple of weeks, and I similarly stress for midterms every few months. When it comes down to it, not much changes from semester to semester (although the drama has subsided greatly). But on the other hand, there is so much that is still very dynamic and unknown about my college self. Will I graduate early? Is this what I really want to major in? Where am I going to be living in a few years? We all complain about the uncertainty, but how boring would it be if we all knew our futures/destinies? Actually, I don't really believe in fate or destiny--it's all what you make of it. Which brings me back to Paris. Paris is my "fate." But I'm going to make it my own. I want to have direction.

When I set foot in Europe, I want to live my life totally differently. I'm making it a goal to be very open to new things, like meeting new people and going places I normally might not go. I feel like I did the dorms all wrong--I shut myself up in my room and stayed on AIM all day chatting with high school friends I really missed--it still turned out ok, because I ended up keeping the good friends from high school and still ended up making some great friends from my dorm floor, but I want it to be different this time around. I'm going to be social, I'm going to introduce myself to new people, and I'm not going to be shy. Studying abroad (ha!) is my chance to completely reinvent myself for a semester. This is such a unique opportunity, and I feel so lucky to be getting it. I can't believe I considered not going for a little while--I seriously almost withdrew my application at one point--partly because I was scared, partly because I felt so attached to everything here. I was afraid that I would leave for 4 months, only to return to a home that had become foreign to me. I thought I was scared about everyone else changing, but in retrospect, I think I was more worried about changing myself--and my relationships with people. Now I see that it's useless to fight change, because it will take you down kicking and screaming. And a little change never hurt anyone, anyway. I'm still a little saddened by the fact that my stay in France will put some distance between me and some people--in more ways than one--but I know that it's something I need to do. The people that matter will still be there when I get back, and I'll be thinking about my closest friends every day. I'm glad for everyone who has helped me get to the point I am at today, and I look forward to the person I will become in Paris, and the person I will be when I come back. I

believe that resisting change is futile, so I say, bring it. Here's to Paris, personal growth, and change. C'est le commencement, pas le fin. (Appendix 3)

Upon comparing the interview excerpt to the blog post, Veronica's refusal to blog about her "rough time at the beginning" takes on added meaning. For Veronica, her blog is not a factual chronicle of her life experience; it is a symbolic resource intended for positioning herself vis-a-vis her audience in ways that do not "embarrass" her: "I never admit my defeats in my blog" (Interview 2). That is, while all autobiographic narrative is ultimately aimed at demonstrating the normal, or ideal, nature of the narrator (Labov, 1972, 1997; Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Linde, 1994; Polanyi, 1985), Veronica's blog posts, as both written and public narratives, are deliberate attempts to re-write and re-imagine her life experiences in a manner that constitutes an idealized subject position. As a type of communicative practice that maximizes authorial control, Veronica's blog posts provide a means for her to create a "narratorial self" (Kramsch, 2009, p. 73) that she feels is as constitutive of her subjectivity as the actual life experiences she relates: "In describing the world, we are often constituting it" (Hanks, 1996, p. 237). As a result, during the first six weeks of the program Veronica does not post a single blog entry (see Appendix); that is, not until she can re-cast the humiliation ("digging through the trash") and social alienation she experienced in a manner consistent with her narratorial self: "Ok ok I'll write it up and I'll make it funny."

When she does, in a blog entry posted on September 20<sup>th</sup>, she re-presents her "rough time" as at once outside of her control due to technical difficulties and ultimately "a blessing in disguise":

#### Technology-1, Veronica-0

After a long bout with technology, some traveling around Europe, and many many pastries, I am finally back online. I really was going to update this thing over 2 weeks ago, but my computer ended up crashing, and it's just my luck that it would happen to me while I was in France. Oh, horror of horrors, it sucked not having Internet at my fingertips for those 2 weeks. But, to sound clichéd, it was really a blessing in disguise. What a surprise, huh?

There is so, so much to say, and I felt so much more passionately about reporting everything before, but now, it's just sort of "meh." I will say this, though. "Losing" my computer for those 2 weeks definitely took a toll on me, and not for the worst. I learned to be more pensive and just relax in whatever setting I was in, and it forced me to go out and meet more people. [...] In retrospect, my long stroke of bad luck is pretty funny, just like every bad situation is when you look back on it. I don't want to get too into what's been going on, so I'll just list some little nuggets of my experiences here thus far. (Appendix 3)

First, by framing her entry within the familiar discourse of sports scores, "Technology-1 Veronica-0", she renders her "defeat" (Interview 2, see above) as an unfortunate outcome

of “a long bout” that, while a loss, indexes the ideology of American sportsmanship in which losing one game is par for the course for the competitor who ‘wins some, and loses some.’ Though somewhat self-deprecating, this authorial stance established Veronica as a ‘good sport’ who is willing to admit – and *laugh* at – defeats without being defined by them. Next, like the athlete who ‘learns from her mistakes’, Veronica highlights the opportunities presented by her life challenges: “[...]it was really a blessing in disguise. What a surprise, huh?” That is, rather than a significant set-back, Veronica re-casts her loss of her online network as an opportunity to get in touch with both herself (“I learned to be more pensive and just relax in whatever setting I was in”) and others (“it forced me to go out and meet more people”). However, regarding the latter, in the final passages of her blog post Veronica explains that she has had to ‘go abroad’ to connect with people who recognize who she “really [is]”:

It's kind of lame that I have to go to a different country to meet interesting people, because quite frankly, a lot of people on this program are tools. But it's kind of nice being introverted for a change. I still know the person I really am inside, and I could not care less what a lot—not all, but many/most—of the people on this program think about me. (Appendix 3)

Here, Veronica puts her “narratorial self” somewhat at jeopardy: in her pre-departure post (see above), Veronica had pledged to not repeat her social errors of university dormitory life (“I feel like I did the dorms all wrong – I shut myself up in my room and stayed on AIM all day chatting with high school friends”), yet here in Paris she is once again recoiling from peer interactions. However, study abroad has afforded a new avenue for social connections – a *European* network to be accessed by leaving the hostile social environment she has encountered among her fellow Americans in Paris. In fact, it is by leaving France that Veronica finally manages to be received by the French in a manner that suits her:

V: ...And like some French g-, I went to go visit my friend in England and some French guy was living on his floor, he told me he read my blog and he was like you're such a good writer, you should write a book called 'fear and loathing, how I came to eat snails in France', and I was so flattered that a French person thought I was interesting cause I really, like (.1) assholes or not I really look up to them you know, they're much more cultured than I am, and now=  
 =T: What do you mean by that? Oh, ok keeping going, sorry=  
 =B: Well now that I've been to France I know why they say it's the cultural capital of the world, like I totally believe that, you know like, like the food is, you know you think France you think food, you think like cheese, wine, like the finest cheeses and wines, things like that, that's you know kinda= (Interview 2).

Unlike the “proud” French who intimidate her into reverting to English in the streets of Paris (see above, Interview 1), this “French guy” finds Veronica’s online persona “interesting”. Of course, their interaction is still in English, but naturally so given the British context, and one in which Veronica feels ‘on the same level’ as a citizen from

“the cultural capital of the world.” Moreover, this Frenchman she “look[s] up to” has read her posts about her life in France and validates her struggles as understandable, even laudable (“you should write a book”). That is, Veronica sees this encounter, though monolingual, as an intercultural rapprochement wherein she has at least momentarily entered a cultural field defined by (her understanding of) *European* terms of distinction. Furthermore, as our interviews progressed, Veronica’s negotiations with the real and imagined dimensions of a European identity took on added salience.

Indeed, Veronica’s identity negotiation goes well beyond peer interactions: although she was born in Romania and raised by Romanian parents, Veronica has never visited her homeland and she has some significant qualms about ever doing so. While she positions France as the “cultural capital of Europe”, Veronica’s imagines a Romania that is so culturally un-evolved that life itself – instead of television or film – occurs in “*black and white*”:

=V: ((laughs)) well plus, I don’t know, it’s kind of, it’s, I have this image of it in my mind like it’s *black and white* almost, like I just imagine that it’s *so backwards*, and I, I’m really, I’m actually kind of scared to go over there just to see what it’s like but I, I will eventually go, but, yeah, but um, yeah my dad was super pissed when I, I came here and I didn’t go there, but I told h-, this is why I didn’t go to *Prague* because I knew that if I went to eastern Europe he would kick my ass for not, making, going to their eastern Europe, and I told him, I was like ‘dad, I’ll go when Romania joins the EU’ that’s when I’ll go to Romania, cause they’re still on the lay, it’s different money, I’m a vegetarian, my grandmother would *not* understand this concept, she’d be like ‘oh, you’re a vegetarian?’ she’d put *lamb* on my plate or something, like something ridiculous, yeah, so, I mean it’s, I know eastern Europe isn’t what it used to be I’m still kind of like (.2) I, I’m still kind of worried about going there, and, I don’t know the language, and I know that she’d be really (.2) disa-, (Interview 1)

As in her rejection of the “nerd” subject position imposed by her peers, Veronica’s struggle to identify with her Romanian-ness on her terms is fraught with anxieties. Once again, she is unhappy with the symbolic capital of the identities available to her in the public sphere (a non-“EU” eastern European identity from “their eastern Europe”), and she prefers to opt out of engagement rather than to attempt to reconcile who she imagines herself to be with how ‘the world’ sees her. In the hypothetical meal with her grandmother, for example, Veronica imagines her identity as a “vegetarian” – which she has presumably managed to negotiate successfully in the United States – being rejected in a “backwards” Romanian context where her grandmother “would not understand this concept.” That is, Veronica’s Romania is a place of imposed identity (Romanians = meat eaters) where she would lose all control over her subject positioning, the negative consequences of which would include a corporal revulsion (she’d put *lamb* on my plate or something, like something ridiculous”). Unlike the haute cuisine of (EU) France that she equates with high culture (“the cultural capital”), Romanian cuisine is associated with an antiquated “black and white” Europe that Veronica avoids at all costs.

Indeed, unlike the “tertiary socialization” (Byram & Alfred, 2002) situation of integrating into the American study abroad program community, in this instance the specter of her Romanian grandmother confronts Veronica with a much more face-threatening scenario rooted in differentially accorded symbolic capital afforded by the complexities and contradictions of her multicultural and multilingual subjectivity. In a continuation of the previously cited comments, Veronica tells the story of a particularly distressing run-in with her Romanian grandmother:

V: [...] I’m still kind of worried about going there, and, I don’t know the language, and I know that she’d be really (.2) disa-, she called me, this Saturday she called me, I don’t know how she got my number, I guess my dad gave her my dorm room number, and she calls me, and she just says, we have like a minute and a half long conversation, of course she calls me at like 7:30 in the morning on *Saturday*, when I’m sick and I wanna sleep in, she calls me and in Romanian she says ‘why don’t you call? Why don’t you write?’ I couldn’t, I was responding in French, because that’s like, I I, I know she doesn’t understand English and I was like well French is closer to Romanian than English is, and then after I respond in French, she says ‘oh, you learn French but you don’t learn Romanian?’ and then she says ‘oh PS tell your dad I said happy birthday, talk to you later’ and then she *hangs up the phone*, so we had like this 2 minute long conversation=

=T: Guilting you!=

=V: Yeah, it was *ridiculous*! And I sent her a postcard and I didn’t put the return address because she writes me these big elaborate letters in Romanian that I (.2) my dad usually has to sit there, and like, I’ll tell him what I want to say and he tells me how to write it, but I can’t do it on my own and she gets really pissed= (Interview 1).

Raised by Romanians in an English-only household, she has acquired only a passive competence in the language of her extended family. However, her parents (especially her father) also expect her to maintain relationships with her Romanian family *in Romanian* (“I don’t know how she got my number, I guess my dad gave her my dorm room number”). Like many immigrants in that situation, Veronica feels torn between understanding herself in purely American terms and attempting to explore the ‘Old World’ dimensions of her hyphenated linguistic and cultural identity. During our first interview, she self-identifies as first and foremost a “Californian”:

T: So, if you had to speak in those terms, you wouldn’t consider your sort of Romanian-ness as like a significant part of your identity?

V: No

T: You’d say like I’m an American first? and a Californian? Or what would you say?

V: I’m:: yeah, I’m Californian, more than I, yeah I think that I’m more Californian than American because there’s a lot of things about America that I

think I don't identify with as much, but California, anything goes, so I identify much more with that. (Interview 1)

However, she also indicates that one of her primary motivations for studying abroad in Paris was to connect with her parents' *European* past. While she sees identifying with the French as impossible, and identifying with the Romanians as distasteful, she eventually opts for a "European" identity (Interview 2):

T: In the last interview we had, you mentioned the fact that your parents are Romanian and you mentioned the fact that you didn't really have a strong connection with your European Romanian family, and you know part of it was linguistic and what have you, but now you're saying you're European, what do you mean by that?=  
[V: I am European  
=V: Well, I'm better than most people ((laughs))=  
=T: Well well, clearly

V: No but I mean, uh, my mom always, uh (.2) I felt European even before I came here but now I really know, like I think it's really cool- like my mom did gym-, she was in Romania, she did gymnastics for like the first 14 years of her life, like=  
=T: Oh like straight up?=  
=V: *Hardcore*, hardcore like, where they would like malnourish you so you wouldn't, you know, be like this tall or they'd cut you out=  
=T: Yeah yeah Romanians are freakin' (hard)=  
=V: Yeah seriously, my mom did all this stuff, and then, when they took us to the French ballet here I was looking, they were doing like a little imitation of um, gymnastics and I was thinking this is what my mom did, and then when I came back from fucking Venice on a tour bus, that's what I was thinking about like my mom would travel all over the country for these meets and stuff, so I just feel like a lot of things I'm doing were things that she did and I think it's so cool because like I get to, see, you know (.2) what the experience was like kinda, you know I know it's like eastern Europe and it was much poorer and it's really different but, I I just think it's really cool that I um, get to see that kind of stuff

T: Does it make you want to go to Romania?  
V: Yeah, eventually, I guess, after, I want to go there with my dad just cuz I have like um, I just have all the, it's kind of like built up a lot in my head and I just imagine this like backwards black and white country, you know what I mean?=  
=T: Yeahyeahyeah=  
=V: I just, it it, that's all I can think of, like you know like in the wizard of oz how it's black and white at the beginning of the movie and then it's Technicolor? Like I just can't imagine, I, it, and that's something, like that's where I'm *from*, as much as you can say I'm from, like, you know born there but only a year, really not that Romanian but (.2) like that's going to be a big (.2) garden state moment in my life ((laughs)) so I kinda want to, I need someone there for support, so maybe I'll go there with my like friend or my family or something you know but,

that's going to be *weird*, like that's gonna be a *weird* moment in my life I think.  
(Interview 2)

Taking the two previous excerpts together, one finds Veronica selectively cobbling together an idealized subject: here “Californian”, “Romanian”, and “European” do not indicate geographic provenance – these terms point not to places on the map, but to the symbolic capital of idealized subject positions. Caught between the two unacceptable symbolic valences of her Romanian-American identity, Veronica chooses *not to choose* by replacing her hyphenated identity with a purely symbolic subject position that exists only in her perception of the symbolic distinction afforded to her being a “European” among Americans. In many ways, studying abroad in France has allowed Veronica to have her ‘European homecoming’ on her own terms: by aligning her mother’s past as a Romanian gymnast touring “poor” “eastern Europe” with Parisian ballet dancers and Veronica’s bus ride from Venice, Veronica creates a “layered simultaneity” (Blommaert, 2005) wherein Veronica’s and her mother’s 20-year-old selves confront each other in the a-historical moment of the myth of “European-ness” -- i.e. where both she and her mother can escape the unwanted symbolic values of “Romanian” and “American”.

Of course, one might be inclined to dismiss this as akin to the identity shopping of the cosmopolitan elite (Skeggs, 2004). In Veronica’s case, however, this self-construction is part of a more fundamental and *high-stakes* process of reconciling the contradictions inherent in an identity that is “multiple, a site of struggle, and changing over time” (Norton-Pierce, 1995, p. 14). Moreover, while it may be hard to establish a causal link between studying abroad *in France* and the triggering of Veronica’s identity crisis, it is clear that her understanding (however essentialized) of the differential cultural and symbolic endowment of France, Romania, and the United States all factor into her efforts to negotiate a “third place” (Kramsch, 1993, p. 47) among all three:

T: So, culture?

V: Oh ok yeah, culture capital, yeah like the cheese and the wine I’ve totally gotten into that, and like, I’m European and my parents are Europ-, my mom, I was talking to my mom about it and she says oh do you feel different coming back blahblahblah all the clichéd questions you know, and she’s saying it with a note of sarcasm but she’s still saying, um, she said are you gonna be a snob when you come back, and I was like yeah a little, and she’s like well, you know, you may be American but you were raised by Europeans and you were born in Europe, and I’m like yeah mom, I know, I got it blahblahblah you know all this stuff, but yeah, just like, stuff like that, like France has, you know you walk down the street and you hear an *accordion playing*, it’s like this guy with the accordion is following you! You know and then they have like *fashion*, exactly, (Interview 2)

***Post script.***

Due to scheduling conflicts involving a summer internship, Victoria did not accompany her father to Romania in 2007. She graduated a semester early, moved back to southern California for six months, then relocated to New York City to pursue a career in publishing. She still lives there at the time of this writing.

### **Claire.**

A 19-year-old third-year undergraduate sociology major, Claire was the youngest of the participants in the study. Both of her parents were language educators, with her father teaching French literature at a state university and her mother (of French descent) teaching high school French and German. In fact, she spent a year of her early childhood living in France while her father worked as a study abroad program director. However, like Lola and Victoria, Claire's motivations for studying abroad in Paris are grounded in more "cultural" pursuits:

C: Well, um, I (definitely) have a *background* with France because I lived there when I was younger, and um, I took it in high school, and my parents are both really into it, and I really like the French culture, so I just sorta figured like, I knew I was gonna study abroad *somewhere*, (then) I wanted to go to France, and that sorta like turned into Paris because, it's a *big city* and I never lived in a big city, so, it's just something I felt like I had to do

T: What do you mean by French culture?

C: Um, the food in particular, I like the European, in general I like the European culture I'm kinda fascinated with it, just like the history, and, I've visited here a few times before too so I kinda got a *taste* of it? (Interview 1).

So, for Claire, choosing this program in Paris had more to do with the city's size and gastronomical offerings than the actual study abroad program's curricular particulars. Furthermore, like the others, Claire sees study abroad as a unique opportunity for institutionally sanctioned 'time off' from the rigors of her home university:

C: But for me, I came here because, I wanted to (.1) like it's such a, it's an *experience*, but like, people (.1) I don't understand why more people don't take advantage of it because it's like the only time in your life when you can just *go* to a foreign country and like *study* you know take like, pretty simp, easy classes to a certain extent, and like not have any responsibility and *just live here*, you know, like you can come back later in life but like you have to have a *job* and you have to, you don't have the excuse or the luxury of being a student, so it's like, for me it was more like the *experience* and something I know that I'd take with me forever, eating the food, drinking the wine, like all that stuff, it was more important to me, so, (Interview 2)



That is, she explicitly associates study abroad and “culture” with leisure and luxury, and in doing so she animates (Goffman, 1981) the consumerist discourse that sees study abroad as “the product students buy to fill [their] leisure time while avoiding the sin of idling away a semester” (Bolen, 2001, p. 188, see Chapter three). In this view, study abroad is posited as a kind of higher education loophole to be exploited by clever students intent on “taking advantage” of the opportunity to live like a tourist under the aegis of the university. Indeed, Claire sees travel as one of the most important dimensions of her semester in Paris. After an extended discussion of how her connection to France differs from her parents’, I ask:

T: So that was their thing so you want to have your own thing. But you still chose to study abroad in France?

C: Because, I think, well, I, I’m really into like sociology and like international (issues), just like that always fascinated me, but culture=

=T: Your major’s Soc?=-

=C: Soc, yeah, and um, I love traveling, and that’s definitely something we all, that all my family shares in common, so, I, it’s like enough ingrained in me, I think, that it’s still like an interest to me, but it’s not the *language part* that necessarily is, even though that of course is very important, and I would love to be fluent again one day but I think I’d have to really *live here* and be completely integrated into the system to actually do that, so

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

C: But, it’s different, I think my reasons for coming here are similar in some ways to why my parents decided to go, and study abroad, but um, different in the sense that, just for me it’s like I *love* travelling and that’s such a big part of my life that, coming somewhere where I have like a history and I feel like I have a some type of *connection?* with it, like that’s really cool, and I have, I have French ancestry and stuff like that too, so it just, I don’t know= (Interview 1)

However, in the above excerpt, Claire reveals a complicating detail regarding her current attitude toward learning French: as a three-year-old child living in France for one year, she *was* fluent, but she lost her French after the family moved back to the United States. She has very few surviving memories of this period in her life; in fact, she spends most of her time on the subject describing what she sees as her inability to learn languages. In fact, Claire considers her lack of proficiency in French as a key indication of her difference from her parents:

T: OK, so your father is a prof of French, right?

C: Uh huh

T: And your mom is a high school French teacher?

C: Yes

T: And you studied French all through HS?

C: Yep

T: Is there a reason why you didn’t take more French classes in undergrad?

C: Yeah, I, I'm really bad at it ((laughs)) so, it's like one of those things, I don't know if it's partially like a *block*, because my parents are both *so* into languages, like my mom speaks fluent, um French, Dutch, and German, she has her Master's in German and French, and my dad's like, you know really good at languages too, he speaks like Portugese, French, and like (.1) they're *so into languages* and so my brother and I always joke about just *not* getting that *gene*, and think maybe it's just because, kinda, when someone's good at something in your family, like my brother's really good at *art* so I never really tried to draw, because that was his thing, so like my parents are really into it, so I was kinda like (.1) I mean it was a combination of the fact that like my *mom* was my *teacher*? in high school?, which was a little strange, but um, it was almost like I didn't, (.1) like I, I did *fine*, you know I've never been a, I've never been a bad student, but it wasn't like, I mean all throughout high school I got all As and a *B in French*, that was every single quarter, and it was so funny cause it was my mom's class and I always got a B in her class, and it was so, I always just *joked* with her about it, and she's just like, you know? like, but it was *proof* that she obviously wasn't favoring me, like I definitely didn't *deserve* an A? but it was like kinda funny that my one bad grade, or not as good a grade would be in that class. (Interview 1)

Like Veronica, Claire seems to hold ambivalent attitudes towards the complexities of her linguistic identity. On the one hand, by studying French in high school and by electing to study abroad in France, she has clearly sought out a re-connection with her lost language and her lost memories of childhood proficiency. On the other hand, however, she asserts her right to determine the significance of this loss, especially insofar as it relates to her self-identity. That is, if one's self-identity is considered the product of "the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives" (Giddens: 1991, p. 8), Claire's efforts to portray herself as 'not a language person' may be understood as a deliberate attempt to reconcile her current monolingual American self with her shadowy recollections of her former French self.

In this way, Claire's testimony highlights the subjective dimensions of her conflicting autobiographical relationship with the French language. That is, her acquisition and loss of French proficiency are posited as outside of her control, the product of "historical and social contingencies" (Kramsch, 2009, p. 18) of a partially-bilingual primary socialization dictated by her family's movements across speech communities. As a result, Claire posits the source of her difficulties (re)learning French as outside of her conscious control: she is "blocked" by "not getting that [language learning] gene" from her multilingual parents.

Unlike in Veronica's interview accounts, however, in Claire's testimonies she suggests that her parents accept Claire's self-determination as an English monolingual only interested in French "culture". In fact, according to Claire, it was her parents who suggested that she not seek out the more intensive immersion experience of living with a host family:

C: (...) so this particular program too I chose because, I didn't want to live in a home stay (.2) I know that's kinda funny because that would have been much more of an authentic integration, but even my parents both of them kind of dissuaded me from it? Because they said that, Parisian families, and this kind of funny because they're both really into France and they're not ethnocentric people at all, but they're just like you know you could be very lucky, or you could get, you could be very unlucky with that situation, and so, and I'm someone who has, I kinda had free reign growing up for the most part as far as like doing, taking care of my own business and kinda coming and going as I please, so it's like, I really didn't want the responsibility of offending a family or like, you know, like ((laughs)) you know just like I didn't want that kind of like, I I, I wanted to come here and do my thing and be selfish, like you know, I've had a roommate and not had my own room for so long back home, you know you share a room and stuff, so it's like, this like possibility of having a studio apartment in Paris, like you know, in the bastille, like all this shit, I read that and I was just like, ok, that's it, that's what I'm doing, you know like, (Interview 1)

Like Lola, Claire's early childhood experiences in France remain largely imagined, and she opts to decide for herself how to integrate them into her adult self-understanding. However, unlike Lola, Claire seems content to leave the past in the past. In fact, for Claire, enrolling in this program represents a conscious effort to re-connect with France in ways that are appropriate for her, not her francophile parents:

C: (...) I kept thinking to myself I'm like this is so cool because I'm here *on my own* I'm not with my parents and I'm doing this and like I'm the one who's here you know what I mean? And I'm gonna be here for four months and it's totally my decision and I didn't know anyone coming here which was, awesome, I mean it was a little scary but at the same time it was just so much more (.3) like, it made me feel so much better about myself as far as like what I was doing, it was something that was completely for myself, rather than for anyone else, you know? (Interview 1)

Claire seems much more accepting of her childhood 'loss' than Lola, and she is considerably more comfortable with her monolingual American existence. Indeed, she admits to having been immensely relieved when she finally met up with her American peers after she spent several pre-program days of French immersion with friends of the family:

C: (...) it was just really difficult, cuz I got there four days before the program actually started so, that was probably the worst part cuz I wasn't around *any* American kids, I was staying with like a friend of a friend, and she was French, and she was really nice and everything, but it was like, just culturally really *awkward*, and like, you know, and I I, it was really cool to, meet all the American kids and the we all went out like *the first night* ((laughs)) so. (Interview 1)

In fact, Claire was one of the most socially active students in the program – one of Veronica’s so-called “cool” or “party” kids. Throughout the course of the semester, I frequently saw Claire returning in the early morning with a group of visibly inebriated students, and she was in attendance at more than a few dormitory parties I broke up in my capacity as residence advisor (Field notes, 10/22-12/10/06). That is, to the casual observer, Claire might have been indistinguishable from the students who seemed to delight in their “Ugly American” (Engle & Engle, 2002) persona.

However, Claire’s approach to her time in Paris was considerably more complex than that. First of all, she was an exceptional student. Unlike most of the students (including Lola and Veronica) who opted for the minimum number of credit hours, Claire took a full load of courses, many of which counted directly toward her sociology major. In the discussion sections that I led for a course on French political history, Claire was a clear standout: she was always prepared<sup>26</sup> and she actively engaged in class discussions. Next, while Claire made no excuses for her nightlife, she also differentiated herself from the students whose behavior she deemed excessive and counter-productive. In fact, she credits her time in Paris for helping solidify a “more moderate” approach to her social life:

C: Well I felt like I (.2) while I was there I felt like I had grown up a lot, because it was really weird how, um, I don’t know, like there was sort of a turning point where I was studying abroad where I kind of realized like, ok like you know I enjoy going out and I enjoy having fun, but there’s like a part of me, that, that thinks that that the rebellious, like kind of indulgent side of me, it, it sort of died a little bit because, I kinda saw (.2) things that, that made me, like (.2) I don’t know I was definitely um, appalled in some respects that certain people were like (.3) allowing themselves to like go, like to put themselves in certain positions, you know what I mean? Like, and it was all done in jest, like, and, and I, and it was interesting stories and it was, you know it’s funny to watch sometimes but it’s like, sometimes when you see someone doing something and you’re like wow, like would I do something like that? Like that’s really embarrassing you know what I mean? I definitely learned a lot about uh, about, basically kinda like more like my values and stuff, when I came back, not that I didn’t go out with my friends and stuff but I I, I think I was much more moderate about it, um, which I which I had already started, when I was in Paris I began to be more, um moderate about like my habits, and you know how I did things and stuff, but when I came back I definitely felt like I had changed from the experience, that like I had, when we (go out), I figured, like things about myself had been cleared up a little bit, like I was a little more comfortable, with like, I don’t know, just, in general, so. (Interview 2)

Taking the last five excerpts together, it is clear that while Claire rejects the identity of “French speaker” as unattainable and/or undesirable, she does not present this as

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<sup>26</sup> Most students stopped doing the required readings once they realized that the primary instructor (a French professor from a local university) only tested them on the content of his lectures.

indicative of any ‘failure’ on her part as a study abroad. Moreover, while she admits to reveling in her time among her compatriots, she also distances herself from the more “indulgent” behaviors of some of her classmates and frames her activities as in keeping with the more institutional identity of a typical – if not ‘good’ – student/study abroad:

=C: which I think all, the people who chose this program, I think, were mostly concerned with, having the experience, you know *learning* some more French, *improving* their French, but mostly it was like I want to take these *classes*, I wanna have like, this study abroad *experience*, where I get to go to another country and I get to meet people, it was like, I feel like it was more of a *social focus*, where, rather than, um, you know just becoming completely, immersed and like learning French, which ((laughs)) I don’t know, I guess that’s kind of, silly in some ways, but, that’s kind of the attitude that at least I felt, and then I felt that a lot of other people had, you know because a lot of people came to that program not knowing very much French at all, so. (Interview 2)

That is, by positioning herself as just like the majority of students in this program (“the attitude that at least I felt, and then I felt a lot of other people had”), Claire actively foregrounds an “assumed” institutional identity while implicitly backgrounding her more deeply personal and problematic former “imposed” identity as a French-English bilingual (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Or, more accurately, Claire retreats to the safety of a more objectively-recognized “identity” rather than engage in the more risky business of delving into the more emotional and imagined complexities of her multilingual subjectivity. While France and the French language have played a fairly significant role in her past, Claire’s comments remain largely focused on her monolingual American English present – a present in which she sees herself as more-or-less indistinguishable from the other participants in this American “island” program (Goodwine & Nacht, 1988). However, both this temporal rupture with her French past and this identification with her peers begin to dissolve in Claire’s discussion of the symbolic significance of Paris.

During a discussion of the more unruly “party kids” in the program, Claire wonders why these type of students would want to study abroad *in Paris*:

T: But I would say, but in your experience, how many people in this program in this program of like 60 people, how many people like that were there?

C: I would say, like, maybe five

T: That’s not bad, right?

C: No that’s not that bad odds, but at the same time, this what I don’t get, about that, why would those people want to study abroad in *Paris*?

T: Why do you think?

C: You know what I mean? =

=T: Why do you think? =

=C: I, I'm really not quite sure, I mean I think they wanted to just go to a city and party and stuff, I guess that's what it is, but it's bizarre to me that they would choose Paris, it's like if you really want just to be in an English

[T: Yeah

speaking country, like, I don't, I don't know, it seems a little strange, but I guess, I guess I understand, it's like they wanted to leave and they wanted to go wherever but= (Interview 2)

For reasons that she never fully explains, Claire sees Paris as the wrong context for such blatant "Ugly American" misbehavior ("just go to a city and party and stuff"). However, it is clear that, for Claire, Paris is not just "wherever", i.e. merely a more exotic backdrop for American undergraduate nightlife as usual. On the one hand, it is tempting to assume that Claire, like Veronica, sees this behavior as too 'unrefined' for even temporary inhabitants of the "cultural capital of Europe" (Veronica, Interview 1). On the other hand, Claire's emphasis on the more quotidian aspects of living in Paris – "eating the food, drinking the wine" (Interview 1, above) – underscores her preoccupation not with French high culture, but with French *lifestyle*, i.e. the everyday practices and rhythms of her life in Paris.

For example, Claire's desire to set herself apart from the more transgressive "party" students led her to spend a considerable amount of her time "lost" in the streets of Paris. Claire routinely went on day-long walking excursions; on one occasion, she invited to show me the way to a particularly good Moroccan café – she expertly navigated her way across nearly three arrondissements without ever consulting a map (Field notes, 11/23/06). These walks, Claire explains, allowed her a more personal understanding of Paris and bolstered her feeling of self-sufficiency:

C: Yeah, yeah, I mean like I liked walking with people but I definitely, when I would get bored that was like my form of entertainment, because, like I mean, Paris especially, I guess there are certain cities that wouldn't have been that entertained in, but like Courtney and I, I remember when I first got there, Courtney was one of those people who I became friends with, like first, and she and I would just, we would kinda laugh, we'd say we'd just go get *lost* somewhere, like we would just start walking in a direction and get lost, and it was such an adventure because, we would, we would like *run into* stuff, like it's like so bizarre to get lost and like you know run into like *a monument* in the middle of something or, you know you see all these *crazy things* that you would normally like, it would be so much harder to get to, or you'd miss most of it because you'd be taking the metro, so you'd be going underground, so, and then there was like you know always that challenge of trying to find your way *home* which, I mean once you really like sat down and looked at the metro map it was pretty easy to work out but, it was nice to just be able to *walk* everywhere, like I live in southern California, I can't *walk anywhere*, like, I can walk or jog or run, but it's not like from place to place you know, you can't, you can't really maneuver the city that way. (Interview 2)

Of course, French culture and lifestyle are often conflated in American stereotypes of the French *joie de vivre* (Bourdieu, 1984; Levenstein, 2004). That is, in Bourdieu's terms, Claire's desire for a more 'French' lifestyle may be the product of a certain degree of overlap between American middle class and French bourgeois "habitus", or the embodied "dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 12). However, for Claire, the resonances between her embodied dispositions and the French lifestyle are understood as evidence of the enduring effects of her early life experiences. That is, Claire credits these walks, along with what she sees as the overall slower pace of life in France, with helping her recognize that while her French may be lost, the effects of her primary socialization in France endure in her body:

C: No exactly, I mean that's how I feel a lot, because it's, it's just like it's in there somewhere, and I feel like it's, you know it is a part of about, um, like it's in my body like, I, have lived there and I've experienced it but, I guess (on) some of those things you know you don't realize so much about what happened to you when, like when you're a little kid how it influences you later? Like I think a lot of times you don't, since you don't necessarily remember things as vividly? You don't think? That it affects you? But I think it does more so than I might have given credit to. (Interview 2)

Like the American students abroad who profess 'feeling American for the first time' (Dolby, 2004), Claire becomes aware of her 'French-ness' through her unexpected feeling of being "at home" in Paris (Interview 2). Just as hearing a children's song could trigger a vivid memory of her childhood experiences in Aix-en-Provence (Interview 1), Claire's resonance with certain dimensions of the French way of life made her realize that her French past and her American present are not as separated as she assumed prior to her term abroad:

C: Well I would say the majority of it is definitely from being like an adult, and living there, and doing, and doing things like in my own way you know, and having like my own life, and, you know when you pull when you pull yourself out of a comfort zone where you know people and you throw yourself into somewhere that's not comfortable and you have to make it comfortable, you learn a lot about yourself, but at the same time like I also feel that all the other experiences that I've had have accumulated, like and, and having my mom and my dad understand for, you know, I mean, they've both lived in France and they both (dig) French culture and so I definitely, I feel like they (.3) their influence on me and like (.2) I I feel like also the way that I, you know do basic habits like my eating habits and activities and stuff like that, are a little more European than maybe some of my friends because, because of my parents so, that way it was like, it was really comfortable for me to go somewhere where they, where their eating habits were, you know that way, and they and they took these long, breaks because, I, although my life when I'm back here isn't exactly to that tune because you know, I'm, I'm like a college student and stuff, like I still, I do feel

comfortable like doing things in a more European manner, you know, and having discussions the way the European-, like the, I feel the Europeans like to have discussions where, you know they like to just talk about like whatever for hours on end, they love, they love arguing, and like, you know all that stuff so like, it's, I don't know I mean I think the majority of, um, my experience, that I, that I was there during um, the uc center, that was definitely very, um, important but (.2) I I think the other stuff does sorta, help (somewhat), (Interview 2)

Granted, the resonances are relatively minor, and perhaps ultimately subsumed under her American middle class habitus. However, Claire's experiences, privileged though they may be, point to exactly the kind of multi-timescaled (Blommaert, 2005; Hofstadter, 2007; Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008; Lemke, 2002) processes that undergird the complex dynamic of memories, actions, and symbols in the lived experiences of the "multilingual subject" (Kramsch, 2006a, 2009). That is, though Claire's situation does not force her to explore congruities beyond her eating habits and her passion for debate, this does not mean she was not "negotiating difference" (Klinger, 2008) at all. Moreover, it was her *being there*, her physical movement across national, cultural and linguistic lines that study abroad provided that triggered these negotiations.

### ***Post script.***

In the summer immediately following her spring semester back in California, Claire and a small group of her American friends returned to Paris during a week-long trip across France, Italy, and Germany. During this trip, Claire found herself acting as the de facto tour guide of her group – thanks to her travel experiences during her term abroad, she naturally emerged as the leader in all things logistical and inter-cultural, from coordinating their transportation to helping her companions avoid "Ugly American" gaffes (Interview 2). After graduation, instead of immediately pursuing a graduate degree in Sociology, she elected to join Teach for America, and she is now working on her teaching credential in Special Education in an under-served urban school district in northern California.

### **Audrey.**

Audrey began her study abroad term as a 21 year-old senior majoring in Communication Studies. Though the daughter of Korean and American parents, she was raised as a monolingual English speaker in northern California. She had the most college-level French of all of the participants in the study (two quarters), and she had spent five weeks living with the family of her French-American boyfriend immediately prior to her arrival in Paris and another three weeks with the same family during the summer after her high school graduation in 2003. However, like the others, Audrey hadn't elected to study abroad in Paris for the express purpose of improving her French. In fact, she admits to having no concrete learning goals whatsoever:



A: You know that's something I've realized since I've been here is that I really didn't, ((laughs)) I honestly didn't think about it before I left, very much, it was more just logistical, like I need to do this, I have to bring this, and get money for that, and very, didn't really sit down and think like 'this is what I want to get out it' like they tell you do that but I'm the kind of person who will never ever do that, they wanted, they like made us, like, at orientation like write a letter to ourselves and I just like drew a picture ((laughs)) you know, I was like fuck this I'm not gonna write a letter to myself! That's gay ((laughs)) (Interview 1)

Like the other participants, Audrey uncritically assumes that study abroad is a worthwhile venture, regardless of the actual content of the courses or the degree of linguistic and cultural immersion. Thinking about the particulars of all this in advance, is, in her words "gay", i.e. 'uncool.' So it seems that Audrey, like many upper-middle-class college-bound Americans, sees study abroad as "nothing less than an expectation...like braces and a car" (Arthschuler, 2001). As I outlined in chapter three, for members of the American "cosmopolitan elite" (Cronin, 2002b; Skeggs, 2004), foreign locales serve as mere backdrops for leisurely cultural pursuits, shopping sprees, and calculated hedonism with "strategic de-control" (Featherstone, 2001). Seen in this light, study abroad serves as one's maiden voyage into enjoying the world as a global supermarket and playground.

In some ways, Audrey fits this description. She was one of the most socially active students in the program, and she admits to having allotted a lot of her time and resources to exploring the Parisian club scene (Interview 1). Moreover, at the clubs, rather than pursue opportunities to interact meaningfully with the French patrons, Audrey admits to "playing the American card":

A: And maybe too, like, um, It's almost like, I feel sometimes like we play, instead trying to assimilate and act like we're *French* at all, like we play the card that we're *American*, like we go to these clubs and it's almost like we're American but we're totally like, kind of like, but we totally go to clubs way better than those back in states, you know it's like that type of thing, almost like this is nothing to us, like, 'this is not that cool of a club', you know like 'we're totally gonna get in here' like you know we all kind of lie, it's not like we lie to *each other*, but we're kind of lying to *them*, like to the doorman, like we went to l'étoile and like none of us like got in line we just stood at the front and waited for S. to get us into the club ((laughs)) and there was this huge line like stretching back there you know, and we're just like you know 'we're not waiting in that *line*' ((laughs)) even though if S. hadn't got us in we probably would have tried to find another bar, you know like any other bar, it's not like we have, you know better options ((laughs)) but yeah, I feel like, yeah you do kind of play that like, like young like American, card almost, or like you know with the girls, like we play it, you know like 'we're young Americans' like 'hey, talk to me, buy me a free drink' ((laughs))

T: ((laughs)) Totally

A: Yeah, like [high pitch] ‘oh I don’t know what French is,’ ‘oh! that’s how you say, oh! how cute!’ you know ((laughs)) (Interview 1)

That is, while Audrey and her friends do not in fact possess the economic, social, or cultural capital of the American jet set, in a rather brilliant display of social mimicry, they act *as if they do* in order to cash in on the symbolic capital this status affords. This is perhaps typical behavior of the social climber, the *petit bourgeois* who hopes that adopting *haut bourgeois* tastes will fulfill Bourdieu’s dictum: “Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier” (1986, p. 6). However, this subject positioning shifts considerably once they gain entrance: no longer do they play the ‘elite American’, but rather the ‘clueless (female) tourist’ (“ ‘oh, I don’t know what French is, oh! that’s how you say, oh! how cute!’ ”). Moreover, in the context of the interview, Audrey also positions herself vis-à-vis the interviewer as the clever yet self-conscious social tactician who is fully aware of her own artifice (“even though if S. hadn’t got us in we probably would have tried to find another bar, you know like any other bar, it’s not like we have, you know better options ((laughs))”). This recognition of the mismatch between her social status and that of the French patrons she and her compatriots attempt to manipulate is further reinforced in her discussion of feeling out of place among her Parisian peers.

However, according to Audrey’s view of Parisian society, these exclusive venues offer the only means to connect with her French generational counterparts:

A: Uh huh, um, I mean I felt more compelled to go out here, just because it’s, I feel like that is something definitely that I’ve got out of Paris is like a huge part of being young in Paris is like going out to these clubs and bars, it’s like that’s kind of the *forum* where everybody meets you know, um, so, yeah. (Interview 1)

Of course, this is a rather skewed perspective on the demographics of Parisian young adults – this “everybody” ignores all the “young in Paris” who cannot afford or would not be allowed access to the poshest Parisian clubs and bars. So, it would appear that Audrey, like Victoria, associates Parisian culture with high society and yearns to absorb its panache via physical proximity, i.e. the proverbial ‘hobnobbing.’ In fact, the opposite is the case.

Audrey’s conviction that Parisian society is inescapably *haut bourgeois* ultimately causes her to reject the city as fundamentally “stagnant” and “decadent” (Interview 1). In the first instance, she sees Paris as too conservative, an unchanging place where the status quo reigns:

T: Do you think you’ll come back? Or to France?

A: Um, if I had an opportunity to? I would love to, right now um (.4) kind of wanting to travel other places, I guess? Um, I love the fact that I know people here now, like I know obviously I know J.’s [her boyfriend’s] family pretty well, they’re really nice, um (.4) and being in Paris has kind of made me realize something about cities, or just living in general, like what you want out of where

you live, and uh I love Paris but maybe not, it's not really what I would want from somewhere, like to live, you know?

T: In what ways? Like what would you prefer?

A: Um, it's a little too expensive ((laughs)) yeah there's that, um it's a little too, um (.3) stagnant? I guess?

T: Stagnant?

A: Yeah, I feel like maybe there's other places in the world where things are moving a little bit more? Like yeah there's a lot going on here, there's tons of pubs, bars, and expositions, but um, and shows and everything, but I feel like it's, I don't want to say *touristy* cause there's obviously a whole subculture to Paris that's not, I just feel like maybe, like, there's just other places in the world where it's looking towards a future that I feel is more (.2) relevant? Or something? I don't know

T: Could you explore that a little more?

A: Um, like, for example places like San Francisco, Seattle, Tokyo, given Tokyo's really expensive, or even like going to Amsterdam too, I wouldn't really choose Amsterdam to live, but just the vibe you get there and what's going in their scene and what they're pursuing politically and socially, stuff like that I feel is maybe more to what I would want, yeah, (Interview 1)

When I pressed her on this topic further, she traced her impression of Parisian “stagnancy” to what she sees as an irreconcilable mismatch between her American middle class self from the “kinda ghetto suburbs” and the upper class identities that are *de rigueur* in the “decadent” Parisian club scene:

T: Have you had any particular experiences that led you to this feeling, or is it sort of an overall impression?

A: I guess maybe just an overall, impression, um (.2) I just feel like living in Paris has made me realize maybe how like, *decadent* it is almost to live here? Like how it's totally not necessary to live in this city, I don't know, it's so expensive and so (.2) kind of *showy* almost that's it's almost I don't need that in my life, I don't want to pay that much money in rent to *live here*, like it's not worth it to me, and it's not, it wouldn't give me anything in particular that I really *want* in my life (...)

A: Well totally, like I mean, you see it, let's say we're planning on going out to a club and everyone's like, well I totally buy into the fact of like trying like going to usually like fancy well known famous Parisian night clubs because, kind of like oh I want to go and see it you know, but at the same time it's like, it's almost like why do you want to go to a world like that where you're not *really* a part of it? Like I'm from a middle class family from the suburbs of California, kinda ghetto suburbs ((laughs)), from San Jose, you know not a huge city, um, kind of like why would I pay 20 euro admission fee and 10 dollars for every drink, um, when, eh, when I don't have that much money, you know what I mean? When that's not like, you know what I mean, that's so like disproportionate to like the way that I should be living like *financially* in one aspect, and like going out there, and like

the *true* locals of that club, or of that *scene*, are totally *bougie*, you know, not saying they're not nice people but you know they're totally *rich* pretty much, and, you know, it's just like (.2) I definitely feel that, cause I feel like if I go, say I want to go out like to LA like there's definitely places there that I would *go* that, maybe not LA maybe that's a bad example, but I mean San Francisco like there's definitely clubs there that I've gone to where I feel that's more *my class*

T: Uh huh

A: Like the common (.1) university student, whereas here it's like because we're abroad we're trying to get this certain experience out of Paris that maybe necessarily doesn't correspond to our class, and who we are and that? I don't know, (Interview 1)

Looking closely at Audrey's discussion of the "stagnancy" and "decadence" of Paris, however, a paradox emerges. First of all, Audrey admits to deliberately seeking out the most "fancy well known famous Parisians nightclubs" in lieu of trying to gain access to the less elite "subcultures". However, by the end of the semester (our interview took place in late November), she does not so much regret her decision to do so, but instead uncritically equates these venues with all that Paris has to offer then decides that the lifestyles of the "bougie" (bourgeois) "*true* locals" are both unattainable and undesirable, "not worth it to me". That is, rather than foregrounding her distaste for Paris as the result of her own selective nightlife experiences, Audrey blames the city itself for not accommodating her "middle class" economic and social capital. Clearly, Audrey has grown weary of her own (im)posturing (Kramsch, 2010), yet she somehow neglects to see how she herself has manufactured this weariness and the concomitant desire to return to social spaces that are "more *my class*".

On the one hand, it appears that Audrey has manufactured her own lose-lose situation: due to her erroneous belief that elite night life constitutes the true Parisian experience, she has wasted her time and resources pursuing a lifestyle that she ultimately rejects without ever realizing that it was her beliefs – not the city – that were the source of her discontent. On the other hand, Audrey's conflicted attitudes toward Paris and the *haut bourgeois* she exclusively associates with the city underscore Audrey's more fundamental struggle with the feelings of (in)authenticity and (il)legitimacy triggered by her experiences as a multilingual subject in Paris. Of course, from a structuralist perspective, Audrey does not seem to qualify as a "multilingual" insofar as she has yet to attain advanced proficiency in French and she has not learned Korean from her father. Indeed, she explicitly emphasizes her discomfort with being positioned as Asian by her French interlocutors:

A: I wouldn't say that I necessarily feel Korean here, or that it's made me feel more (.2) I definitely you know felt the whole American thing, um, a lot because I was not, like acculturated to French culture very much and the language and everything, um, I felt Asian here maybe more because in California it's just so accepted, you know, it doesn't seem like a big deal, but here maybe a little bit

more (.1) I think a lot of people here too, uh, a lot of people here will kind of question like ‘oh, what are you?’ I mean I get that a lot in America too but, I don’t know I’ve heard people talk about me on the metro and stuff, like ‘oh what is she? Maybe she’s japanese?’

T: I’ve heard a lot Asian students say that everybody just thinks you’re Chinese

A: Yeah yeah yeah, everyone’s like (.1) I’ve said ‘je ne suis pas chinoise’ so many times ((laughs)) but um, or you know I learned *matisse* pretty early on, like I learned that as like a vocab word because a lot of people asked me that too.

(Interview 1)

This tension between accepting and interrogating ready-made identities continues in Audrey’s discussion of the impact of her early immersion experiences on her subsequent peer relations. More so than any other student in the study, Audrey had a relatively wide variety of immersion experiences during her time in France: from five weeks of intensive French-only life while staying with her boyfriend’s French relatives before the program started, to the numerous evenings spent in the company of her boyfriend’s Parisian friends. In fact, Audrey was so accustomed to “getting by in French culture” by the time she arrived in Paris that it was American college culture that she found “shocking”:

A: You know what is was, I think it was because I’d spent five weeks here already, and gotten used to, like, not acting French but like getting by in French culture in the sense of like faux pas and stuff like that, and then just going with everyone and everyone being like ‘WE’RE IN PARIS! WE’RE GONNA GET DRUNK AND LIKE RUN AROUND THE STREETS!’ I was kind of like ‘Oh my god, you really shouldn’t do that here, like people, they don’t appreciate that, you know that’s not cool in French culture at all’ and um, some people I feel like their take on going abroad is not necessarily to try to assimilate, it’s to be ‘well, I’m American, that’s how I am’ type thing and maybe I’m not like that?

T: So you had like an American culture shock?

A: A little bit, yeah, I think I had a little bit of American culture shock, I was a little like ‘*whoa, whoa*’ (Interview 1)

Like Victoria and Claire, Audrey distinguishes herself from those ‘Ugly American’ pleasure-seekers who revel in their brash disregard for cultural differences and behavioral norms, i.e. “the we’re-American-we-just-want-to-go-out-and-get-fucked-up and you know just-want-to-party kids” (Interview 1). However, like Claire, Audrey also admits to occasionally associating with those students. After an extended caricature of these “party kids” as being the type of people who talk of nothing but getting intoxicated – “Like we’re gonna get so, like they have to talk about how they’re gonna get fucked up and then afterwards talk about how much they did get fucked up” – Audrey concedes, “not like I don’t do this, I’m not saying that I’m above any of this” (Interview 1). Like the immersed student who occasionally seeks the comfort of the “American group” (Citron, 2002), Audrey controls how frequently she indulges in a night out with the “party kids”.

That is, while “calculated hedonism” does indeed factor into her study abroad experience, Audrey sees her time in Paris as more than just three months of “strategic de-control” (Featherstone, 2001). Despite her pre-departure resistance to thinking about her learning goals, once in Paris, Audrey reports working quite hard at improving her French by seeking out immersion scenarios where she cannot resort to English (Interview 1). In fact, during our post-sojourn interview, she regrets not making more of an effort to become fluent, and she wishes that she had elected to do a more immersion-style program and spent even less time with the “party kids”:

=A: But I was (better) around the city, like my French improved a lot, and I remember, like seeking out situations where I would speak French almost?=  
=T: Nice!=  
=A: Like I didn’t mind speaking French even though I knew it wasn’t perfect=  
=T: Uh huh=  
=A: Because I knew that people could understand me and I could understand them (.8) and, I think that in some ways I maybe regressed a little bit? Because I hung out, I ended up hanging out with all the kids that would always go out?=  
=T: Yeah=  
=A: and they totally like (.2) indoctrinated me I guess, and I was like ‘oh, let’s go out’  
T: ((laughs)) yeah (.2) um, you talked about that a little bit in your first interview, that you feel like, um, that you actually could’ve gotten fluent  
A: Uh huh  
T: What do you think stood in your way? You think that was it? That you sort of shifted your priorities and spent more time kicking it, um, with, you know, at night and partying and stuff? Or (.2) do you think, did it have anything to do with classes? Or?  
A: I think it was classes, and the fact that I didn’t do a homestay, I don’t think partying or anything like that. (Interview 2)

Looking back over the excerpts pertaining to her relationship with her peers, it seems that Audrey is rather inconsistent in the degree to which she separates herself from the students who revel in an exaggerated American-ness. First, she admits to assuming a stereotypical American tourist identity in order to position herself favorably vis-a-vis the French clientele in the post night clubs (playing “the American card” to get free drinks). Next, she describes the shock and disapproval she felt when encountering her fellow Americans for the first time (“some people I feel like their take on going abroad is not necessarily to try to assimilate, it’s to be ‘well, I’m American, that’s how I am’ type thing and maybe I’m not like that?”). Finally, she self-deprecatingly suggests that her own behavior did not entirely diverge from the caricature she provides of her peers who concern themselves exclusively with intoxication (“I’m not saying that I’m above any of this”). All in all, Audrey presents herself as exceedingly conscious of choosing to ‘play along’ with various self- and other-imposed and assumed identities, depending on the perceived costs/benefits such identities afford her across contexts.

While the fluidity of these identities is undeniable, they remain for the most part exactly that – objectively recognizable and collectively-determined roles that Audrey plays as she moves through social spaces and participatory frameworks. However, by characterizing her identity play as under her conscious control and by expressing her feelings of not fitting neatly within any particular identity, Audrey also underscores the non-coincidence between who she feels herself to be (“maybe I’m not like that?”) and who she ‘is’ when assuming these identities. In this way, Audrey’s testimonies point to an implicit recognition of the diversity of her own subjectivity: as she ‘plays along’ with these identities, all the while consciously ‘crossing her fingers behind her back’, Audrey positions herself as at once the agent and patient of identification processes.

The most striking – and contentious – outcome of Audrey’s time in Paris was her decision to seek employment in Asia after graduation. Prior to her term abroad, she had been toying with the idea of teaching English abroad through the Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program. However, until her time in Paris, she had been unsure of her ability to adapt to life in a foreign country, and her parents had been adamantly against the idea, especially her Korean father:

A: (...)I told my dad about the possibility of me, cause he *asked* me, he said, like he’s been pushing me you know to look into graduate schools, and what I’m going to do, and I really haven’t been, but um, he asked me and I said, ‘yeah, I’ve been thinking about doing the JET program actually,’ and he’s like ‘what’s that?’ and I explained it to him, teaching abroad, in Japan for a year, and they help you a lot, they find you housing, it pays pretty well, and he was just like, ‘OH! OH!’ he’s like ‘this is not a simple *thing* you are thinking about, this is not a joke’ and he like *went off* on me for seriously like half an hour=

=T: Saying what? =

=A: ((laughs)) He just kept saying like, ‘you think this is an easy thing you want to do’ he’s like ‘you don’t know’ he’s like ‘you going to go to this foreign, like, far away country, he’s like he’s like ‘when I came to America, it took me like two years to actually be able to function and assimilate into the culture’

T: But they don’t make you assimilate into Japanese culture on JET

A: Exactly, I tried to explain that to him, I was like ‘dad, I’m not trying to become Japanese, I’m just going to go teach English there’=

=T: Exactly=

=A: You know, and he was like ‘I’ve heard stor- I saw like a *Dateline* thing about these girls getting *raped* on those kind of programs’ and he’s just like ‘you think this is so simple’ and then at the end, I knew at that point not to really argue with him, especially over the phone, it was kind of not worth it, so I was kinda like ‘uh huh, uh huh, uh huh’ and then at the end of our conversation he was like, uh, he kept saying like ‘it’s 180 degrees different than America!’ and then at the end he was like ‘I don’t think this is something that me and your mother can support.’

And I was like, ‘ok’ (Interview 1)

Like the incipient bilingual who must struggle with feelings of imposture as (s)he assumes new subject positions across languages, Audrey has difficulty asserting herself as a globally mobile subject who is distinct from her father. Unlike the parents of Lola, Veronica and Claire, Audrey's father does not see her wanderlust as inherently beneficial, and he maps his own experiences struggling to assimilate into American culture onto his daughter's plans to teach English in Japan. According to Audrey's account, her father equates cultural difference with danger and uncertainty and sees Audrey's plans as uninformed ('you don't know'), naïve ('you think this is so simple'), and reckless ('I've heard stories- I saw like a *Dateline* thing about these girls getting *raped* on those kind of programs'). While this interaction may not differ greatly from the inter-generational conflict that typifies "coming of age" and claiming one's independence from familial constraints, it is distinct insofar as her father's misgivings center mainly on the similarities between his own life decisions and his daughter's tentative plans. That is, in Audrey's story, her father attempts – unsuccessfully – to equate his own subject position as an inadequately prepared and traumatized immigrant onto his daughter. In the context of the narrated dialogue, Audrey feigns acquiescence ("I was kinda like 'uh huh, uh huh, uh huh'"), but in the interview exchange within which this story was embedded, it is clear this was only to placate her father ("I knew at that point not to really argue with him [...] it was kind of not worth it").

However, after her relative success with both language learning and cultural integration in Paris, Audrey gained enough confidence to continue with her plans despite her father's misgivings. She brought it up in the context of discussing her career goals:

T: I know this is like the question of death, and it's fine if you don't have an answer, but do you have specific career goals connected to your major?

A: Yeah, I guess I don't, you know, I don't really have like specific specific career goals, and yeah I'm a graduating senior ((laughs)) I've thought a lot about going into research and being a professor, but that's kind of something I see more in the distant future, like I'd ideally like to work first, the one thing maybe it could tie into is I've strongly been considering do the JET program or something to that effect? I've heard a lot of good things about it, yeah, it's made me consider, it's a year? JET program's a year? It seems like totally doable and something I would love to do, you know um, this experience has probably pushed me more into thinking that that was a possibility, a strong possibility, um, as far as this program and my major and like career goals, um, yeah, (Interview 1)

### *Post script.*

Audrey's plans to participate in the JET program did not come to fruition. Instead, she chose to teach English as a Foreign Language at a university in mainland China. At the time of this writing, she is still working in China and making plans to pursue a Master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). She is taking classes in Mandarin Chinese and is participating in a conversation exchange with a French colleague at her university.



## Discussion

As the preceding case studies suggest, each of these students interpreted their experiences studying abroad in Paris in highly personal ways. However, in the bulk of the recent applied linguistics research on study abroad, these “individual differences” are typically understood within a “linguistics of community” (Pratt, 1999) that posits such idiosyncrasies as undermining students’ ability to accommodate to native speaker communities. In this view, students’ tendency to see study abroad as mainly about themselves is a symptom of a dysfunctional inclination to ‘cling to the familiar’ and underscores their incapacity to break with an American view of the world and to see the Other on its own terms (Citron, 2002; Kinginger, 2009, 2008; Ogden, 2007). Similarly, international educators are increasingly skeptical of the current state of American study abroad in terms of its potential for getting American undergraduates to notice the cultural specificity of their own worldview (Engle & Engle, 2002; Feinberg 2002).

While I agree with many of these critiques, my findings in this study lead me to consider the deeply personal orientations of my participants from a more post-structuralist perspective that sees these subjective interpretations of experience as both inevitable and fundamentally recuperable within the study abroad curriculum. Furthermore, the kinds of continuities these students’ actively maintained, though undeniably leading them to ‘fail’ to engage with their environment in more systematic and durable ways, also highlight a hitherto ‘hidden dimension’ of study abroad that I see as a universal component of international education in general and language learning in particular. Finally, though the ‘mismatches’ evidenced by these testimonies are in many ways the product of intercultural breakdowns – i.e. the transfer of an American cultural perspective/identity into a French cultural context – the more personal and biographical conflicts triggered by studying abroad in Paris attest to subject positionings that exceed or at least blur the boundaries of structurally-defined identities.

In what follows, I will begin by addressing the more common, i.e. cultural, interpretive frames and discourses that these students bring to bear on their experience abroad. From there, I will segue into a case by case discussion of the more subjective dimensions of these respondents’ accounts, with particular attention paid to the symbolic negotiations of self vis-à-vis more idealized and imagined subject positions mentioned in the preceding analyses.

As I mentioned in the introduction, all of these students considered study abroad as an opportunity to learn about French “culture”. However, for them, culture is understood primarily as a commodity more or less equally available given sufficient proximity to its source, i.e. France. By spending a semester in Paris, these students have come in search of a cultural authenticity unavailable at a distance, i.e. in the United States. Of course, this perspective elides intensive language- and culture-learning as a necessary prerequisite for ‘cultivation’ and smacks of a “cosmopolitan elitism” (Skeggs, 2004) one

would assume is antithetical to a study abroad intended to help students “negotiate difference” (Kinging, 2009) in ways that trigger a critical reflection on one’s position in a global network of social, political, and economic systems of cultural “flows” (Blommaert, 2005; Hannerz, 1992a). However, these students’ understanding of culture also represents a widely held, non-specialist conceptualization with wide circulation in American public and private discourse. Indeed, As Risager (2006) argues, this blending of individual and collective notions of hierarchical culture is representative of modern democratic views of the individual in society:

In general, one can say that by virtue of the interplay between the individual and the collective meaning of the concept of culture is an epochal concept which to a particular extent characterizes modern society. It thematises the possibility for individuals to be able to cultivate themselves and to become members of the cultivated classes no matter what their origins, without innate privileges. (p. 36)

As such, these students’ persistent description of this program as less about language learning and more about “culture” can be seen as the animation (Goffman, 1981) of a discourse with extensive purchase; that is, by speaking of study abroad in this way, they are foregrounding what they consider to be largely normative beliefs about the purposes and products of international education (Hoffa, 2002). Of course, it is exactly these kind of commonsense or “folk” beliefs (Miller & Ginsberg, 1995) that a well-designed study abroad program should anticipate and counteract. However, as I mentioned in the introduction above (see also chapter three), this program was specifically created as a ‘cushioned’ international education ‘teaser’ for first and second year students and had yet to curricularly respond to the participant demographic it actually attracts (Smith interview). As a result, while these students’ fixation on high-culture-as-commodity clearly compromised their inclination to step outside of American cultural perspectives, it is equally clear that their orientation was shaped as much by collective pressures as by some kind of willful self-absorption and/or snobbery.

Moreover, as the preceding analyses illustrate, in the course of their term abroad, the commonality of this American folk perspective on culture did not in fact yield a uniformity of meanings ascribed to their experiences. On the contrary, while they all ostensibly approached their term abroad aiming at accruing collectively-recognized forms of cultural capital, they have very little to say about these intended outcomes. Instead, in case after case, these students focus on the unintended consequences of their term abroad, namely the deeply personal and often troubling subjective reactions triggered by living in Paris. Admittedly, most of these reactions involve a large degree of stereotypification and romanticization – a distanced musing on the biographical significance of their experience embedded within emotional and aesthetic meanings that reference the Other in only the most superficial manner. However, if seen through the lens of more recent work on subjectivity in language learning (Kramsch, 2006, 2009), these musings take on new meaning.

As Kramersch argues (2006, 2009), learning a new language and being confronted with new cultural meanings engages the learner in processes of meaning-making that are rarely limited to the objective realm of linguistic and cultural norms. On the contrary, beginner learners in particular often respond to the forms and surfaces of the language and its speakers in ways that are highly idiosyncratic and imagined. As in the fundamental tension between a word's collectively-determined meaning (Saussure's *langue* [1972]) and the individual speaker's highly personal relationship with both the form of the word and his/her memories tied to that word across the lifespan, the second language learner often resists and resignifies a word's denotation in deeply personal ways. This tension, Kramersch argues, persists at the margins of meaning-making, even as the learner increasingly conforms to the norms of the speech community.

For example, while one may begin learning French because it sounds 'sexy' or 'fancy', this seminal orientation to French sounds and its speakers may persist throughout even the most advanced stages of proficiency. Moreover, while this may be rarely admitted, this symbolic motivation for learning the language may very well account for the learner's ability to endure the innumerable 'shocks' and 'reality checks' encountered as the he/she confronts the diverse – and often sobering – realities of the life of the language. Indeed, it is this tension between the meaning of the language in the individual's life and its life independent of the learner, i.e. across history and actual contexts of communication, that Kramersch sees as at the very core of the language learning project. Through analyses of language learning memoirs of bi-/multi-linguals, Kramersch (2009) points out how these individuals interpret and account for their experiences in ways that draw on both the real and the unreal, the objective and the subjective, the historical and the "mythical" (Barthes, 1957) in order to reconcile themselves with a life in and between two or more languages.

Of course, it is perhaps questionable to compare my participants' accounts of English-dominant study abroad with the symbolic negotiations of advanced bilinguals. However, as I mentioned above, Kramersch argues that these symbolic struggles are not the exclusive domain of the advanced learner; on the contrary, it is in the very early stages of language learning when these more subjective orientations to the language and its speakers are most salient. Moreover, as the above case studies illustrate, all of these participants are intimately connected – however symbolically or literally – to multiple languages and linguistic and cultural identities. Finally, how they make sense of this orientation, i.e. how they account for their experiences abroad in relation to the totality of their life experience, is a highly subjective affair, and one that is vehiculated by "myth" and "desire" (Kramersch, 2006, 2009).

As I mentioned above, Kramersch sees the beginner language learner as less concerned and/or aware of the objective and denotative realities of a language and its speakers. Instead, the novice language learner orients him/herself more to the sounds and surfaces of things. These emotional, aesthetic resonances with the foreign language forms Kramersch calls "myths":

“Myth, then, is a use of symbolic forms (verbal or visual) that is not primarily meant to refer or inform, but to act upon listeners’ or readers’ sensibilities and influence their perceptions. [...] It is a way of using language less for its objective truth value than for the subjective beliefs and emotions that it expresses, elicits, and performs. [...] Because it condenses a variety of historically contingent meanings into one timeless symbol, myth often functions as a ‘condensation symbol’ (Rothenbuhler, 1998: 17; Sapir 1934/49: 565-6) [...] Because myth is anchored in an imagined reality that does not operate in chronological, historical time, it has been called ‘a-historical’ (Barthes 1957)”. (Kramsch, 2009: 11-12)

For example, Lola and Veronica’s descriptions of the French are grounded not in the real-time objective realities of the actual French people they encounter during their time in Paris; instead, Lola’s tears in the Tuileries and Veronica’s exaggerated fears of the “cultured” French and the “backwards” Romanians are rooted in an a-temporal ‘nowhere’ of imagined and idealized “French-ness”. Moreover, what they want to get from these mythologized French is not their language or their culture, objectively speaking, but rather an idealized subject position within their own biographically understood self-identity. In Lola’s case, she yearns for a means to symbolically reconcile the French childhood denied her by her parents’ separation with her current adult life as an American native speaker of English. Since this reconciliation is impossible in the objective realities of her life experience, Lola constructs a myth of “French childhood-ness”, an essence that is purely symbolic and thus attainable – a means of achieving a subjective plenitude, or fullness, in a biography fundamentally disjointed by objective circumstances outside of her control. Similarly, Veronica’s myth of “European-ness” functions as an idealized subject position that transcends the brute realities of geography and family history in order for her to symbolically reconcile the divergent symbolic capital she associates with each term in her hyphenated Romanian-American identity.

Of course, from the perspective of most structuralist research on identity in applied linguistics, both Lola’s and Veronica’s subject positionings via these myths would be seen as nothing more than stereotyped and romanticized views of native speakers, i.e. as impediments to understanding the French on their own terms. However, if seen from the perspective of recent Applied Linguistics scholarship on the “multilingual subject” (Kramsch, 2009, 2006b), Lola’s and Veronica’s predicament underscores their efforts to retain symbolic control over their “subjectivity”:

“Subjectivity...is our conscious or unconscious sense of self as mediated through symbolic forms. It is the symbolic meaning we give to ourselves, to our perceptions, reactions, and thoughts that orients our relationship to others” (Kramsch, 2009: 18).

As in other post-structuralist correctives to the reductionism of the category of “student” or “learner” (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Norton-Pierce, 1997; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; Kinginger, 2008), Kramsch argues for considering language learners’ efforts at identification (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004) as a process of meaning-making that draws on

symbolic resources that transcend the immediate space and time of any given moment of linguistic performance (see introduction above and chapter two). This approach considers the more deeply personal ways in which people position themselves *to* and *through* the symbolic resources at their disposal. Moreover, this view of meaning-making is less concerned with the kinds of motivation that drive face-to-face interaction on the interpersonal plane of existence; instead, Kramsch argues for a more serious consideration of the highly subjective “desires” that undergird a subject’s ongoing negotiation of symbolic equilibrium or “self-fulfillment”. Kramsch (2006) writes:

This need for identification with others, with their language, their way of speaking is so strong that Kristeva gave it the name ‘desire’ (Kristeva, 1980). Desire in language is the basic drive toward self-fulfillment. It touches the core of who we are. Anyone who has spent some time learning a foreign language while studying or working abroad knows the thrills and frustrations of desire (2006: 101).

As in myth, a subject’s desire is loosely grounded in the objective realities of lived experience. One may ‘fall in love’ with French or a French speaker in the early stages of learning the language, but the desire that drives one’s learning is ultimately an inwardly generated and generative motivation that exceeds and endures beyond ‘lost loves’. In Lola’s case, for example, her love for all things French, though obliquely related to the ‘lost love’ of her French father, is equally self-generated through her mythologization of French children and Paris (“Paris as my lover”, Interview 1). However, desire is not only a force of attraction, a drive to bring things together. Self-fulfillment can also be achieved through symbolic processes of distinction and differentiation.

For example, while at first Claire’s distancing from her francophile parents seems to stand in stark contrast to Lola’s belief in the possibility of activating her French genetic endowment, in fact Claire’s resistance and Lola’s confidence are but two sides of the same coin of “desire” (Kramsch, 2009, 2006). Like the second language learner who actively resists accommodating to native speaker norms, e.g. who deliberately retains an English accent while speaking French, Claire’s acceptance of her monolingual English self underscores her “desire to preserve what is [hers]” (Kramsch, 2009:15). Although desire is at the core of “the basic drive toward self-fulfillment”, this drive is often a fundamentally defensive orientation toward perceived “threat[s] to [one’s] integrity as [a] subject” (Kramsch, 2009: 14-15; Kristeva, 1980). That is, desire accounts for the more personal, i.e. subjective, dimensions of identification, and sheds light on how this “positive or negative identification with the Other” (ibidem) is dialogically accomplished by a subject positioning that is fundamentally *intersubjective*. In Claire’s comments, for example, she is negotiating a subject position both within the context of the research interview and within the textual worlds she is creating in her autobiographic accounts.

Of course, as Audrey’s case illustrates quite clearly, this intersubjectivity operates in tension with more collectively-recognized and institutionally-ratified identities. When Audrey seeks to distance herself from the “bougie” French she encounters in Parisian nightclubs and the Korean immigrant identity her father attempts to impose upon her, she

is eminently concerned with identifying with structurally-determined social categories (an American middle class, college educated, international mobile adult). However, from a post-structuralist perspective in which an emphasis is placed on speakers' more subjective and symbolic affiliations with more or less objectively recognized or "governmentalized" (Kramsch, 2010; Blommaert, 2005) identities, Audrey's attempts to position herself according to national (American), regional (Californian), and racial/ethnic (Asian) identities highlights her effort to negotiate "the dynamic interplay between the social, conventional, ready-made in social life and the individual, creative, and emergent qualities of human existence" (Bauman & Sherzer, 1989, p. xix). As Audrey positions herself in relation to what she considers her more recognizable and/or "visible" (Irvine & Gal, 2000) identities, she does so not only linguistically and socioculturally, but *subjectively* according to the shifting symbolic values she ascribes to these identities. Admittedly, unlike Lola and Veronica, Audrey's negotiations of her multilingual subjectivity remain primarily on the *intersubjective* plane wherein she generally positions herself vis-à-vis identity categories without delving into the more deeply personal dimensions of the symbolic values indexed by these categories.

That is, on the one hand, Audrey underscores the fluidity of her identity performances across contexts as she describes how she 'plays at' being a monolingual American English speaker with some French interlocutors ("oh I don't know what French is") while adopting a French racial identity in other interactions ("matisse"). On the other hand, however, Audrey's negotiations of identity seem to remain precisely within the domain of relatively fixed, i.e. structuralist, *identities* that correspond to bounded communities: at the clubs, she is "American" while in other settings she accepts the label of "matisse." Of course, these communities themselves are social constructions, and therefore fundamentally "imagined" (Anderson, 1983); however, as social constructions, the symbolic capital associated with them depends precisely on structural relations in the social sphere much more so than the post-structuralist conception of subjectivity. However, even if Audrey seems content to play with the symbolic capital of more recognizable – i.e. more legitimate and authentic – identities, this very recourse to recognizability underscores the difficulties inherent in the multilingual subject's attempt to find legitimate subject positions within the symbolic constraints of everyday discursive practices in which the intersubjective path of least resistance favors "the social, conventional, ready-made in social life" (Bauman & Sherzer, 1989, p. xix).

Proponents of subjectivist theories of inter- and multi-culturality suggest that this recognition and appreciation of the "diverse diversities" (Dervin, 2009) of the Self and Other is at the heart of lived experience in late or post-modernity. Granted, Audrey does not directly interrogate the identities themselves ("American" vs. "French") in order to expose the diversities occluded by these categories. However, this merely highlights the intersubjective difficulties inherent in social interaction: while late-modern subjects may become increasingly conscious of the "liquidity" (Bauman, 2001) of their sense of self over time and across contexts, this does not mean that are free to – or *inclined to* – reject and/or dismantle the more "solid" (Bauman, 2001), "governmentalized" (Blommaert, 2005), or "promotional" (Kramsch, 2010) identities they have been socialized into

assuming. Indeed, as Audrey discovers in interaction with her parents regarding her plans to work abroad in Japan, one's subjectivity is inherently co-constructed and therefore susceptible to various degrees of governmentalization from without – i.e. the legitimacy and authenticity of new and emergent subject positions must be negotiated both on the intra-psychological (subjective) and the inter-psychological (intersubjective) planes of being in the world.

Overall, while these case studies fit neither the traditional SLA focus on intensive language learning nor international educators' view of intercultural communication, perhaps this discussion of the more subjective dimensions of American undergraduates' accounts of study abroad heeds the call for a more holistic conceptualization of the study abroad in an Applied Linguistics research that James Coleman says should consider "whole people and whole lives" (AAAL lecture, 2010).

Perhaps by understanding how students like these make sense of their term abroad, and how they account for its 'impacts', program designers can consider ways of getting students to discuss/share these evolving understandings more systematically within the program itself (see chapters six and seven). That is, while I support Kinginger's call for developing programmatic means of "foregrounding language learner identity" (2008), I do so provided the assumption isn't to disregard or suppress the subjectivity of the "whole person" (Coleman, 2010). As I hope my case studies demonstrate, it is important not to see this subjective dimension only as a distraction and/or a narcissistic distortion of the 'reality' of the L2 speech community – something to be anticipated, pointed out, then curtailed, reigned in, in order to allow the 'real business' of SLA to occur.

Yes, looking at the subjective responses of students abroad can elucidate their desire to "cling to the familiar" (Kramsch, 2009) by avoiding contact with native speakers and retreating to the company of their peers and/or the "electronic umbilical cord" (Kinger, 2010) of online interaction. However, it can also account for the unrelenting drive of some learners to learn a language 'at all costs', to persist through all the 'shocks' and 'reality checks' that can be disheartening for even the most committed learner. Students' desire to learn a language is often rooted in, and fundamentally depends on, deeply personal motives – emotional, aesthetic resonances with the language, its literature, or the history and cultures (however romanticized) of its speakers. Studying abroad in France in English is not altogether unlike the early stages of language learning, when the shapes and sounds of all these new signs, whose conventional meanings are still outside one's grasp, allow one to personalize their meaning, to dream and idealize, even to essentialize, for one is (temporarily) free to imbue them with any essence one wishes.

While in this chapter I have centered my attention on the content of these students' accounts of study abroad in France, I have done so largely without explicit reference to the context of interaction that frames and enables these accounts. In the next chapter, I introduce myself into the analysis, in order to account for the more interactive dimension of these testimonies.

## Chapter Six

### Student and Researcher Voices in Dialogue

In what follows, I intend to demonstrate that the poststructuralist notions of self-identity and subjectivity, as discursive phenomena, necessarily involve a consideration of the dialogic and sociocultural conditions of possibility for the interactive positioning that emerges in and across interview contexts. Moreover, as I mentioned in chapter two, since post-structuralist does not mean anti-structuralist, I will also point out how the particular subject positions assumed by these respondents are often grounded in highly institutionalized, i.e. structural, identities. And finally, with all due attention paid to the conventionality of their remarks, I will demonstrate how these respondents re-signify (Bakhtin, 1981; Butler, 1997) conventional identities and storylines to construct a subjectivity that, however evanescent, is self-constructed in the margins or interstices of these more socially-sanctioned categories and scripts.

With Lola, for example, I examined how her ways of speaking about her experiences in Paris highlighted the more emotional, aesthetic, and imagined dimensions of her identification with not only the actual French people she met, but also with a more idealized and “mythical” (Barthes, 1957; Kramsch, 2009) “French-ness” that she felt had been denied her as a child but was now newly available to her via her re-connection with France through study abroad. What remains to be described, however, is how this subject positioning was accomplished interactively via turns-at-talk in the particular situation of the research interview. That is, how is it that these deeply personal dimensions of her identification with French-ness were accomplished, given the various dialogic and institutional contingencies that framed and emerged within the context of the interview?

#### Lola

Prior to our first interview, I had had contact with Lola only twice: once during a field trip to Père Lachaise cemetery that I co-chaperoned with another Graduate Student Instructor (fieldnotes, 10/12/07), and once when she had requested my services as Resident Advisor (RA) in attempting to fix her malfunctioning futon. In the first instance, I had noticed that she was especially attentive to the tour guide’s historical comments about the cemetery, asking many clarifying questions and requesting that the guide repeat several French words so she could practice their pronunciation. The tour guide became increasingly impatient with her repeated interruptions, and I heard several of her fellow students make mocking remarks about Lola’s apparent obliviousness to her aggravating effect on the tour guide. As a result, when Lola came to me for help with her futon, I expected her to be pushy and demanding; on the contrary, however, she was exceedingly polite and self-deprecating, joking that she was fairly certain it was her fault the futon was broken and apologizing for bothering me with a situation that she had created. Moreover, she mentioned expressly seeking my help, as she was “scared” of the other Resident Advisor. As I mentioned in chapter two, many of the students in the dormitory



told me that they considered me the more approachable RA, a reputation that I had earned from being more lenient regarding the dormitory noise and alcohol policies. While I had never encountered Lola at any of the student parties I had “regulated” in the dormitory, it is perhaps safe to assume she had heard of my leniency from her peers.

Our first interview took place in the late afternoon on November 5, 2006. Lola was the first student to reply to my emailed invitation to participate, and she agreed to sit for two interviews in Paris and one interview after her return to her home campus. As I outlined above, this first interview took place in my studio apartment in the dormitory. The interview lasted over 90 minutes, filling up an entire audio cassette. We sat at opposite sides of a small island table on which I had arranged two glasses of water, my recorders (audio cassette and digital), a pack of cigarettes, an ashtray, and my interview script. Just prior to the interview proper, I asked if I could smoke, and when she agreed, I offered her a cigarette, which she accepted.

Like most research interviews, our dialogue began with a brief unrecorded conversational exchange during which I roughly outlined the purposes of the study and explained the nature of my work as a graduate student researcher in Education. We also established that we attended the same university, which led to a brief discussion of our experiences living and studying there.

While I will limit the bulk of my analysis to a stretch of talk between only two pre-scripted questions, overall our exchange followed a general pattern: after my first pre-scripted question, Lola’s ensuing response was extended enough to allow me to bring up subsequent questions more spontaneously, as follow-up questions more or less directly relevant to her ongoing discussion, and only towards the end of our lengthy dialogue did I turn my attention to my script in a marked way (deliberately suspending the dialogue) in order to verify that I had addressed all my intended questions/topics. For example, while I had a pre-scripted question regarding students’ desire to “make French friends” (Appendix 2), Lola’s brought the topic up herself during her discussion of her reasons for living in the dorm.

Indeed, Lola’s voluminous responses unfolded with minimal opportunities for me to interrupt with much more than the briefest backchannelings and requests for clarification. In the excerpt I have selected for this analysis, for example, Lola produces 169 lines of talk versus my 37 (a ratio of 4.6 to 1.0). Moreover, of those 37 lines I produced, 13 were overlaps of her talking and 16 were immediate latchings (contiguous utterances) onto her previous turn. Moreover, most of my conversational turns occurred in a cluster toward the end of this excerpt when I began to offer advice regarding her plans to live in France with or without a European Union (EU) passport. As I described in the previous chapter, one of Lola’s objectives for contacting her estranged French father was to enlist his help in her application for French/EU citizenship. However, she was somewhat hesitant to do so, given the discomfort she felt in her previous interactions with him (“no good vibes”, Interview 1, see chapter five). In the analysis I provided in chapter five, I highlighted how this procedural complication, and the dependency upon her father that it involved,

stood in stark contrast to Lola's general self-positioning as the autonomous agent of her own destiny – she would become the French person she “should have been” (Interview 1), with or without any help or support from her parents.

Looking at our interview interaction during this discussion, I notice a similar positioning playing out. When I attempt to assert topic control and shift the key of the interaction toward ‘giving advice’ regarding the bureaucratic difficulties I believe she will face in trying to work in France without first securing EU citizenship or a work permit, Lola works hard to regain control of the discussion by either talking over my attempted interruptions (Excerpt 1 below) or immediately latching on to my turns with counter-evidence (Excerpt 2):

**Excerpt 1.**

=L: But I just have to learn *French* ((laughs)) that's the problem, that, the hurdle is, is if I want to work here I'm gonna have to be fluent, you know you have to be  
[T: Well that will make everything easier if you (don't need a work  
fluent to work at the desk at Accent, like I'm just not, that good yet, I'm on my  
[T:permit)  
way, you know=

**Excerpt 2.**

=L: I could do that without a French passport, it just makes it easier  
[T: You could that as a crutch [it's way easier,  
it's *really* hard to get a job in France as an English teacher if you don't have an  
EU passport=  
=L: Yeah, or just doing anything=  
=T; Uh huh, well that's going to make it a lot easier for you to come back=  
=L: Yeah and also, just, even, you know my mom never had her citizenship and  
she lived here off and on and had apartments and had a life, and (.1) you don't  
have to be (.2) French born to, to live the French *life* and to become, to, you  
know, to immerse yourself in it, so um=

Indeed, nine (including seven actual turns-at-talk) of my total thirty-seven lines of talk occur during this rapid back-and-forth. By contrast, in the preceding dialogue, I had only five total lines (each constituting a turn) while Lola contributed fifty-seven lines across only five turns. Granted, this is generally in keeping with the overall patterns of talk I described above: following a pre-scripted question, the interviewees begin with lexically dense responses, which slowly taper off as the topic is exhausted.

However, when the whole excerpt is considered (i.e. from one scripted question to the next), the shift in volume of talk described above is only a temporary break in her more voluminous monologic talk. After this brief interchange of overlapping and contiguous turns, Lola continues to take the lead, producing ninety-six lines across eight turns while I

produce twenty-three lines across sixteen turns. That is, in terms of the overall interaction, my attempt at offering advice creates a break from the general participatory trends that hold sway throughout the discussion, i.e. she talks, I listen. Moreover, this break operates both to disrupt the established patterns of interaction and to shift the key and genre of the interaction itself, from ‘interviewing’ Lola to ‘advising’ her – a break that Lola works hard to undo in order to shift back into the more monologic discourse she had maintained up until that point. For example, in her initial response to the pre-scripted question that begins this excerpt, I take only four turns at talk: two clarifying questions (Excerpts 3 and 4) and two supportive backchannels (Excerpt 5 and 6), all four either contiguous to her preceding turn and/or followed by a contiguous turn from Lola:

**Excerpt 3.**

=T: What was it about it that was so beautiful?=  
=

**Excerpt 4.**

T: Yeah yeah=  
=

**Excerpt 5.**

T: ((laughs)) totally=  
=

**Excerpt 6.**

=T: How old were you when this happened?=  
=

Meanwhile, during this same stretch of transcript, Lola produces fifty-seven lines of talk across only five conversational turns (See Appendix 4, Excerpts 7-11). By contrasting both the thematic content and the manner in which this content is conveyed in our interactions before and during my attempt to advise Lola on her approach to living in France, it is clear that this advice represents a significant break in our established patterns of interaction. While my turns function to display agreement or to request supporting details, Lola is ‘on a roll’, an extended monologue in which she shifts topics at will (i.e. from the Tuileries narrative to her knowledge of French cultural “codes” to the “cuteness” of French children to her early childhood as potentially French). Moreover, it is during this extended monologue, in which Lola appears to be speaking as much to herself as to me, that Lola generates the kind of subjectivity-work I highlighted in chapter five: the mythification (Barthes, 1957) of French children (Excerpt 7 and 9) and her re-imagining of the French childhood she was denied by her parents’ separation (Excerpt 10 and 11). However, once I break this pattern and shift into providing cautionary advice, our interaction becomes at once more “conversational” (Lakoff, 1990: 42-44), i.e. more reciprocal with a more egalitarian distribution of turns, and more *strained* and confrontational as she attempts to downplay my reservations regarding her plan for living in France with or without EU citizenship (see Excerpt 2 above).

That is, this temporary suspension of her more monologic speech acts as a thematic and interactional rupture that Lola makes a concerted effort to repair in order to move out of the realm of the here-and-now of dialogue and back into the realm of her more imagined, idealized, and a-temporal discussion of the inevitability of her ability to “be French” (Excerpt 11, Appendix 4). For example, in the subsequent dialogue, Lola segues back into a discussion of her knowledge of French cultural norms in order to highlight her ability to “pass” for French in her daily life in Paris:

**Excerpt 12.**

=L: And I just find it so cute like, when I’m on the metro and a couple will get on, and the woman will like look around and like, kind of give everyone a *smile*, and I’m like [hushed tone] ‘that’s a *tourist*, that’s an *American*,’ it’s *so funny*, and I’m like, I’ve got like my sullen face on, and I’m like [whispers] ‘I’m (like a French) person,’ you know? Um (.2) yeah, I just want to, I just want to be here, I just love [T: Uh huh ((laughs))

it, I feel so, ever since the beginning I just felt *so* at *home*, and also like having a *base* that’s like *this*, like really helps, I love my *room*, I love t-, coming home to my room, even though I travel a lot on the weekends, coming back to my room, and just, *also* the moment, the thing that I love is when I come back from my trips, and I’m coming from the airport and then I take the metro and then I get *out* of the metro and I’m finally on the street and I’m just like ‘*ahh* back in my *home*’ you know? but just like looking around, Parisian streets that I *know* and my neighborhood, and also I find it *so funny*, um, I guess something about *me* says I

[T: (unintelligible) yeah

know my neighborhood I look *French*, cuz people *always* come up to me and ask for directions, I *love that*, and I can give it to them too, that’s like the most, one of the most rewarding things, like [higher pitch, softer tone] ‘*allez tout droit la-bas*’,

[T: That’s pretty sweet, yeah ((laughs))

um (.2) it’s, *oh* it’s *very rewarding*, it’s very rewarding, even those difficult times, I don’t, they don’t bother me (.3) even the rudeness, (or whatever)

In the preceding excerpt, I retreat into my previous role as an unequivocally supportive ‘sounding board’ for Lola’s self-positioning as a “French person”. Again, my comments are restricted to backchannelings and affirmations: laughing on cue and displaying agreement (“That’s pretty sweet, yeah”; “(unintelligible) yeah”). That is, Lola’s highly personal account, which yields evidence of the more subjective ways in which she is constructing a French identity, is embedded within a monologic discourse of self-presentation that is dependent upon a dialogic complicity on my part, i.e. a “reception” that is less “imposed” (Bourdieu, 1991) than co-constructed.

In this way, these shifts highlight exactly the kinds of “cross-talk” (Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz, 1976) – i.e. incongruencies of conversational goals and participant roles – that Briggs suggests often emerge when interviewers and interviewees operate with

conflicting “meta-communicative norms” (1986, p. 6) regarding interview discourse. While I felt entitled to not only comment on but to also evaluate her talk, Lola was clearly made uncomfortable with this critical intrusion into her ongoing monologue, and this resulted in a defense of her position and eventually a re-assertion of control of both genre and topic. For Lola, it seems, an interview is intended to elicit an interviewee’s self-presentation and pre-supposes that the interviewer’s role is to accept and ratify this self-presentation, not to question or critique its truth-value or “tellability” (Ochs & Capps, 2001). As such, this suggests that this brief interlude constituted a breach in the kind of “facework” involved in an interview: namely, that the role of the interviewer is to protect the “positive face” of the interviewee by “appreciat(ing) and approv(ing) of” the “positive consistent self-image or ‘personality’ claimed by interactants” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, in Jaworski & Coupland, 1999, p. 321). Moreover, as Atkinson (1996) and Cameron (2000) suggest, it is likely that this “face threatening act (FTA)” (Brown & Levinson, 1999, p. 323) is the result of an inter-discursive conflict between Lola’s and my own assumptions regarding the metacommunicative norms that hold sway in an interview. That is, given the prominence of interviews as methods of “self-expression” in American “communication culture” (Cameron, 2000), my questioning of Lola’s life plans represented a dialogic intrusion into a form of self-presentation that many expect to be as monologic as possible.

## **Veronica**

Prior to our first interview, I had had several interactions with Veronica in my capacity as Resident Advisor in the student dormitory. In fact, she had come to me for help and advice during her “*rough time* at the beginning” (Interview 1, see chapter five) of the semester – once when her hard drive crashed and once when she had misplaced her key to her apartment. In both instances, Veronica had come off as both deeply upset and humorously self-deprecating. On the one hand, she worried about creating additional financial burdens on her parents and was deeply embarrassed by the prospect of “digging in the trash!” (Interview 1) to locate her key. On the other hand, she worked hard to laugh it all off by framing these humiliations as typical of her bad luck and unpleasant yet character-building challenges (Fieldnotes, September 2 and 14, 2006; cf. Interview 3, chapter five). Moreover, during our second contact, I had mentioned my study and encouraged her to participate; she was the second student to volunteer, and our first interview took place on November 9, 2006.

In our preliminary unrecorded discussion, we established that we both attended the same university, a fact that Veronica mentions throughout our interviews (see chapter five). Unlike Lola, Veronica was much more deferential in our interaction; as a result, I felt both more in control of the dialogue and more pressured to keep the discussion going with follow-up questions and requests for additional talk on a given topic. For example, in the excerpt I have selected for this analysis, Veronica produces 37 lines of talk versus my 9 lines (a ratio of 4.11); moreover, neither of us produces any overlapping utterances, though Veronica produces 5 contiguous utterances and I produce 6. Overall, that is, Veronica and I seem to adhere to the politeness conventions typical of a conversation

between relatively socially distant interlocutors – “no gap, no overlap” (Sachs, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). However, as in Lola’s interview, there are some deviations from this more equitable and deferential turn-taking as Veronica shifts between discourse genres in the course of the interview. In Veronica’s case, the most notable deviation occurs when she tells a story. As I discussed in chapter five, Veronica took considerable pride in her ability to tell a story, and she used narrative (especially on her blog, see chapter five, Appendix 3) to come to more positive terms with her social difficulties among her peers and to re-imagine her identity as neither “American” nor “Romanian”, but “European”.

Similarly, in our interview interaction, when Veronica launches into a personal narrative, she seems to transfer this subject positioning into the interactive realm of the interview. In her initial response to my pre-scripted question about her travel experiences, for example, Veronica yields to my somewhat critical line of questioning about why she has not visited her native Romania:

Excerpt 1.

**T: So you’ve travelled? You said you went to Italy. Romania? Did you go to Romania?**

V: No, and my ((laughs)) actually my dad was pretty pissed that I didn’t go, he’s wanted me to go like every summer, he goes almost every summer=

=T: You’ve never gone with him? =

=V: No (.1) because the thing is, before I was too young, and then when you get to college, like when you go to Berkeley you have, you have too much school to do during the year and in the summer you have to have an internship if you wanna have a job eventually, you know, so I never have the free time, and his mom lives there, you know my grandma, and she hasn’t seen me since I was like 3 years old, so she really wants to talk to me=

=T: Why didn’t you go during high school?

V: Oh, I don’t know, I, I, =

=T: You’re like, ‘I want my summer, yo!’ =

Up to this point in the dialogue, Veronica is somewhat on the defensive – seemingly caught off guard by my insistent questioning of her reasons for never having visited her homeland, Veronica admits to disappointing her father and offers purely logistical explanations for not having the time to accompany her father on this annual trips since she’s been in college. When I continue to push her by asking why, then, she didn’t do so when she was in high school, Veronica is at a loss for words (“Oh, I don’t know, I, I”) until I latch onto her utterance by humorously putting (highly colloquial) words into her mouth (“I want my summer, yo!”) that suggest that I understand why a high schooler might resist giving up her summer vacation for a family trip. This comment offers a significant break in the key of my preceding line of questioning – instead of continuing my interrogation of her motives, my ventriloquation (Bakhtin, 1981) indexes a more empathetic and jocular stance in which I evaluate her motives as typical of the American high school student who values the off-time of the summer months as much for their

break from academic duties as for their release from family obligations. Either as a result of my newly emphatic stance, or perhaps merely as a continuation of her previous mention of her strained relationship with her Romanian grandmother, Veronica follows my humorous remark by delving into her much more personal reasons for avoiding Romania during her term abroad:

### Excerpt 2.

=V: ((laughs)) well plus, I don't know, it's kind of, it's, I have this image of it in my mind like it's *black and white* almost, like I just imagine that it's *so backwards*, and I, I'm really, I'm actually kind of scared to go over there just to see what it's like but I, I will eventually go, but, yeah, but um, yeah my dad was super pissed when I, I came here and I didn't go there, but I told h-, this is why I didn't go to *Prague* because I knew that if I went to eastern europe he would kick my ass for not, making, going to their eastern europe, and I told him, I was like 'dad, I'll go when Romania joins the EU' that's when I'll go to Romania, cause they're still on the lay, it's different money, I'm a vegetarian, my grandmother would *not* understand this concept, she'd be like 'oh, you're a vegetarian?' she'd put *lamb* on my plate or something, like something ridiculous, yeah, so, I mean it's, I know eastern Europe isn't what it used to be I'm still kind of like (.2) I, I'm still kind of worried about going there, and, I don't know the language, and I know that she'd be really (.2) disa-, she called me, this Saturday she called me, I don't know how she got my number, I guess my dad gave her my dorm room number, and she calls me, and she just says, we have like a minute and a half long conversation, of course she calls me at like 7:30 in the morning on *Saturday*, when I'm sick and I wanna sleep in, she calls me and in Romanian she says 'why don't you call? Why don't you write?' I couldn't, I was responding in French, because that's like, I I, I know she doesn't understand English and I was like well French is closer to Romanian than English is, and then after I respond in French, she says 'oh, you learn french but you don't learn romanian?' and then she says 'oh PS tell your dad I said happy birthday, talk to you later' and then she *hangs up the phone!*, so we had like this 2 minute long conversation=

=T: Guilting you!=

=B: Yeah, it was *ridiculous!* And I sent her a postcard and I didn't put the return address because she writes me these big elaborate letters in Romanian that I (.2) my dad usually has to sit there, and like, I'll tell him what I want to say and he tells me how to write it, but I can't do it on my own and she gets really pissed=

In this extended narrative, Veronica positions herself as a victim of circumstances that are primarily outside of her control (her grandmother called early, on a Saturday, when Veronica was sick and badly needed sleep). Moreover, the comedy of errors that is her telephone conversation with her Romanian grandmother also indexes the degree to which she feels caught within a web of interpersonal relationships that conspire against her. On the one hand, she recognizes that her refusal to visit Romania angers her father ("my dad was super pissed") and her decision to speak French shocks and dismays her Romanian

grandmother (“she *hangs up the phone!*”). However, she ultimately underscores that her familial and linguistic inadequacies are as much a result of her subjective fears (e.g. being rejected as a vegetarian by her Romanian grandmother) as the objective conditions of her upbringing by Romanian parents who insisted on English in the home (see also chapter five).

For my part, unlike in the preceding discussion of the practical constraints on her ability to visit Romania, I am wholly supportive of her evaluative intent in this narrative. In fact, structurally-speaking, I actually provide the “evaluation” (Labov, 1972; Labov & Waletzky, 1967) before Veronica can do so herself:

### **Orientation.**

=V: ((laughs)) well plus, I don’t know, it’s kind of, it’s, I have this image of it in my mind like it’s *black and white* almost, like I just imagine that it’s *so backwards*, and I, I’m really, I’m actually kind of scared to go over there just to see what it’s like but I, I will eventually go, but, yeah, but um, yeah my dad was super pissed when I, I came here and I didn’t go there, but I told h-, this is why I didn’t go to *Prague* because I knew that if I went to eastern europe he would kick my ass for not, making, going to their eastern europe, and I told him, I was like ‘dad, I’ll go when Romania joins the EU’ that’s when I’ll go to Romania, cause they’re still on the lay, it’s different money, I’m a vegetarian, my grandmother would *not* understand this concept, she’d be like ‘oh, you’re a vegetarian?’ she’d put *lamb* on my plate or something, like something ridiculous, yeah, so, I mean it’s, I know eastern Europe isn’t what it used to be I’m still kind of like (.2) I, I’m still kind of worried about going there, and, I don’t know the language, and I know that she’d be really (.2) disa-

### **Complicating action.**

V: [...]she called me, this Saturday she called me, I don’t know how she got my number, I guess my dad gave her my dorm room number, and she calls me, and she just says, we have like a minute and a half long conversation, of course she calls me at like 7:30 in the morning on *Saturday*, when I’m sick and I wanna sleep in, she calls me and in Romanian she says ‘why don’t you call? Why don’t you write?’ I couldn’t, I was responding in French, because that’s like, I I, I know she doesn’t understand English and I was like well French is closer to Romanian than English is, and then after I respond in French, she says ‘oh, you learn french but you don’t learn romanian?’ and then she says ‘oh PS tell your dad I said happy birthday, talk to you later’ and then she *hangs up the phone!*, so we had like this 2 minute long conversation=

### **Evaluation.**



=T: Guilting you!=  
=V: Yeah, it was *ridiculous*!

### **Resolution.**

And I sent her a postcard and I didn't put the return address because she writes me these big elaborate letters in Romanian that I (.2) my dad usually has to sit there, and like, I'll tell him what I want to say and he tells me how to write it, but I can't do it on my own and she gets really pissed=

By interjecting my own evaluation of her narrative, I at once impose and display my understanding of Veronica's story's very "*raison d'être*: why it was told, and what the narrator is getting at" (Labov, 1972; in Jaworski & Coupland, 1999, p. 231). However, while my active participation in her narrative may be seen as an intrusion of sorts, in terms of facework, my interjection operates to support Veronica's "positive face" by "presuppos[ing]/rais[ing]/assert[ing] common ground" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, in Jaworski & Coupland, p. 334). That is, by evaluating her grandmother's behavior as "guilting" Veronica, I align myself with Veronica's narrated self who feels unduly judged for her inability to speak Romanian. Moreover, Veronica, for her part, immediately latches onto my comment by supporting my evaluation as valid ("Yeah, it was *ridiculous*!") before moving on to the resolution. That is, unlike my previous interjections aimed at questioning the validity of her claims of not having the time to visit Romania with her father, in this narrative sequence, I not only validate her narrative subject positioning, but I also actively co-construct her characterization of her grandmother as inappropriately harsh in her reaction to Veronica's sleep-deprived decision to code switch into French.

However, as in my interaction with Lola, when our discussion moves out of a more monologic discourse genre (personal narrative) and back into the dialogic realm of the interview, I assume a more critical stance in which I begin to question why Veronica has not tried to learn Romanian as an adult:

### **Excerpt 3.**

=T: Do they teach Romanian at [your school]?=  
=V: I don't think so, I don't think so, they have like Celtic studies and all these different things but I don't think they have Romanian

However, unlike in the previous segue initiated by Veronica toward a narrative explanation of her apprehension about visiting Romania, in this instance I work to build a bridge back into Veronica's more subjective reasons for her disinterest in learning Romanian:

### **Excerpt 4.**

T: So, if you had to speak in those terms, you wouldn't consider your sort of Romanian-ness as like a significant part of your identity?

V: No

T: You'd say like I'm an American first? and a Californian? Or what would you say?

V: I'm:: yeah, I'm Californian, more than I, yeah I think that I'm more Californian than American because there's a lot of things about America that I think I don't identify with as much, but California, anything goes, so I identify much more with that

That is, unlike Lola, who actively struggles to remain within a more monologic discourse, Veronica is more inclined to enter into a dialogic (re)negotiation of the implications of her multilingual and multicultural subjectivity. While this may simply indicate Veronica's willingness to defer to my institutional authority to manage topics in a research interview, it also parallels her general concern, discussed in detail in the previous chapter, to negotiate a subject position that is at once personally satisfactory and interpersonally ratified. That is, like her earnest desire to be considered "cool" by her peers and "cultured" by the French (Interview 1), in the context of the interview Veronica seems keen on garnering my approval of her life decisions. Like the late-modern subject whose freedom to self-identify through a "continuously revised biographical narrative" (Giddens, 1991, p. 5) also generates a deeply-felt desire that his/her choices are approved of by "expert systems" (p. 7), Veronica is anxious to be received by others in ways that support her more inwardly-generated sense of self. However, in our interview, as in her interview accounts of her struggles to adequately position herself vis-à-vis the symbolic capital of being at once "American" and "Romanian", Veronica struggles to strike this crucial symbolic balance, which leads to alternating monologic and dialogic subject positionings. Indeed, in her closing remarks prior to the next pre-scripted question, Veronica explains that her desire to self-present as "Californian" rather than simply "American" was equally difficult in practice:

#### **Excerpt 5.**

V: Uh, it's kinda interesting, nobody, er actually yeah people always ask, yeah, American slips out a lot of times, not that it's even a bad thing, but I'm just saying, but then they always say where from in America, and then I always say California, and I'm from orange county and I thought, I thought the show the O.C. was really popular here, someone told me it was?=  
=T: yeah with young people, sure=  
=V: Yeah ok yeah, maybe that's the problem, I didn't tell young people that, but then people say *what?* OC? And then I say nevermind, California, everyone here only knows like Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco, so I tell them I go to school [door bell rings] in San Francisco and I live in Los Angeles

That is, while Veronica enters into dialogue with a clear purpose of aligning herself with specific and salutary identities (from the "OC", i.e. Orange County, a Californian locale

affiliated with wealth and power thanks in large part to a popular television show), the interactive pitfalls that arise often lead her to accept “imposed identities” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004) that only partially correspond with her idealized subject position.

## **Claire**

Although Claire was one of the last students to volunteer for the study, I’d gotten to know her quite well before our first interview. She was a particularly active student in the course for which I led discussion sections, and she regularly contacted me via email and face-to-face with questions and comments about the course readings, lectures, and discussions. I’d also interacted with her many times in my role as Resident Advisor, both when I leniently policed dormitory parties that she attended and when she came to me for advice on places to eat in Paris. Through the latter contact, we established a fairly friendly relationship through our mutual appreciation for French cooking. In fact, at one point in the semester, I invited Claire and several other dorm residents to my apartment for a cooking lesson on how to prepare rabbit. Following this dinner, Claire often invited me to accompany her and other students on trips to the local open-air markets and restaurants. I was also invited to and attended Claire’s birthday celebration at the restaurant located immediately beneath the dormitory. Across these various interactions, Claire and I had several fairly in-depth discussions regarding her experiences living in France as a child; indeed, in our informal conversations, Claire seemed very willing to discuss personal matters, including her parents’ relatively recent divorce. In fact, I had personally invited her to participate in the study, in large part due to her stories of language loss after her family returned to California after her parents’ their stint working at a study abroad program in southern France.

However, in the context of the research interview, Claire seemed markedly reserved, and generally refrained from discussing personal matters. She tended to keep her responses relatively brief and to the point, with little of the kind of extended monologues found in Lola’s and Veronica’s interview accounts. In the excerpt I have selected for analysis, for example, Claire produces only 40 lines of talk to my 11 lines (a ratio of 3.64, the second lowest after Audrey, see below), with no overlapping utterances and only one contiguous utterance. For my part, I overlap her turn only once and produce only one contiguous utterance (see below, and Appendix 4). While the tone of our discussion was informal for the most part, and she unabashedly admitted coming to Paris largely for “eating the food, drinking the wine” (Interview1, chapter five), she also seemed keen on positioning herself as a serious student via repeated shifts into more academic discourse in which she drew on the content of her various courses to comment on aspects of French history, culture, and politics.

That is, despite how well I knew her outside of the context of the study, Claire seemed intent on remaining within the more formal frame of the educational research interview and within her institutional identity as a ‘good’ student and study abroad. Moreover, as I discussed in the previous chapter, when it came to discussing her language loss, Claire was decidedly matter of fact about the experience – French was her parents’ “thing”

(Interview 1, chapter five), and she was content to focus on enjoying the more immediately available trappings of French culture rather than make a concerted effort to re-learn a language that she was so “bad at” (Interview 1, chapter five). Furthermore, though Claire readily admitted to treating her term abroad as a “luxurious” (Interview 1) time off from her more studious and responsible life on her home campus, she justified her orientation to the program as both in keeping with its curricular purpose and ratified and supported by her parents, both French educators:

**Excerpt 1.**

T: Now why did you pick this particular program? I mean obviously it meets your needs in terms of what you’ve been describing but, there are other sorta similar programs right that you could’ve taken in France?

C: Well I wanted Paris specifically so that narrowed down some of the options

T: Why?

C: Because I, if I ever go back to Par, or to France to live I definitely would rather live in the south of France because it’s more laid back in my opinion and, I do, I really do love that area, it’s awesome, but I always figured that if I came back that’s where I’d live, but Paris, is somewhere that you live for 4 months, obviously not get every single thing out of it, and experience everything, but it would be such an experience that I don’t think I could really have as an adult unless, you know, circumstances were really unique, so this particular program too I chose because, I didn’t want to live in a home stay (.2) I know that’s kinda funny because that would have been much more of an authentic integration, but even my parents both of them kind of dissuaded me from it? Because they said that, Parisian families, and this kind of funny because they’re both really into France and they’re not ethnocentric people at all, but they’re just like you know you could be very lucky, or you could get, you could be very unlucky with that situation, and so, and I’m someone who has, I kinda had free reign growing up for the most part as far as like doing, taking care of my own business and kinda coming and going as I please, so it’s like, I really didn’t want the responsibility of offending a family or like, you know, like ((laughs)) you know just like I didn’t want that kind of like, I I, I wanted to come here and do my thing and be selfish, like you know, I’ve had a roommate and not had my own room for so long back home, you know you share a room and stuff, so it’s like, this like possibility of having a studio apartment in Paris, like you know, in the Bastille, like all this shit, I read that and I was just like, ok, that’s it, that’s what I’m doing, you know like [T: It’s on::

and I looked at the, at the descriptions of the courses and they all seemed sup, so interesting and they applied for my major so, that’s why I picked it, but

Like Lola and Veronica, Claire emphasizes her desire for autonomy during her time in Paris – away from the rigors and collective housing arrangements of the home university, Claire sees this program as an opportunity to “do [her] thing and be selfish”. Moreover, Claire’s language underscores her need to set herself apart from her parents: across 23

lines of talk, Claire uses the first person pronoun 28 times. However, in the course of her explanation for choosing this program, Claire positions herself in fundamentally intersubjective and interdiscursive ways in order to highlight that her decision reflects a normal, if not ideal, orientation to study abroad. First of all, although her repeated unqualified description of study abroad as an “experience” may sound shallow or even touristic, this is in fact exactly how many study abroad programs are marketed in contemporary American higher education. Indeed, in the official description for this study abroad program, the wording is equally vague:

“It is designed to immerse students in several dimensions of French culture and life. [...]The program is intended as rewarding experience abroad, and it is also a gateway for some students who may choose to extend their stay in France for a second semester” (Program description online, fieldnotes 09/13/06).

That is, Claire “animates” the “principal” (Goffman, 1955) institutional discourse for this very program in order to index her identity as a typical participant. Furthermore, while she begins her discussion of her choice of living arrangements by portraying herself as both fiercely independent and potentially “offensive”<sup>27</sup>, she ultimately attributes her decision to following the sage advice of her francophile parents (“they’re both really into France and they’re not ethnocentric people at all”).

For my part, aside from an early request for elaboration on her reasons for specifically choosing Paris, my only contribution, though overlapping, functions to display my understanding of her excitement about living in such a desirable arrondissement (“It’s on:”). Like in my interaction with Veronica, this comment is a form of evaluative ventriloquation – I am speaking for her narrated self as much as I am speaking for myself in the here-and-now of the interview. At first glance, this may seem like a rather odd manner of speaking for a researcher; however, given both my relative familiarity with Claire outside of the study and the key of the cotext in which is embedded, the colloquial register resonates and collocates with her preceding talk of being excited about the “possibility of having a studio apartment in Paris, like you know, in the Bastille, like all this shit”. Furthermore, by mirroring her use of more informal language, my interjection operates interactively as a contextualization cue (Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz, 1976) to display my comfort with Claire’s framing our dialogue as an appropriate venue for less monitored, formal speech. Indeed, as I indicated above, I was caught off guard by Claire’s relative degree of formality during our interviews, and I was keen on re-framing our interaction as more like our previous exchanges during which she had been much more willing to speak freely about the more personal dimensions of her experiences in Paris. However, this key shift (and others like it in the course of the interview) occurs only in passing, as Claire continues to maintain the more distant and guarded institutional identity of the ‘good student’ eager to display her curricular successes without divulging

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<sup>27</sup> Her laugh immediately following this remark, in my mind, is a self-deprecating reference to her proclivity for a good deal of raucous nightlife. As I mentioned in chapter four and above, Claire spent a considerable amount of her free time with the “party kids” (Veronica, Interview 1), often returning to the dormitory in the early morning hours among a throng of visibly inebriated students.

any potentially discrediting details of her personal life. Hoping to keep the interactive ball rolling in this more informal frame, however, I immediately pose a follow-up question about what her actual experiences have been:

**Excerpt 2.**

T: What has been your experience so far of the program?

C: The program itself? Like?

T: Like did it sorta meet your expectations? Has it played out the way you expected it to play out?

C: Yeah, definitely, very, I think I was pretty on par with everything, um, I was a little bit surprised at how welcoming, and how much they really did make an effort that everyone felt comfortable, and I felt like that was really nice because it can be really scary, for me not particularly though of course it's hard to come somewhere new and you know be in that environment, but I think that that's so important especially like in mixing all these people together in a totally foreign environment, um I think they did a really good job of trying to like help us, just kinda transition into it (.2) but other than that, like the classes were all really good, I enjoyed all of them, um the coursework was not too heavy at all, I mean I felt like it was challenging=

=T: How many classes are you taking?=-

=C: I took three, yeah, so um, I mean I did feel like it was interesting and I did feel like it was challenging at times, but I felt like it was about the perfect amount of work because it was like (.2) I think that if they made things too heavy and too tedious it really would have detracted from the reason why we're all here you know, which is, not just to study but to like, learn about, you know, this culture and this way of life, so

T: Were there any ways in which the classes fed into your experience or your understanding of France or the language, culture, society, anything like that?

Whether because of the wording of my question, or because of her general reservations about treating our interview as just another conversation between relative social intimates, Claire's response reinforces her previous subject positioning as a successful ("it can be really scary, for me not particularly") and serious ("I took three [courses]"<sup>28</sup>) student. Moreover, while in our follow-up interview post-sojourn Claire describes the courses as "pretty simp, easy classes to a certain extent" (Interview 2), in this first interview Claire is much more diplomatic: the classes are "not too heavy" but "challenging". Of course, given my role as her Graduate Student Instructor and my stated purpose of using my research findings to "help better prepare future generations of study abroad students" (Appendix 1), Claire's choice of words may reflect a desire to save both our "positive faces" (Brown & Levinson, 1987). That is, despite our social

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<sup>28</sup> Most of the students in the program took only two courses. In my early meeting with the program director, he bemoaned the fact that the students had discovered a curricular loophole that allowed them to enroll in only two courses, despite the stated program recommendation that all students take a full course load (Fieldnotes, 08/24/06).

relationship outside of our institutional roles, Claire seems particularly cognizant of speaking ‘on the record’ in the research interview, and she foregrounds and maintains an identity that is in keeping with that eminently institutional context. For my part, while I was somewhat disappointed by this subject positioning, I ultimately yielded to its “metacommunicative norms” (Briggs, 1986), turned to my interview script, and segued into a discussion of the purely academic dimensions of her experience abroad (“Were there any ways in which the classes fed into your experience or your understanding of France or the language, culture, society, anything like that?”).

## **Audrey**

Audrey was the last student to volunteer for the study, but like Claire, I had gotten to know her fairly well before our first interview. I knew her both as a dormitory resident and a student, and though she was less engaged in my course than Claire, she routinely came to me for help with her French homework. She attended a university far away from my own, but she was born and raised in the area where my university is located, and we often discussed familiar music venues, activities, and towns in the region. In the course of the semester, I routinely recommended concerts for her to attend in Paris, and she and several other dormitory students accompanied me to two such concerts. Moreover, when her French-American boyfriend came to visit for a week during the semester, Audrey made a point to invite me along on some of their evenings out with his Parisian friends. During these evening excursions, Audrey and I had several in depth conversations about her pre-program experience visiting her boyfriend’s family in the south of France. In fact, in large part due to her descriptions of this immersion experience, I personally invited Audrey to participate in my study.

As in my first interview with Claire, I expected the more socially close relationship I had with Audrey to endure in our interview exchange. Unlike in Claire’s interview, this was generally the case with Audrey’s – in fact, more so than with any other participant, our interview felt very conversational and informal, with a lot of joking, laughing, and teasing (see below). Audrey was very frank and willing to swear and make off-color, non-‘politically correct’ remarks (“that’s gay”, Interview 1, chapter five). That is, in contrast with Claire, Audrey seemed less concerned with speaking ‘on the record’ in a research interview. Then and now, I see this maintenance of the key and register of our more informal previous interactions as indicative of Audrey’s trust that I could see the irony inherent in her remarks and would not judge her harshly or take her comments out of context. Overall, our interviews felt the least scripted, and as a result, it was particularly awkward for me to turn to pre-scripted questions, both because it framed the interaction as more formal and asymmetrical, and because I would become so caught up in the natural flow of topics that I essentially forgot it was an interview, that I was ‘in control’. Our turns at talk were evenly distributed, with each of us producing an identical number of turns (14), overlaps (3) and contiguous utterances (5). Moreover, the ratio of our relative volume of speech was the lowest of all the excerpts I have selected (3.32). So, despite the clearly demarcated institutional roles that ostensibly held sway over our interaction, Audrey and I co-constructed relatively equal footing over the course

of our dialogue. The most striking evidence of this is the fact that Audrey is the only participant to ever address me by my *first name*. This occurs after a follow-up question to one of my pre-scripted questions about her career goals:

**Excerpt 1.**

T: I know this is like the question of death, and it's fine if you don't have an answer, but do you have specific career goals connected to your major?

A: Yeah, I guess I don't, you know, I don't really have like specific specific career goals, and yeah I'm a graduating senior ((laughs)) I've thought a lot about going into research and being a professor, but that's kind of something I see more in the distant future, like I'd ideally like to work first, the one thing maybe it could tie into is I've strongly been considering do the JET program or something to that effect? I've heard a lot of good things about it, yeah, it's made me consider, it's a year? JET program's a year? It seems like totally doable and something I would love to do, you know um, this experience has probably pushed me more into thinking that that was a possibility, a strong possibility, um, as far as this program and my major and like career goals, um, yeah

T: How would your dad feel about you going to Japan?

A: *Oh my god!* ((laughs)) It's funny that you ask that question Tim, because I had this conversation with my dad while I was here, and usually like over the phone, our phone conversations are kind of hard cause, you know, my dad obviously speaks English but his English isn't that great and he's kind of the type of person like over the phone he has certain points he wants to make and *that's it*, and then he'll be like 'ok, are things good? Are you having fun?' and that's about it, he doesn't really hear my responses, I'll tell him a story, like I'll try and like tell him a joke or a story and he'll just be like silent afterwards, then go to the next question ((laughs)) and my mom's just like 'oh that's great!' um, but I told my dad about the possibility of me, cause he *asked* me, he said, like he's been pushing me you know to look into graduate schools, and what I'm going to do, and I really haven't been, but um, he asked me and I said, 'yeah, I've been thinking about doing the JET program actually,' and he's like 'what's that?' and I explained it to him, teaching abroad, in Japan for a year, and they help you a lot, they find you housing, it pays pretty well, and he was just like, 'OH! OH!' he's like 'this is not a simple *thing* you are thinking about, this is not a joke' and he like *went off* on me for seriously like half an hour ((laughs)), he just kept saying

[T: Saying what?

like, 'you think this is an easy thing you want to do' he's like 'you don't know' he's like 'you going to go to this foreign, like, far away country' he's like he's like 'when I came to America, it took me like two years to actually be able to function and assimilate into the culture'

T: But they don't make you assimilate into Japanese culture on JET

A: Exactly, I tried to explain that to him, I was like 'dad, I'm not trying to become Japanese, I'm just going to go teach English there'

[T: Exactly



[A: You know, and he was like ‘I’ve heard stor- I saw like a *Dateline* thing about these girls getting *raped* on those kind of programs’ and he’s just like ‘you think this is so simple’ and then at the end, I knew at that point not to really argue with him, especially over the phone, it was kind of not worth it, so I was kinda like ‘uh huh, uh huh, uh huh’ and then at the end of our conversation he was like, uh, he kept saying like ‘it’s 180 degrees different than America!’ and then at the end he was like ‘I don’t think this is something that me and your mother can support.’

[T:Oo::!

and I was like, ‘ok’

It’s interesting to note that even in the delivery of my scripted research question, I blend registers by opening with a rather apologetic and colloquial disclaimer (“I know this is the question of death, and it’s fine if you don’t have an answer”). For her part, Audrey is self-deprecatingly frank about her less-than-ideal position as a fourth year undergraduate without firm career plans, “and yeah I’m a graduating senior ((laughs))”. Furthermore, in her discussion of her interest in the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program, Audrey assumes an epistemic stance of uncertainty regarding the program particulars, repeatedly ending her statements in a rising interrogative intonation, as if to invite my verification of her somewhat shaky understanding of the facts of the program. In contrast with Lola’s active dismissal of my attempts to offer advice on her future plans to work in France after graduation, Audrey’s willingness to involve me in her ongoing talk is in keeping with the kind of open-ended, co-constructed “conversational narratives” Ochs and Capps (2001) describe as typical of interactions between social intimates (see chapters one and two). That is, Audrey appears comfortable launching into a response with the understanding that I am equally enabled to pitch in as needed in order to fill in the factual gaps of her account. While I do not do so in this instance, Audrey’s opening up of the floor to my supporting feedback underscores her relative comfort with appearing unsure of herself in this crucial domain (future employment) and offers interactive evidence of her view of our dialogue as a relatively ‘safe’ and ‘low stakes’ affair.

Audrey’s perception of my role in this exchange is most apparent in her explicit use of my first name in her orientation to her narrative about her father’s disapproval of her plans to work in Japan. When I posed the question about how her Korean father would “feel” about her electing to work in Japan, I had anticipated that he might object given the history of conflict between Korea and Japan. Furthermore, when she responded so emphatically (“*Oh my god!*”), this was exactly what I expected to hear. Granted this is a potentially uncomfortable topic to broach, and my inclination to pose such a question further underscores my framing of our relationship as one grounded in sufficient trust and face-saving concerns to allow this kind of highly personal – even traumatic – disclosure. For her part, Audrey’s use of my first name is a clear contextualization cue to her acceptance of this informal, intimate frame: by positioning me as “Tim”, Audrey interpellates me as social familiar with whom she is ‘on a first name basis’ and thus privy to a discussion of her familial difficulties.

Additionally, throughout her narrative, during which she positions herself dialogically through the many instances of the reported speech of her father, it is clear that I feel entitled to enter into her story in order to align myself with her subject positioning as unduly chastised by the irrational fears of her immigrant father (“But they don’t make you assimilate into Japanese culture on JET”; “Exactly”; “Oo::!”). This last overlapping utterance (“Oo::!”) is a highly evaluative exclamation that indexes my empathy toward Claire’s difficult situation – typical of early adulthood – of failing to garner her father’s recognition of her ability to make informed life decisions on her own. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Audrey’s narrative highlights her struggle to resist her father’s mapping of his own immigrant experience onto her plans to temporarily work abroad in a prestigious international exchange program. Though she is ultimately unsuccessful in the context of her storyworld dialogue with her father, in the context of our interview, Audrey makes it clear that this failure has not deterred her in the least (“I knew at that point not to really argue with him, especially over the phone, it was kind of not worth it, so I was kinda like ‘uh huh, uh huh, uh huh’”). Moreover, as her audience and interlocutor, I support her subject positioning as the kind of autonomous adult who is entitled to decide for herself how ‘risky’ her life plans are. Indeed, assuming her father’s fears center on the insurmountable cultural differences Audrey would face in Japan (‘it’s 180 degrees different than America!’), I suggest that perhaps he would prefer that she find work in his native Korea:

## **Excerpt 2.**

T: What if you said Korea?

A: Basically the same. Um, he’d probably prefer me to go to Japan over Korea ((laughs)) well just because it’s, because, well maybe Korea because I do have some family there

T: So you’d have support and stuff

A: Eh, maybe, I don’t know, I have an aunt who lives there, the last one of my dad’s siblings who lives there, but, my dad didn’t talk to her for twenty five years because there was some kind of family feud, so I mean I’m sure she would, she’s really rich, so um, that’s clutch, but um, Japan cause he probably thinks it’s safer, cause he’s like ‘North Korea this’ and ‘nuclear weapons that’ and I’m like ‘dad, like ((laughs)) there’s danger in the world everywhere’ but um, yeah because before, um, this was kinda way before I really got ready to come abroad, but um, one of my roommates was gonna come to Europe with me, she has like a shit ton of family in Syria, she’s one of my Armenian roommates, and my other roommate was gonna go to Lebanon, so we were gonna meet up in like Syria and Lebanon and hang out, and my parents were like ‘HELL NO!’ ((laughs)) and like they just freaked out, even my mom at that point was like, ‘no, you’re not going to the middle east’ so, I can understand that

However, in another unexpected twist, Audrey suggests that it is not so much the cultural differences that her father worries about, but the more objective possibility of physical

harm that might come her way by crossing national borders. After an initial nod to my implicit suggestion that Korea would offer more “support and stuff” from her Korean relatives, Audrey portrays her father’s fear as a symptom of a general paranoia regarding what he sees as the political instability of her desired destinations. For my part, unlike the previous narrative, in this case I refrain from comment due to what I see as Audrey’s animation of the familiar, and less contentious, subject of parental concern for the physical safety of one’s children. Furthermore, by concluding her narrative with a recognition of her parents’ worry in this regard, Audrey ends by positioning herself as appreciative of their concern (“so, I can understand that”), which, as a narrative coda functions to “forestall further questions about the narrative itself” (Labov, 1972, in Jaworski & Coupland, 1999, p. 230). This cutting off of her narrative from further discussion is further evidenced by my transition to a hypothetical discussion of her plans for graduate school:

### Excerpt 3.

T: What um, global studies obviously is inter-disciplinary, what field do you think you would pursue for grad school, have you thought about it, like, obviously global is probably the field you like more than others or whatever?

A: I’ve done a lot of poli sci, international relations type stuff=

=T: Oh! you and [your boyfriend] can be like, a little couple(.1)=

=A: [higher pitch] Poli sci buddies! ((laughs)) uh huh, except for, you know, he’s like ‘global studies isn’t a real major!’, I’ve also done a little bit of anthro that I found interesting, like um, development, developmental anthropology?=  
 =T: Yeah=

=A: (third world) country development I found a little bit interesting

T: Yeah=

=A: Yeah=

=T: That’d be really really cool=

=A: Yeah=

=T: It just depends like, where your mind’s at, you know, if you wanna go, of what level of like, I guess society and culture you wanna get into, anthro tends to

[A: Yeah yeah

get kind of like, micro level?=  
 =

Once we shift topics in this way, our interaction becomes considerably more interactive and playful. For example, when Audrey mentions the possibility of pursuing graduate studies in international relations (her boyfriend’s current undergraduate major), I shift keys suddenly via my “Oh!” (Schiffrin, 1988) into a teasing suggestion that she and her boyfriend can be “a little couple” of international relations scholars. Audrey immediately latches onto my humorous comment by assuming an equally playful stance via her high-pitched recasting of my remark (“Poli sci buddies! ((laughs))”) and her self-deprecating suggestion that her boyfriend considers her current work in global studies as “not a real major!”. She then redirects the dialogue back to a more serious discussion of her various academic interests, which yields a series of supportive backchannels from me before I

segue into a hedge-filled stretch of friendly, though somewhat didactic, advice on the potentials of an anthropological approach to international relations. Either because Audrey finds this shift off-putting, or because our discussion of her career goals had simply run its course, she does not seem interested in extending this new topic, and I turn to my interview script once again:

#### **Excerpt 4.**

=A: Uh huh=

=T: You know?

A: Yeah, like specializing in like, Chile or something yeah, totally

T: [looking at questions] Um, let's see, um, ok, um (1.0) ok, so would you say that your expectations for this program have been more or less confirmed, like what you expected it to be like versus the way it has been?

#### **Discussion**

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the most surprising pattern that emerges in these analyses of interaction concerns the indirect relationship between social distance and biographical disclosure. That is, on the one hand, these interactions highlight the fact that participatory roles, once established and routinized, are difficult to renegotiate (Audrey) and/or yield conflicting interpretive frames (Claire) in the more formal setting of the research interview. On the other hand, when the interview context is the primary interactive ground for the interviewer/interviewee relationship, respondents are more inclined to frame the dialogue as fundamentally about them (Lola) and/or their working through of problematic personal relationships (Veronica). Whether this finding indicates a fundamental methodological breakdown in the field is up to the reader to decide, though I concede that more observation outside of the interview context may have helped me more fully flesh-out the context-dependency of these participants' ways of speaking across more or less formal social settings.

Taking them as they are, within the context of the actual turns-at-talk, suggests that the students who knew me primarily in my institutional capacities (Lola & Veronica) drew on the more general American cultural scripts and metacommunicative norms of the interview as a technology of the confessional (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Foucault, 1978). In contrast with Claire and Audrey, these students delved into more deeply personal perspectives on their term abroad and its implications for their ongoing self-reflexive project of self-identity (Giddens, 1991). In considerably longer and more monologic stretches of talk, they negotiate at once the more objective constraints (family relationships, biological inheritance, peer dynamics) on this subjectivity as well as the more subjective and agential symbolic re-negotiations of the meanings they would like to ascribe to their self-understanding. That said, all these participants highlight their desire to decide for themselves how to self-identify vis-à-vis the symbolic capital attendant upon their more or less enduring and emergent identities and subject positions that have become salient through their experiences studying abroad in Paris. However, the varying

degrees of interpersonal familiarity (both institutionally determined and interactively accomplished) that frame our interview interactions seem to yield notably divergent discursive outcomes. In other words, the artificiality and authenticity of the research interview as a discourse genre was diversely negotiated, with the unexpected outcome of increased social distance yielding more explicitly personal disclosures of these symbolic negotiations of multilingual subjectivity.

Ultimately, though, these interview interactions provide ample evidence of these study abroaders' drive to incorporate their experiences abroad into their ongoing biological narrative and their willingness – however constrained by the social factors outlined above – to engage in active dialogue on the significance of their experience in relation to more than just the stated academic goals of the program, their respective majors, and career goals. Despite the myriad ways in which my data collection procedures may have compromised the interactive conditions of possibility for yielding generalizable findings, there is one clear constant across all case studies: during their term abroad, all of these students made sense of their experiences as “whole people [with] whole lives” (Coleman, 2010). In each case, the student both brought with her and developed new ways of interpreting her experience that transcended the traditional understanding of the purpose of study abroad as well as the program's capacity to address this more subjective dimension of living and learning in a foreign context.

Moreover, while in the previous chapter I argue in favor of heeding the more deeply personal dimensions of this subjectivity-work, here what seems most evident is that these students are inclined to work through this subjective dimension in dialogue with others. That is, programmatically speaking, rather than dismissing the non-academic dimension of study abroad – whether experienced socially or personally – it seems worthwhile to deliberately address these issues, both to help sojourners consider how their views may conflict with the realities of the host community and to identify and reinforce the more deeply-held (even if idealized) yearnings that have driven them to enroll in study abroad (and, ideally, language learning) in the first place.

Finally, as I suggested in chapter five, study abroad program providers (especially, but not exclusively, language teachers) are uniquely positioned to engage in these kinds of discussions. In fact, as the applied linguistics and international education research on study abroad suggests (chapters three and four), these educators are increasingly concerned with understanding and recuperating the slippery processes and outcomes of “individual differences” among program participants. As case study after case study underscores, the reasons for the sometimes disappointing learning outcomes of a term abroad are often un-assessable via the more traditional testing methods currently in use. This is undeniable and unavoidable; indeed, what I argue for here is not the provision of new pre- and post-sojourn measurements, but rather a more open and ongoing dialogue among all interested parties (faculty, staff, and students) that can, on a sliding scale of direct pedagogic intervention, create a forum for a more public articulation of the various discourses that impinge upon the interpretive work (subjective and intersubjective) within the term abroad.

I suggest this not merely as part of a ‘celebration of the diversity of voices’ that are contained within the program community. As my and others’ findings suggest, students’ (mis)understandings of the purpose of their term abroad are often embedded within larger cultural frames that can disincline students from engaging actively with the linguistic and cultural differences of the host community. Nor do I argue in favor of embracing a laissez-faire, “coming of age model” (Levin, 2001) for American study abroad in which students are allowed to uncritically reproduce American cultural scripts that posit formal education as subsumed under “personal development”. My point is simple: while I call for increased consideration of the subjective dimension of study abroad experiences, I also recognize the potential for student-faculty discussions of this dimension to uncritically reproduce the kind of therapeutic confessions (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Cameron, 2000; Foucault, 1978) that characterize biographic ‘sharing’ in American popular culture. To resolve this conundrum, however, I propose placing it at the center of more public discussions that at once allow for students to share *and* provide a systematic means for interrogating the conventionality of these ways of speaking in order to mold their self-reflexivity in ways that generate a more critical and self-conscious orientation to their experiences living and studying outside the United States (cf. Dervin [2009, 2010] on similar work done in Finland with Erasmus students).

In the next chapter, I provide some curricular recommendations for the kinds of educational interventions that might allow for this kind of ongoing discussion and a curricular recuperation of this “hidden dimension” of American study abroad.

## Chapter 7

### Implications for Research and Pedagogy

#### Summary of Key Findings and Implications for Research

In addressing issues related to identity and subjectivity, this study aligns itself with much of the recent applied linguistics research on study abroad. Moreover, like these other recent studies, I have addressed the ways in which issues related to identity can complicate and/or compromise students' capacity or inclination to align their learning efforts with the intended goals of the program. This study, however, departs from previous work in several key ways.

First of all, most of the qualitative studies of American study abroad that have addressed the issue of learner identity have done so largely in an effort to explain the types of interactive and intercultural mismatches that arise as student behaviors and interpretations remain rooted in an intransigent American habitus (Bourdieu, 1991). Of course, these researchers often reach widely divergent conclusions regarding the pedagogic implications of this mismatch, with some advocating greater accommodation of American students (Pellegrino-Aveni, 2005) and many others calling for more concerted efforts to train the students themselves to adapt to the foreign environment (Dolby, 2004; Kinginger, 2008; Levin, 2001). In this study, I have also addressed the ways in which these students' initial learning goals gave way as they negotiated the unexpected identity issues triggered by spending a semester abroad (Research Question #2, chapter one).

However, in order to account for the complexities of the symbolic work involved in these negotiations, I have found it necessary to move beyond the structuralist notion of identity in favor of the post-structuralist concept of subjectivity (Research Question #3). That is, rather than only considering the ways in which these students' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors do or do not align with recognizable "American" norms, I have also explored the degree to which these respondents' accounts represent a form of *symbolic* cobbling together of a subjectivity through discursive practices that incorporate as much *self-imagining* as any self-identification with socially recognizable communities or archetypes. As a result, while I also support the call for more pre-departure preparation (especially in foreign language curricula), my findings suggest that simply viewing the situation of these students as an intercultural contact, with the most relevant and salient cultures at hand being "American" and "French", would obscure the much more complicated symbolic reality at hand. As I demonstrated in Veronica's case, a student's drive to learn French may have as much to do with the heritage language they are *not learning* as it does with the foreign language they *are learning*. If future research and study abroad program curricula are to succeed in understanding the reasons for the well-known unpredictability of study abroad as a learning context, they may need to account for not only what students are *moving toward* but also what students are *leaving behind* by electing to study abroad. Although the majority of applied linguistics research on

study abroad frames students' behaviors as inherently prospective – i.e. *forward*-looking – this study suggests a view of motivation and intentionality that is non-linear and imbedded in a more subjective experience of time wherein the reasons for acting today, including the things we say (and especially how we incorporate new experiences into our ongoing life story), potentially draw on multiple scales of life-historical time (Lemke, 2002).

This study also offers a new perspective from which to consider the increasingly frequent critiques of American students' treatment of study abroad as a 21<sup>st</sup> century Grand Tour (Research Question #1, chapter one; cf. Engle & Engle, 2002; Kinginger, 2008; Ogden, 2008). While it is undeniable that these students framed their time in Paris as primarily geared toward non-academic “cultural” pursuits, what is ultimately most striking about their testimonies is this alleged fixation on culture is quickly eclipsed by a focus on much more personal issues. That is, while they claim to be studying abroad to soak up high culture and take time off from the rigors of their home university, these students end up more keen on discussing the impact of their experiences abroad on their sense of self vis-à-vis the identities – real and imagined, inherited and desired – that have been brought into stark relief as a result of their term abroad.

Moreover, this reconceptualization of motivation goes beyond considering study abroaders as pursuing the type of “distinction” that Bourdieu and Skeggs (chapter four) describe as the chief “profit” gained by international experiences. Of course, profit-seeking (of symbolic capital of various forms) is central to much of what they describe; however, their pursuit goes beyond the structurally-determined value they see themselves accruing in the social sphere and delves into more deeply personal drives toward “self-fulfillment” and “plenitude” (Kramsch, 2009). Indeed, their initial purpose for going to Paris might very well have been motivated by their (more or less conscious) sense of the “market” (Bourdieu, 1984) conditions in the United States regarding the symbolic capital of having “studied abroad in Paris”. However, once in country, both this cultural and the more material forms of rational calculus (e.g. labor market concerns) fall by the wayside when these students face the unintended consequences of their term abroad on their subjectivity, understood primarily in life-historical terms (Research Question #2, chapter one).

Of course, researchers concerned with advanced bilingualism (Kramsch, 2009; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004) have touched on these issues. However, few (save Kramsch) have taken seriously the idea that such phenomena among beginner language learners are anything but errors, distortions, i.e. an intransigent monolingualism and monoculturalism typical of those who persist in seeing the Other through the lens of the Self. While I do not deny that these students' interpretations of their experience abroad are incongruent with the primary educational purpose of study abroad (and advanced foreign/second language learning), I simply suggest that they are fundamental enough to the core processes of living and learning in a foreign context to be addressed head on and made public enough to help students work through them.



Furthermore, these dreams, desires, and essentializations are not tightly held secrets; they're not hard to get at, to elicit through standard qualitative research methods. On the contrary, students are inclined to discuss this subjective dimension of their experience with compassionate interlocutors; a fact which suggests study abroaders are potentially open to critically examine their own positions, perspectives, and ways of speaking about study abroad. Of course, this willingness to share these reactions may not amount to any particular form of competence unto itself (Research Question #3). Indeed, this study may not offer any insights into the type(s) of competence that study abroad *should* develop. However, my findings do underscore the fact studying abroad can trigger the kind of high stakes symbolic negotiations that characterize "symbolic competence" (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008; see chapter one). That is, as these students struggled to integrate their study abroad experiences into their self-reflexively understood life history, they all found themselves wrestling with the tension between their self-generated subjectivity and the various identities imposed on them from without. Granted, the practical stakes of these negotiations may have been minimal and largely self-serving; however, with the appropriate educational intervention, perhaps this symbolic competence could have been extended to include a more thorough consideration of the Other on its own terms.

From a programmatic and pedagogic perspective, then, it seems safe to assume that while the exact contours of each student's subjective reactions to their experiences abroad may be too idiosyncratic to anticipate fully, the likelihood that such reactions will occur is sure enough to allow for educational interventions that help students work through this subjective dimension in a manner that is more in keeping with the intended learning goals of the program. In the next section, I will offer a rough sketch of what such an educational intervention might look like for this study abroad program.

### **Pedagogic implications**

The key finding of this study is that all of these students accounted for the significance of their experiences studying abroad in terms that transcended the institutionally sanctioned academic and professional goals of the program itself. Of course, given the specific type of program and the small number of focal students, it is impossible to generalize these findings to all American undergraduates studying abroad. However, insofar as these students' emphasis on issues related to personal identity resonates with the findings of so many other studies on American study abroad (especially more language-intensive, "full immersion" programs), it seems safe to assume that most study abroaders make sense of their experiences in ways that go beyond the narrowly-defined goals of most study abroad programs. While the aims of the present study are purely descriptive, in what follows I will offer some tentative suggestions on how this subjective dimension can be better addressed and recuperated via educational interventions.

Of course, the degree to which these participants were free to idealize and essentialize the French is undoubtedly a product of their relative isolation from a more intensive engagement with the language and its speakers. However, as I suggested in the previous chapters, these more subjective interpretations of experience are simply most salient

among novice language learners. While in the best case scenario, study abroad helps students move from a more “foreign language” orientation to a more “second language” one (Risager, 2006), the starting point is typically the same: namely, studying the language in formal classroom contexts, in relative isolation from its use in native speaker communities. As such, even the students who ultimately gain near native-speaker linguistic and pragmatic competence will undoubtedly retain some of their more emotional and aesthetic “desires” and “myths” (Kramsch, 2009), albeit with considerably more self-reflexive awareness of how these subjective orientations depart from the more objective facts of life of the language and its speakers. For example, for students who pursue a major in a foreign language, their deeply-held love for the language and its literature may be as much grounded in a deeply personal and aesthetic attachment to the sounds and surfaces of the language as in their evolving understanding of the complex social and historical realities of the language. With this in mind, while in the following pedagogical recommendations I will limit my discussion to this focal program, I see attending to this subjective dimension as relevant to the study abroad experiences of more than just the most “insulated” and novice language learners.

That said, to maintain continuity, I will approach this section as if I were designing a course for this particular “island” study abroad program. While the lack of an intensive language learning component limits the curriculum in many ways, I accept this limitation as part of the challenge of working with students who do not have language learning as their top priority and thus tend to have limited and/or only superficial contact with native speakers in the host community. These are the extreme outsiders described by Hoffa (2002), i.e. those students who never progress past the early stages of language learning and generally remain on the outside looking in, culturally speaking. As my data suggests, these are also the students whose lack of sustained contact with the language and its speakers causes them to turn inwards, to understand their experiences in more deeply personal and life historical ways. What seems necessary, then, is an educational intervention that both gets students to more consciously reflect on these personal reactions/interpretations *and* builds a bridge between the personal and the cultural, understood here as the various constraints of collective meaning-making that impinge upon all individual social action and interpretation.

Take, for example, a student like Veronica (chapters five and six) whose view of Paris as the “cultural capital” of Europe fed into a deeply personal negotiation of the relative symbolic capital of American and Romanian national identities. If she had had an opportunity to explore the degree to which her views on culture in general and French culture in particular represent, for example, a specifically American perspective, Veronica might have benefited in at least two key ways: 1. She might have been more inclined to notice the cultural and class complexity of contemporary France (i.e. checking her pre-conceived notions against the realities of her environment), and 2. She might have been able to better identify her own opinions and perspectives among the more or less conventional ways of speaking (discourses) she drew on to account for her study abroad experiences.

Regarding this last point, here I would like to offer a poststructuralist expansion of previous study abroad research, especially Kinginger (2008; see chapter three), that has called attention to the potentially adverse effects of students drawing on such “textual resources” and “collective rememberings” (Wertsch, 2002). I concede that it is through the re-animation of such discourses that students may reproduce, for example, a rigid and defensive national identity or a hip consumerist persona on an extended tour/shopping excursion (see chapter four; Gore, 2005). However, I also suggest that the collective means of making meaning do not fully determine an individual’s total symbolic capacity. By calling students’ attention to the recognizably “American” cultural scripts they may be following while abroad, it’s possible to also help them consider how their interpretations of their experience depart from such widely circulated interpretive resources (i.e. dominant discourses).

Furthermore, some of these distortions and essentializations, such as stereotypes, are potentially beneficial during the early stages of language and culture learning. As all four of the previous case studies illustrate, it is usually these positive stereotypes about the foreign Other that are at the core of students’ primary objectives for spending a term abroad. That is, following Kramsch (2009), I assume that these students’ “myths” and “desires” regarding the French language, its speakers, and French “culture” are not simply stereotypes to be exposed, debunked, and abandoned (see chapter five). While deconstructing essentialisms is a component of my approach, I also accept that such idealizations are an integral part of what drives students to study abroad (or to study the language) in the first place. So, the pedagogic challenge of this course will be to at once demystify and edify, i.e. to help students check their subjective perceptions and imaginings against the realities of life in France, but also to encourage students to continue to reflect on this subjective dimension, with the understanding that such emotional, aesthetic, and life-historical orientations to the Other, if kept in realistic perspective, can be a source of the kind of motivation and self-reflexivity that drives successful language learning and acculturation.

In this way, my proposed course will scaffold students’ exploration of the significance of their experiences abroad on both the interpersonal (via class discussions, writing assignments, ethnographic projects) and the intrapersonal (via journals and other self-reflection assignments) planes of meaning-making. Crucially, these latter assignments will be organized such that students can write both for themselves and for the instructor: that is, while students will be required to hand in some version of these writings, they will also be explicitly encouraged to write parallel texts to themselves, i.e. with no intended audience, in order to allow themselves to explore personal issues/topics that they would prefer to keep private.

The primary objective of the course is to highlight the tension between invention and convention that all social agents more or less consciously negotiate. My approach to this is three-pronged:

1. Theoretical: drawing on work done in linguistics (psycho-, socio-, and applied), anthropology, and sociology, I will familiarize the students with current and canonical social scientific theories of identity, language, culture, and the inter-relationships among all three (especially in autobiographical narrative).
2. Methodological: students will learn basic ethnographic methods, with particular attention paid to the ethnography of communication, then conduct a series of data collection and analysis projects on both English and French speech events.
3. Critical/Reflexive: students will read a selection of more or less critical published research and commentary on American study abroad, then complete writing assignments both summarizing and responding to this research (e.g. comparing the authors' depictions of American study abroad and study abroaders to their own experiences thus far).

These three dimensions will be presented together in each week's readings and assignments, with the methodological component more heavily weighted at the beginning of the semester then receding as students begin to conduct their own mini-ethnographies and discourse analyses. That is, as the primary purpose of the course is to help students reflect on their evolving ways of accounting for their experience abroad, the majority of the work will center on the theoretical and critical/reflective components. In what follows, I will elaborate on each of these dimensions before moving on to a more detailed description of the course syllabus.

### **Theoretical.**

Given that the majority of the students in this program are majoring in social science disciplines unrelated to linguistics, the primary challenge in working through these readings will be to help the students engage with the theory in a manner that is immediately applicable to their experiences abroad. That is, while they will be required to read the original scholarship, I will facilitate their engagement with the material through writing assignments and classroom discussions. As such, the overarching question will be: how do these scholars' conceptualizations of language, culture, and identity inform your initial and ongoing orientation to and evaluation of your experiences studying abroad?

The underlying assumption here is that students already understand their motivations for studying abroad in terms related to culture and identity, and that by interrogating these terms more systematically and objectively, students will be able to more critically reflect on how they use these concepts to account for their experiences abroad. For example, it is likely that the majority of the students, like the participants in this study, will see the relationship between language, culture, and identity through the dual lens of communitarian (one [national] language = one culture = one identity) and individualist (personal "cultivation") discourses. In the first instance, students will likely reference the language of biology, inheritance, and group belonging in a discussion of which ethnic/cultural/national communities they identify with. In the second instance, they will

draw on the discourses of social mobility, self-cultivation, and personal agency in a discussion of the an individual's capacity to learn from, adapt to, and borrow from other cultures' practices (e.g. lifestyles) and perspectives with which they (learn to) identify.

By tracing the movement in the social sciences from structuralist/nationalist to more post-structuralist/transnationalist conceptualizations of language, culture, and identity, this course will help students see how their own conceptualizations converge and diverge with the views of experts, with the ultimate goal of allowing students to take a more conscious and self-reflexive stance regarding the epistemological assumptions undergirding their own views on these issues. That is, as I explained in the previous case studies, I see these students' commonsense views of culture and identity as only superficially contradictory and counter-productive – if students can be made aware of the cultural and historical specificity of their views, they will be inclined to take more seriously the opportunities presented by a term abroad for a sustained consideration of the inter-relations between language, culture, and identity.

Many scholars and program providers argue for finding a way to make American undergraduates foreground their “learner” identities more cross-contextually (and thus background all their other identities that might complicate things) in order to remain objective, reserve judgment, avoid conflict, etc. In this approach, however, I assume that by inviting them to reflect on how their term abroad is affecting them beyond their proscribed role as ‘students’, they can be made aware of how their outsider status both opens up a new horizon of subjective meanings *and* requires a more concerted effort on their part to check these subjective meanings against the realities of their ongoing experience.

### **Methodological.**

Again, given the relatively minor role assigned to language learning in this program, students are less likely to glean insights into the role language plays in shaping, expressing, and symbolizing cultural differences (Kramsch, 1998a). However, given their extreme outsider status vis-à-vis the French language and its speakers, these students are uniquely positioned to take a closer look at the interface between language and social action. For instance, given the rapid and often severe clique formation among program participants, students implicitly understand that social groups are forming along lines of inclusion and exclusion that are negotiated at least in part through language.

Taking my cues from the Ealing Ethnography Programme (Barro et al., 1998; Roberts, 2003) and recent recommendations by the East Coast Language Consortium (2009), I will first help them ‘make the familiar strange’ by training them to conduct mini-ethnographies of their interactions in English to demonstrate that they are at once agents and patients of meaning-making (especially the linguistic). Next, depending on their level of proficiency in French and their access to native speakers (e.g. their host family), they will record and analyze an informal or classroom interaction in French in order to help them recognize their limited capacity to establish the kind of mutuality and

intersubjectivity they take for granted in many L1 interactions. Ideally, this second assignment would involve some assistance from their French instructor in order to help them more adequately account for the linguistic and pragmatic particulars of the transcribed interaction. However, following Hymes' (1974) SPEAKING analytical framework, the main point of the assignment will be to raise their awareness of the systematicity of linguistic practice, in the spirit of the Hymesian adage, "there are rules of use without which the rules of usage would be useless" (1972, p. 278). Of course, given their limited proficiency, it is likely that they will provide more personal, even idiosyncratic, interpretations of what the L2 and its speakers "mean" for them (e.g. their favorite French word because of its sound, what it reminds them of in English, how "refined" and "classy" the French seem, or some negative equivalent, e.g. "snobbish", "too proud", etc.). Unlike in a traditional language classroom, in this course these more subjective interpretations will be encouraged, with the premise that by making them public, students can begin to more objectively interrogate the sources and enduring influence of these perceptions.

### **Critical/Reflexive.**

Researchers in England found that many study abroaders return with more and/or reinforced negative stereotypes of their foreign hosts (Coleman, 1998). Similarly, critics of American study abroad suggest that American undergraduates are decreasingly capable of noticing and respecting cultural differences while abroad (Engle & Engle, 2002; Feinberg, 2002). Moreover, many language educators worry that the growing trend toward shorter term programs without an intensive language-learning component discourages American undergraduates from developing the kind of intercultural and/or global competence necessary for life in an increasingly globalized world. However, some international educators defend this trend and suggest that it is cultural learning – with or without a specifically linguistic dimension – that is the true educational promise of study abroad. By sharing this published research and commentary on American study abroad with these students, I aim to encourage them to consider to what degree these accounts correspond with their own experiences. That is, through a critical engagement with a broad spectrum of expert opinions on the purpose and potential of undergraduate study abroad, these students will be invited to participate in this debate and to evaluate/defend their own perspective on the educational promise of a term abroad in an American "island" program.

### **Credits/grading policy.**

Although in all likelihood a course like this would be assigned only 1 or 2 units, for this hypothetical syllabus I am designing it as a full 5 unit course (per the standard unit number for courses in this program), but without letter/numerical grades (Pass/No Pass only). However, despite being a Pass/No Pass course, my grading policy is particularly stringent, with any incomplete assignment automatically resulting in a No Pass (see below). In my experience in American higher education, and especially in study abroad programs, students are understandably more lax about completing coursework that is not

directly tied to their grade. As the success of this course relies on so much student-initiated work (e.g. journals and research projects), I believe it is necessary to make this work obligatory.

## **Sample Syllabus**

### **Course title.**

“Telling Stories: Language, Culture, and Identity during Study Abroad”

### **Course description.**

In the last decade, undergraduate participation in study abroad has increased exponentially, due in large part to word of mouth testimonies of returning students. In order to meet the academic needs of an increasingly diverse student population, American study abroad programs have themselves diversified: today most programs are less than a semester in length, and many offer some or all of their courses in English. However, many educators worry that as American study abroad has grown, the educational quality has suffered, especially in terms of the diminished emphasis on intensive foreign language learning. In fact, in some of the current research on American study abroad, scholars argue that in short term programs like this one students treat their time abroad as nothing more than an extended vacation, a break from the real-world rigors of their home university. Moreover, during interviews about their experiences studying abroad, many students tend to describe the benefits of their experience in more personal and non-academic terms, with only the most indirect and stereotyped references to the host community. Critics see this as evidence of a failure on the part of both American study abroad and the American students themselves. However, other scholars and international educators call for a more serious consideration of how American undergraduates account for their study abroad experiences, with particular attention paid to their discussion of issues related to culture and identity. In this course, we contribute to this latter discussion in three key ways:

1. Theoretical: reading work done in linguistics, anthropology, and sociology, students will explore current and canonical social scientific theories of identity, language, culture, and the inter-relationships among all three (especially in autobiographical narrative).
2. Methodological: students will learn basic ethnographic methods, with particular attention paid to the ethnography of communication, then conduct a series of data collection and analysis projects in both English and French.
3. Critical/Reflexive: students will read a selection of more or less critical published research and commentary on American study abroad, then complete writing assignments both summarizing and responding to this research (e.g. comparing the authors’ depictions of American study abroad and study abroaders to their own experiences thus far).

While these readings may delve into academic disciplines unfamiliar to you, this course is designed to help you get the most of your term abroad, regardless of your major and/or your degree of proficiency in French. The ultimate goal of the course is to encourage you to take a more objective and critical perspective on your study abroad experience; as such, through our weekly discussions and your writing assignments, we will work together to directly apply these theories and methods in ways that are relevant to your ongoing evaluation of your term abroad.

### **Required reading.**

A course reader will be available for purchase at the program center.

### **Class participation.**

Per the program's attendance policy, attendance at all class sessions is mandatory.

### **Writing Assignments**

For each assigned reading, students must answer three Reaction Journal questions, to be turned in at each class session. Additional writing assignments will include more personal reflections on your experience studying abroad, with explicit references to the theories and research findings addressed in the readings.

### **Research projects.**

Students will conduct two mini-ethnographies, one in English and one in French. These projects will involve the recording, transcribing, and analysis of brief (less than 5 minute) speech events.

### **Grading policy.**

Although this class is strictly Pass/No Pass, the grading policy is absolute: any missed assignments will result in a No Pass.

## **SYLLABUS**

*The Fall 2010 semester begins on September 13<sup>th</sup> and runs for eight weeks.*

### **Monday, September 13<sup>th</sup>**

Introduction to the syllabus. Why a course on study abroad during study abroad?

### **I. Language, Culture, and Identity during Study Abroad**

Although you have come to France in order to “study abroad”, you are clearly much more than just a “student”. In this section we will examine popular and scientific



understandings of identity in order to consider the ways in which you are experiencing your time here as a whole person with a whole life. Similarly, we will examine the very slippery notion of “culture” in order to determine the various ways in which language and identity constitute, and are constituted by, culture. Specifically, we will determine if language and culture are inextricably linked together or if there are ways in which they can be separated.

### **Monday September 20<sup>th</sup>. Language and Culture.**

Risager, K. (2006). Language and culture in a global perspective, pp.1-16. The concept of culture: An introduction, pp.32-51. In *Language and Culture: Global flows and local complexity*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Hymes, D. (1974). Studying the interaction of language and social life, pp. 29-66. In *Foundations of Sociolinguistics: An ethnographic approach* (1974).

Engle, J., & Engle, L. (2002). Neither international nor educative: study abroad in the time of globalization, pp. 25-39. In W. Grünzweig & N. Rinehart (Eds.), *Rockin' in Red Square: Critical approaches to international education in the age of cyberculture*. Münster: LIT.

### **Monday September 27<sup>th</sup>. Language, Culture, and International Education.**

Sapir, E. (1933). Language. In D. Mandelbaum (Ed.), *Selected Writings in Language, Culture, and Personality* (pp. 7-33). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mead, G.H. (1936). The problem of society: how we become selves. In M.H. Moore (Ed.), *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Woolf, M. (2007). Impossible things before breakfast: Myths in education abroad. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(3/4), 496-509.

Citron, J.L. (2002). U.S. students abroad: host culture integration or third culture formation? In W. Grünzweig & N. Rinehart (Eds.), *Rockin' in Red Square: Critical approaches to international education in the age of cyberculture* (pp. 41-56). Münster: LIT.

### **Monday October 4<sup>th</sup>. Language, Culture, and International Education.**

Barro, A., Jordan, S., & Roberts, C. (1998). Cultural practice in everyday life: the language learner as ethnographer. In Byram, Michael & M. Fleming (Eds.), *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective: Approaches through drama and ethnography* (pp. 76-97). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ogden, A. (2007). The view from the veranda: Understanding today's colonial student. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 15, 35-55.

Kinginger, C. (2008). Case histories of individual students. In *Language learning in study abroad: case studies of Americans in France*. Modern Language Journal, 92, Monograph. Oxford: Blackwell.

### **Monday October 11<sup>th</sup>. Language and Identity.**

- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2004). Language and social identity. In A. Duranti (Ed.) *A companion to linguistic anthropology*, (pp. 363-394). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kramsch, C. (2003). Identity, role, and voice in cross-cultural (mis)communication. In J. House, G. Kaspar & S. Ross (Eds.), *Misunderstanding in Social Life*. London: Longman.
- Appiah, K.A. (1994). Identity, authenticity, survival: Multicultural societies and social reproduction. In C. Taylor (Ed.) *Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Block, D. (2007). The rise of identity in SLA research, post Firth and Wagner (1997). *The Modern Language Journal*, 91, 863-876.

### **Monday October 18<sup>th</sup>. Social Interaction and Identity.**

- Goffman, E. (1955). On face-work: An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. *Psychiatry: Journal of Interpersonal Relations*, 18(3), 213-231.
- Pavlenko, A., & Blackledge, A. (2004). Introduction: Theoretical approaches to the study of negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts. In A. Pavlenko & A. Blackledge (Eds.), *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts* (pp. 1-33). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Miller, L., & Ginsburg, R.B. (1995). Folklinguistic theories of language learning. In B. Freed (Ed.), *Second Language Learning in a Study Abroad Context* (pp. 293-315). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Wilkinson, S. (2002). The omnipresent classroom during summer study abroad: Students in conversation with their French hosts. *Modern Language Journal*, 86(2), 157-173.

### **Monday October 25<sup>th</sup>. Midterm Exam**

## **II. Narrative, Culture, and Identity during Study Abroad**

### **Monday November 8<sup>th</sup>. Identity and Study Abroad: Social Class and Gender.**

- Kinginger, Celeste. (2004a). Alice doesn't live here anymore: Foreign language learning and identity reconstruction. In A. Blackledge & A. Pavlenko (Eds.), *Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts* (pp. 219-243). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Kinginger, C., & Farrell-Whitworth, K. (2005). Gender and emotional investment in language learning during study abroad. *CALPER Working Paper Series*, 2. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Center for Advanced Language Education and Research.
- Polanyi, L. (1995). Language learning and living abroad: stories from the field. In B. Freed (Ed.), *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context* (pp. 271-291). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

### **Monday November 15<sup>th</sup>. Identity, Stereotypes, and Study Abroad.**

Coleman, J.A. (1998). Evolving intercultural perceptions among university language learners in Europe. In Byram, Michael & M. Fleming (Eds.), *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective: Approaches through drama and ethnography* (pp. 45-75). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kinginger, C. (2010). American students abroad: Negotiation of difference? *Language Teaching*, 43(1), 1-12.

Feinberg, B. (2002). What students don't learn abroad. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. 3 May 2002.

### **Monday November 22<sup>nd</sup>. Narrative and Identity.**

Labov, W. (1972). The transformation of experience in narrative syntax. *Language in the inner city: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bruner, J. (1986). Approaching the Literary. Two Modes of Thought. Possible Castles. *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Freeman, M. (1999). Culture, narrative, and the poetic construction of selfhood. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 12(2), 99-116.

## **III. Globalization, Late-Modernity, and International Education**

### **Monday November 29<sup>th</sup>. Narrative, Late-Modernity, and Identity.**

Giddens, A. (1991). Introduction. The contours of high modernity. The emergence of life politics. In *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Atkinson, P., & Silverman, D. (1997). Kundera's immortality: The interview society and the invention of the self. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3, 304-322.

Wolcott, Timothy. (2010). Student Voices. In *Americans in Paris: A discourse analysis of student accounts of study abroad*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. University of California, Berkeley.

### **Monday December 6<sup>th</sup>. Globalization and International Education.**

Hoffa, W.W. (2002). Learning about the future world: international education and the demise of the nation state. In W. Grünzweig & N. Rinehart (Eds.), *Rockin' in Red Square: Critical approaches to international education in the age of cyberculture* (pp. 57-72). Münster: LIT.

Block, David. (2002). 'McCommunication': A problem in the frame for SLA. In D. Block & D. Cameron (Eds.), *Globalization and Language Teaching* (pp. 117-133). London: Routledge.

### **Monday December 13<sup>th</sup>. Final Exam**

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American Council on Education. (2002). *Beyond September 11: A comprehensive national policy on international education*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.

Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities*. London: Verso.

Appiah, K.A. (1994). Identity, authenticity, survival: Multicultural societies and social reproduction. In C. Taylor (Ed.) *Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition* (pp. 149-163). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

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Atkinson, P., & Silverman, D. (1997). Kundera's immortality: The interview society and the invention of the self. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3, 304-322.

Atkinson, P., & Delamont, S. (2006). Rescuing narrative from qualitative research. *Narrative Inquiry*, 16(1), 164-172.

Austin, J.L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bakhtin, M.M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Bamberg, M. (Ed.). (1997). Oral versions of personal experience: Three decades of narrative analysis [Special Issue]. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 7, 1-4.

Bamberg, M. (2004a). Narrative discourse and identities. In J. C. Meister, T. Kindt, W. Schernus, & M. Stein (Eds.), *Narratology beyond literary criticism* (pp. 213-237). Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter.

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- Bamberg, M. (2004c). Talk, small stories, and adolescent identities. *Human Development*, 47, 366-369.
- Bamberg, M. (Ed.). (2006a). Narrative – State of the art [Special issue]. *Narrative Inquiry*, 16, 1-239.
- Bamberg, M. (2006b). Stories: Big or small? Why do we care? *Narrative Inquiry*, 16, 147-155.
- Bamberg, M., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2005). Small is beautiful: Small stories as a new perspective in narrative analysis. Paper presented to the 9<sup>th</sup> International Pragmatics Association Conference, 10-15 July 2005, Riva del Garda, Italy.
- Barro, A., Jordan, S., & Roberts, C. (1998). Cultural practice in everyday life: the language learner as ethnographer. In Byram, Michael & M. Fleming (Eds.), *Language learning in intercultural perspective: Approaches through drama and ethnography* (pp. 76-97). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Invitation to Participate and Informed Consent Form**

Dear EAP students:

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project concerning the negotiation of multiple languages and multiple cultures during your semester here in Paris. I am a Ph.D. student in Education in Language, Literacy, Society and Culture (LLSC) at UC Berkeley, and this study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Claire Kramsch, Professor of German and Education at UC Berkeley. I am interested in learning about your experiences in these areas in order 1) to help better prepare future generations of students and 2) to gain a better theoretical knowledge of how multilingual people adapt to (and appropriate for themselves) a new culture.

If you agree to take part in my research, I will conduct three interviews with you at your convenience: one in mid November, the next in mid December, and the third in January after you return to your home campus (in person or via email or phone). The interviews will involve questions about your academic and non-academic experiences here in France, with particular emphasis on your experiences with the language and culture. All interviews should last about 30 minutes. With your permission, I will audiotape the interviews.

I will also ask you to keep a learner journal during the semester. In this journal, I would like you to note key events that have an impact on your linguistic and cultural competence in French. The length of the entries is up to you, but I would like you to write at least one entry per week. I will collect and photocopy these journals at the end of each month.

Finally, for students who elect to participate as case study subjects, I will ‘shadow’ you for 1-2 hours per week as you participate in Study Center classes and/or extracurricular activities in Paris. That is, I will follow you through a small part of your day, noting and/or audio recording your verbal interactions with friends, classmates, waiters, shopkeepers, etc. With your permission, I will audiotape these activities.

There are minimal risks to you in participating in this study. Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy, but your information will be handled as confidentially as possible. If information from this study is published or presented at scientific meetings, your name and other personal information will not be used. There is also no direct benefit to you, although I hope that your reflection on language and culture will give you some new insights into yourself and your experience studying in Paris. There will be no costs to you, other than your time involved and any personal transportation costs.

All of the information that I obtain from you during the research will be kept confidential. I will store all my notes and audio recordings where only I have access to them. I will not use your name or other identifying information in any reports of the research. After this research is completed, I may save the tape and my notes for use in future research. However, the same confidentiality precautions given here will apply to future storage and use of the materials.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to refuse to take part. You may refuse to answer any questions and may stop taking part in the study at any time without it affecting your standing in the Study Center classes.

If you have any questions about the research, you may call me at 06.80.84.75.59 or email me at: [twolcott@berkeley.edu](mailto:twolcott@berkeley.edu). If you agree to take part in the research, please sign the form below. Please keep the other copy of this agreement for future reference.

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a participant in this research project, please contact the University of California at Berkeley's Committee for Protection of Human Subjects at (510) 642-7461, or e-mail: [subjects@uclink4.berkeley.edu](mailto:subjects@uclink4.berkeley.edu).

Sincerely,  
Timothy Wolcott  
Lead Investigator

### **Consent to Participate in Research**

I have read this consent form and agree to take part in this research.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **AUDIO RECORDS RELEASE CONSENT FORM**

As part of this project I may make audio recording of you while you participate in the research. I would like you to indicate below what uses of these records you are willing to consent to. This is completely up to you. I will only use the records in ways that you agree to. In any use of these records, your name will not be identified, and information that would allow you to be readily identified will not be included.

1. The audio records can be transcribed and studied by the researcher for use in the research project.

Initials \_\_\_\_\_

2. Written transcriptions of the audio records can be used for scientific publications.

Initials \_\_\_\_\_

3. Transcriptions of recorded material can be used at meetings of scholars interested in the study of language acquisition.

Initials \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 2: Interview Scripts.**

### **Interview #1 Questions & Prompts:**

1. Why did you decide to study abroad in France? In Paris? At this study center? Are you planning to stay one semester, or will you continue on to another EAP program in France?
2. What are your linguistic goals? How proficient in French do you expect to get during your time here?
3. Are your linguistic goals related to any of your academic goals? That is, will you be using French in your future studies?
4. What are your career goals?
5. What are your social goals this semester/year? Are you interested in making French friends? If so, how/where do you plan to meet them?
6. Are you living in a dorm in a home-stay? Why did you choose either one? If you are in a home-stay, what do you think so far of your situation? How much interaction have you had so far with your host family? If you are in a dorm, what do you think so far? How do imagine your dorm life will fit into your social, academic, and language-learning lives?
7. So far, have your expectations for this experience been more or less confirmed? Were your expectations not met in any significant ways? Try to think of how you imagined it would be here before you left the USA.
8. In general, how does your life here differ from that at your home campus? And your home town?
9. Have you had any trouble orienting yourself to any aspects of your situation here? To France in general? In particular, can you remember any difficulties (miscommunications, culture 'shocks,' etc.) you've had so far that you either: 1. still don't understand, or 2. now, looking back, see as learning experiences vis-à-vis the French (or Parisian) language and/or culture?

### **Prompts for Interviews #2-3:**

Note: In these meetings I will draw primarily on what the students have said in previous interviews. My general approach will be to remind them of things they've said – and especially stories they've told – to see how they feel about these topics, incidents, issues now. However, I will be drawing on a few prompts to keep the conversation going, and to elicit new stories related to their linguistic and cultural experiences while studying in France. They are:

1. Describe an average day for you here in Paris.
2. Tell me about a particularly exciting/confusing/surprising/irritating experience you've had since we last spoke.
3. Tell me about a time when you felt you really learned something new about the French language or culture. Try to describe the situation in as much detail as possible.
4. In your opinion, how do your academic and social lives fit together during your study here in Paris? (i.e. Do you feel that what you learn in class helps you better understand and/or objectively evaluate aspects of French society, culture, language?)
5. Have you had any recurring problems or difficulties vis-à-vis the French language and/or culture?

### **Appendix 3: Veronica's blog posts [July 26-October 23]**

Wednesday, July 26, 2006

#### **Endings, and Beginnings**

Less than a month from now, my world as I know it will be turned upside down. I'll be moving to a different country, living in a different time zone, eating different food, and a lot of times speaking a different language. I'll have my very own studio to myself and be living with people I've never met before. Everything that I have spent the last 20 years familiarizing myself with will be thrown out the window for 4 months. At first, I was pretty intimidated about so much change all at once. In a lot of ways, I still don't really know what I am about to plunge into head first. But, more and more, I am getting super excited about it.

I've been thinking a lot this summer, at my mind-numbing job (though my co-workers are hilarious), and I've come to the realization that I still have a lot of growing up to do. I take the most comfort in the things that I am most familiar with. This may seem fairly innocuous at face value, but it can lead to bad things once it starts snowballing. I do this on so many levels, like with food, for example. The first time I ever went to Gypsy's, I ordered the quattro stagione calzone because the description made it sound good. Lo and behold, it turned out to be pretty tasty, and from that point I was hooked. Now whenever I go there, I always order that same stupid calzone. And sure, it's great, but what about everything else I'm missing out on? I'll never even know what else is out there, simply because I am so comfortable with what I superficially believe to be the best there is. This minor food example is a microcosm for the bigger picture of my life in general. Something comes along, it makes me happy for the time being, and I stop looking for something better. Which makes sense, when I'm happy. Meanwhile, opportunities to "upgrade" various aspects of my life slip away, and I don't even know it. I'm content with my life right now, but maybe it's naive to think there isn't something better out there. There has to be! Change is always good--I firmly believe that. Everyone complains that work and school are routine, but it's so much more than that. Life itself becomes routine when you don't switch things up every now and then. I have a few solid friends from high school, so I know that that part of my life has stabled out. College is a different story. On one level, I feel like it's so incredibly static--I'm in the same seat at the same time on Tuesdays and Thursdays, I write the same type of paper every couple of weeks, and I similarly stress for midterms every few months. When it comes down to it, not much changes from semester to semester (although the drama has subsided greatly). But on the other hand, there is so much that is still very dynamic and unknown about my college self. Will I graduate early? Is this what I really want to major in? Where am I going to be living in a few years? We all complain about the uncertainty, but how boring would it be if we all knew our futures/destinies? Actually, I don't really believe in fate or destiny--it's all what you make of it. Which brings me back to Paris. Paris is my "fate." But I'm going to make it my own. I want to have direction.



When I set foot in Europe, I want to live my life totally differently. I'm making it a goal to be very open to new things, like meeting new people and going places I normally might not go. I feel like I did the dorms all wrong--I shut myself up in my room and stayed on AIM all day chatting with high school friends I really missed--it still turned out ok, because I ended up keeping the good friends from high school and still ended up making some great friends from my dorm floor, but I want it to be different this time around. I'm going to be social, I'm going to introduce myself to new people, and I'm not going to be shy. Studying abroad (ha!) is my chance to completely reinvent myself for a semester. This is such a unique opportunity, and I feel so lucky to be getting it. I can't believe I considered not going for a little while--I seriously almost withdrew my application at one point--partly because I was scared, partly because I felt so attached to everything here. I was afraid that I would leave for 4 months, only to return to a home that had become foreign to me. I thought I was scared about everyone else changing, but in retrospect, I think I was more worried about changing myself--and my relationships with people. Now I see that it's useless to fight change, because it will take you down kicking and screaming. And a little change never hurt anyone, anyway. I'm still a little saddened by the fact that my stay in France will put some distance between me and some people--in more ways than one--but I know that it's something I need to do. The people that matter will still be there when I get back, and I'll be thinking about my closest friends every day. I'm glad for everyone who has helped me get to the point I am at today, and I look forward to the person I will become in Paris, and the person I will be when I come back. I believe that resisting change is futile, so I say, bring it. Here's to Paris, personal growth, and change.

C'est le commencement, pas le fin.

Friday, August 04, 2006

### Going, Going, Gone

I'm leaving the day after tomorrow, and I don't even know what to think/feel/do. I'm happy, sad, confused, frustrated, annoyed, and upset all at once. I want too much of what I can't have. I want my B\_ friends in Socal, I want for nobody to have to work 40 hours, I want for people to call me only when I want to be called. At the same time, I am so torn right now that I want to be left alone by everyone. But I'm leaving so soon, and I still want to see so many people before that happens. Leaving B\_ until January is hard enough. But leaving America? I don't even know how I'm going to maintain my relationships with people while I'm gone. AIM? Skype? Letters? I don't want to lose touch with people! I'm really happy with where I am right now with a lot of people, and Paris is gonna screw all that up. I'm gonna go there and not really talk to people from here as much, and when I come back it's just not gonna be the same. My life is in a state of equilibrium right now, and I'm voluntarily disturbing the perfect balance I've worked so hard to achieve. Fuck!

Wednesday, September 20, 2006

### Technology-1, Veronica-0

After a long bout with technology, some traveling around Europe, and many many pastries, I am finally back online. I really was going to update this thing over 2 weeks ago, but my computer ended up crashing, and it's just my luck that it would happen to me while I was in France. Oh, horror of horrors, it sucked not having Internet at my fingertips for those 2 weeks. But, to sound clichéd, it was really a blessing in disguise. What a surprise, huh?

There is so, so much to say, and I felt so much more passionately about reporting everything before, but now, it's just sort of "meh." I will say this, though. "Losing" my computer for those 2 weeks definitely took a toll on me, and not for the worst. I learned to be more pensive and just relax in whatever setting I was in, and it forced me to go out and meet more people. I loathe those stupid French phone cards I had to use, though. It would ask me in French to enter my PIN, and when I'd do that, in English it would tell me I had entered the wrong code. Then my French phone service would cut out after I dialed 27 numbers just to get my brother's voicemail. In retrospect, my long stroke of bad luck is pretty funny, just like every bad situation is when you look back on it. I don't want to get too into what's been going on, so I'll just list some little nuggets of my experiences here thus far. I've already been here for over a month! It's unbelievable, it's really becoming home. I went to Ireland last weekend, and it was pretty great. I really do wish we had had the time to go see the countryside, because I've seen the pictures, and it really is beautiful, but you just can't do a whole country in one little weekend. My first experience in a hostel was pretty great, though. The other girls in my room were nice and quiet, the room was clean, and I met such an internationally diverse set of people in the cafeteria. It's so fascinating to talk to people from all over the world, especially when they tell me their impression of Americans. Europeans are very polite when it comes to saying what they think about America. Everywhere I go, every person I talk to, is a lesson to me. A lesson in history, in sociology, and in politics. This is what the meat and potatoes of this experience really is, I've come to realize.

It's kind of lame that I have to go to a different country to meet interesting people, because quite frankly, a lot of people on this program are tools. But it's kind of nice being introverted for a change. I still know the person I really am inside, and I could not care less what a lot—not all, but many/most—of the people on this program think about me. I dropped one of my classes because the professor was rude and disrespectful, the reading was ridiculous—not just in quality, but quantity (never a problem back in B\_), and he wanted us to do a research paper based on our luck getting into a French library and soliciting help from locals. I'm all for getting your hands dirty in the name of a good research project, but I really was insulted by the fact that this guy was asking us to do a research paper that was based on such arbitrariness and luck. I have way better things to

do with my time. But my other two classes are so, so amazing. One is on the politics within and among museums, i.e., museum tactics to intimidate patrons. I never even know this was going on! I love the European approach to education. In America, my art history class was memorization and focusing on the paintings. Here, it's about how the paintings are displayed. I love it. And my theatre class was the biggest shocker. The professor gave us Plato on the first day, to ease us in with talk of mimesis and the Forms and how acting is "three degrees removed from the truth." The next day, half the class dropped. It's so funny how intimidated people get by a little Plato. So yeah, two classes, plus French, which isn't bad, so a pretty easy semester, with a major emphasis on traveling every weekend. It's going to be great.

I realize this blog is pretty boring, so I'll put some more amusing stuff in here now. I don't know what it is, but I've had a lot of luck getting girls' numbers at airports, haha. First there was that girl Danielle who I met at LAX who told me she lives in Paris. We still haven't met up, but we keep playing phone tag and we'll meet eventually. Then on the way to Ireland this girl in the seat adjacent to mine starts talking to me, and it turns out she's a student in Paris, too! She's from Ireland, so she told us all the best places to hit up while we were in Dublin. Then she asked for my email and we're going to hang out sometime next week probably. Europeans are so friendly about stuff like that, I love it. I can't wait to get to know more of them. Okay, well there's lots more to say but I'm just going to do nuggets like I said. Here is just a taste of what I've done/what's happened to me in the last 5ish weeks I've been here, all 100% true:

\*

Computer crashing, French repairmen taking a week and a half just to replace hard drive, then re-formatting my own computer

\*

Dropping my digital camera that I bought right before this trip, then having my dad send a new one

\*

Pastries, Pastries, Pastries

\*

Battles with allegedly bilingual French calling cards

\*

Mastering the Metro system, at last

\*

Mistaking a meat lasagna for a vegetarian lasagna, yuck!

\*

Meeting two Swiss boys who paid for my friends and me to get into a club, then bought us each at least 3 drinks each, which were at least 7 Euros each. Boys are so funny.

\*

Quote from Swiss boy: "Stop acting drunker than you already really are."

\*

Watching how boys dance from England, Ireland, Switzerland, and Italy. Funny shit.

\*

Italian boy: "Show me your moves, Califorrrrrrrnia girl!"

\*

Irish bouncer: Where you girls from? Us: California. Irish Bouncer: (a little drunk) I wish they were all California girls.

\*

"Grinding is the universal language."

\*

Paranoia about a lack of shower sandals in the hostel.

\*

Riding an uber-touristy double decker bus in Dublin.

\*

Spending our cab fare on drinks.

Lots of good times so far. This weekend I'm going to Toulouse to see the woman who introduced by parents to each other (which worked out so great). I'll try to take lots of pictures of southern France, it's supposed to be really pretty. Okay, that's all for now! And from now on, my updates shouldn't be so few and far between. Au revoir!

Monday, September 25, 2006

"Oh la la, America"

After living in France for over a month now, I feel like I see things through a much different lens than the one I used to back in the states. I wouldn't say I consider myself a citizen of France, but I don't know if I would call myself American at the moment, either. No one, I am sure, is shocked to hear that there are differences between the European and American lifestyles. But the shocker is what is different between the two. Some things, I

just really feel like Americans could take a lesson from the French in. This isn't to say I've become an American-bashing ingrate, but there are just some things that I really can't help but think, "Why, America, why?" They are:

-Medicine: When I had medical problems back in the states, the process to rid myself of whatever malady I had was what I had always suspected but have now had confirmed abroad, and that is that it was unnecessarily complicated and long. For example: I'd have some minor problem that needed antibiotics. I'd have to make an appointment, come in 2 weeks later, explain my symptoms to the doctor, watch helplessly as he arbitrarily chose a drug du jour, and would follow a ridiculous remedy prescription. I say ridiculous because it would be something like, 4 pills a day, every 4 hours, for a week. Here in France, same malady, one powder drink overnight, wake up and the problem is solved. Why can't America just step up and modernize its medicinal practices already? I know the answer to this already. Simply put, it's because Americans love attention, and they love to sue, sue, sue. One powerful dose of medicine would surely be more likely to produce side effects, and you just know someone out there is itching to sue over the fact that their sickness was so successfully cured. And yes, I do mean frivolous. Only in America do people sue a corporation because it made them fat. The medicinal system here is so effective, and I will really miss it when I have to go back to the states and deal with the absurdity of hourly pills for lengthy amounts of time again.

-Meals: If there's one thing the French know how to do, it's sitting down and savoring a good meal. I visited some distant relatives in the south of France this past weekend, and my, do they know how it's done. Yes, dinner took an hour and a half, but it is an art down to every detail. The preparation, the cooking, the setting of the table—it's all a performance, in a sense. The actual meal is not only delicious, but a good deal of labor is also put into the aesthetics of the meal, remarkably enough. The woman I stayed with made rice in a hollowed out vegetable, then re-filled the vegetable's outer peel and put the "hat" back on it for cooking. When I asked her if we would eat this part, she said it was simply there for decoration. The entrees and desserts here are so pretty, for lack of a better word, that you almost feel guilty eating them. In America, everything is rush, rush, rush, on the go, out the door, and no one sits down to enjoy what they're putting into their bodies. I'll for sure miss this, too.

-Pensiveness: Going off a tangent of meals, the French really know how to just sit and relax without really needing anything. This definitely does not translate into laziness. I for one have learned to become much more pensive since I've arrived here. I've walked to class before, seen a middle-aged woman sitting in a cafe with nothing other than her cup of coffee to entertain her and possibly a magazine, and three hours later when I walk back from class, she'll still be there. What I really love is that here in this country, there is no stigma associated with going to a cafe, or even a restaurant, on your own. In the states, people assume there is something wrong with someone if they go by themselves to a

traditionally social setting, like a restaurant. We've all done it, I know I have. But now I see that there's nothing wrong with sitting down and just being introverted and keeping your thoughts to yourself for awhile. My mom (a European) once said, "It's really funny, but today I realized that I'm the most interesting person I know." Sounds a little strange, but she has a point. Since I've been here, I've learned to enjoy the time I have to myself, and I don't need to be constantly doing something. Sometimes it's nice just to sit, take in your surroundings, and just people-watch and be content with where you are at that moment in time. I hope I can take this back home with me.

Independence from Technology: when I met my "cousin" this weekend, we took some pictures, and he told me he'd email some to me when he went online again. But he told me he only gets a chance to check his email once every couple of weeks, because internet is so expensive here. I've also found that cell phones charge nothing to receive calls, but an arm and a leg to send calls. I guess it's a trade-off. But I was really impressed by the fact that the French don't need to constantly be connected to the Internet. Personally, I think the Internet is sort of evil, or if nothing else, a huge drain on my time and social life. I know it's ironic that I'm writing that going online is a waste of time, when I have to be online to post this, but I stand by my words. I wish I could be as nonchalant towards technology as the French are, but I don't think it's very plausible. Did I mention I'm a communications major?

There's plenty more that I think the French have on us, but I'm too tired to think of anything else at the moment. Of course, there are some things the United States just make more sense on... but I can't think of anything at the moment. One funny thing, I think, is that one of the ways the French combat terrorism is by making their outdoor trash cans transparent flimsy bags, so that dangerous things like bombs are easy to detect. They use trash bags, but we instigate military conflicts. Who's to say what's better, right? Meh. I'd also like to say that the French are very intimidating in the sense that even people younger than I am seem to know exactly what they are doing with their lives. My youngest cousin, who is younger than my brother even, knows she is going to study commerce and go on to work for a certain company. Sure, this could change, but in France people don't constantly waver from their career paths the way we do in the states. I always worry that I'm going to graduate from college not knowing what I want to do with my life, 80G's and four years later. This probably will still happen, but there's no point worrying about that now. I just wish I had the French mentality. They seem to think you just have to man up and choose a career path and stick with it. They know they'll have to work hard, but they see it as an ends to a mean. Maybe in American we have too much freedom of choice, and we're too overwhelmed with the selection to choose just one thing to specialize in for the rest of our lives. Bah, it's all so overwhelming. But then again, the French average a 35-hour work-week, so how bad could it be, right? Anyway I'm too tired to go on any more. If you read this, don't think I'm a traitor and that I think I'm all European now (even though I am, 100% Romanian!). Every country can learn something from another. Unfortunately, we're all too proud to admit when someone knows better than we do...

Sunday, October 08, 2006

## A Breath of Fresh Air

### Things I Miss about America:

- \* Target
- \* Toilet seat covers
- \* Being in a restaurant where the bathrooms are not crudely labeled “toilets”
- \* TV
- \* Driving
- \* Getting lost and only having to worry about getting directions, and not having to worry about the language I was getting the directions in

I just had to get that out of my system. I just got back from England, and I am physically, emotionally, and mentally exhausted. My weekends used to be for relaxing, but now they're devoted to seeing the world. And guess what, I'm not even complaining. I've never felt more alive. Yeah, I should probably be sleeping instead of blogging in this hallucinogenic state of mind, but I feel like this is the best way to record/remember the way I really feel about my life at present.

Be careful what you wish for! Because good God, I certainly got it. For the first time in a long time, I feel like I've bitten off more than I can chew. Not since I first came to Berkeley have I been so stressed and felt so inadequate. Being the masochist that I am, I'm lovin' it. The pain that I've felt, the struggle just to get to places, to get food, and to get around, has never made me work harder in my life. The worse things seem to get, the better my stories are for my friends back home, not to mention the amazing people I meet in each country I visit for the weekend, and it's just the ultimate rush. I wouldn't trade the hardships I've faced in the last 8 or so weeks for anything.

Now I know what people who are reading this must be thinking. “Oh poor le Veronica, struggling in Paris? Yeah right.” Well, guess what. It is a struggle. For starters, the money issue. Right off the bat, Americans have to bend over and take the exchange rate, which is approximately 1.3. I don't even want to get into the pain I felt when I had to exchange beaucoup d'argent in England for a very meager amount of pounds. As the cashier took my pile of Euros and handed me a couple of bills and some coins in pounds, I'm sure she was highly amused by the “is that really all?” expression on my face. But, such is life. You can't come to Europe and expect a bargain. Travel is the one thing that is worth every penny, in my opinion. I'm not the type of girl to go crazy at the mall, but Europe is worth going all out on. I learn so much everywhere I go! The exchange rate is just one example. I love talking to other people and comparing notes. It's so unlike anything I've ever done before.

Take this weekend for example. I met a French exchange student studying in Manchester, and I figured, oh my gosh, this guy is my complement, because we are in the exact same boat, only opposite. He's been thrown into an Anglophone country knowing only French before that, and I'm vica versa. So of course I took advantage and asked him as much as possible about his experience. He said something that really hit the nail on the head, something I'd never even bothered to consider before. He said the hardest part about connecting with English-speaking people was that, it could only be done on a formal level. And this is so true. When we speak to people of other cultures, who speak different languages, we all have a different level of mastery of the language. And if we happen to have a common language, the scale is never perfectly balanced. It's difficult enough getting to know the formal text-book version of the language, but to master it enough to be able to crack a joke is wishful thinking, to say the least. This guy was telling me that humor is the way he usually relates to people and makes friends, but that by the time he thinks of a joke and works out the translation in his head, the moment has passed and he's fallen behind in the conversation. I so know what he means! I've been to bars with my friends, and we meet cool people, but it never goes beyond "what's your name, where are you from, what are you studying?" We all assume these foreigners are strange and lack a sense of humor, but in reality jokes would be lost in translation on all of us. It's a pretty crappy paradox, but what can you do? Luckily American girls have the reputation of just smiling and looking pretty =) It's usually good enough to earn a drink.

I was talking to this guy from Luxembourg in this really happening student bar in Paris, and I was trying to ask him about how French men flirt. Of course, he didn't understand what the word "flirt" even meant (we were speaking English). So I try to demonstrate, and proceed to make a total fool of myself, to his amusement. Then his friend recognizes what's going on and says "ahh, flirté? Oui, je comprends." I think it's really funny how a slight mispronunciation can mean totally different things between languages. I tried asking some guys last week if they read Harry Potter, and they didn't understand what I meant. I was complaining about this to my French (sort of) Aunt later that day, and she said "ahh, you have to pronounce it 'Arry Pot-AIRE' or they won't know what you mean." Riiiiii-diculous!

Something else I haven't yet gotten used to here is school. I am so totally out to lunch this semester. I completely, whole-heartedly enjoy my classes, and I've never appreciated theatre and museum politics so much, but god-damn, I am not challenged! It really is a nice break. I get to factor this into my [home] GPA, go out to crazy new places on the weekend, then come back and create a caligram for my French class. In case you don't know what that is, it's a poem in the shape of whatever the poem is about. That's right, I've effectively re-entered my diaper days! The challenge is no longer my studies, it's simply getting by in life. It's asking for directions, it's going to the right market, it's figuring out when and when not to make eye contact with the locals. These things have always come easily to me; school has always been the challenge, at least in the sense of the workload. All that has been turned upside down now. And I just love it so much.



On a completely unrelated side note, the more removed I get from everything, the more I realize what—and who—really counts. I had an hour-long conversation with my mom today, and God I just love that crazy woman. We were laughing at how lame most people are who aren't us, as ridiculous as that sounds. She'll tell me about some crazy old homeless person who gave her some really sage advice as she's walking the dogs in the park, then I'll tell her some obscene mean thought I had in my head about someone who I hung out with that day. It makes no sense here, but with her it all does. I think my mom's the coolest person in the world, and the grand irony is she'll probably never believe it. I know they say you can't choose your family, and that you can choose your friends, but I'm so glad that I was born to my mom. How many people can call up their mom and tell them everything going on in their life at that moment, at any hour of the day or night, and know she'll not only listen to every word, but not judge you for it? Growing up, I'd bring friends over and they'd always just cling to my mom as soon as they got to my house, just cuz she's that damn cool. I'm glad that at the end of the day I'm the one who gets to go home with her. I don't know how I got on this tangent.

One last thing I will say is a myth-buster. You know how people always complain about English food? Well, I always thought, how bad could it be? You just can't screw up some foods. Oh, was I wrong. You definitely can. A "traditional" English breakfast consists of a fried tomato and mushroom, a sunny-side up hard-boiled egg (shudder), hella sausage, and (gag) warmed-up beans. YUCK. Granted, this was breakfast at a pub, but it was still definitely not up to snuff. For dinner I got some sort of vegetable soup—I didn't catch which vegetable because I couldn't understand the waiter's accent—but it's the first time since I was a kid that I just could not eat what was on my plate. English food is bland at best, and warm and soggy at worst. Best of all, it's on the pound system so you pay more for much less. In sum, don't eat the food when you go to England.

This post is really long, and since Judy's the only one who will read all of it, I'm just going to wrap it up. If anyone out there is considering studying abroad, and has any doubts, I am more than open to talk about it all. It's the hardest thing you'll ever do, but by far the most worthwhile. If you want to really live, leave the life you're used to. It's too damn easy, and that's just boring. One last thing to make you all jealous: I'm going to Interlaken, Switzerland this weekend, and—if the weather permits—I'm going hang-gliding. In the worst case scenario, if it snows, we're going skiing and bob-sledding. Jealous??

The End.

Monday, October 16, 2006

It's the Little Things

I got a little side job with this really nice French family. I'm tutoring 10-year-old Claire and 8-year-old Antoine so they can learn to speak English. Today I was working with Claire out of her picture book, and I asked her solely in English to show me the girl with the blonde-haired ponytail. She succeeded at the task. Not only did she understand my

question, but she knew exactly what I wanted her to find. My heart skipped a beat back there because I could actually see the difference I made and the improvement she's making already. This takes me back to my lifeguarding days two summers ago. I love working with kids and making a difference in people's lives. I just had to record this moment for posterity, because it's the best feeling I've had in awhile. =)

Monday, October 23, 2006

Finally, A Little Appreciation

I'd just like to start my post on an aesthetic note:  
[pictures 008]

The little French boy, Antoine, whose father thinks he's being tutored in English but whose mother is really making me baby-sit, gave me this picture as a gift today. Yes, it's me. And yes, that's a pig tail. I asked him, quite plainly in French, "Est-ce que je suis une cochonnette?" And he laughed and said yes, I am a little pig. Then he opened his arms to me, and I, thinking he wanted a hug, got assaulted. As it happens, he wanted me to spin him around the room, and proceeded to blackmail me with the threat that he would throw a huge frog-shaped pillow at his baby sister, who I was trying to watch at the same time, if I did not comply with his request. After an exhausting two hours with Antoine, during which we had a sword fight, drew mean but very funny pictures of each other, and had a pen war, I realized that this kid is something else. He's not what meets the eye, this Antoine kid. When I pointed to the lamp and asked him to identify it in English, he screamed cheeseburger. What a coincidence, I thought, the desk was also a cheeseburger just five minutes ago. But then later he went on this whole tirade, explaining to me the finer points of Risk, a game that doesn't even make sense to me in English, and I couldn't help thinking that spending time with this kid makes me feel so happy. We may not understand each other on a lingual basis, but something else is definitely there.

I now realize that I can enjoy Paris on my own terms. Who says you have to eat at the most expensive cafes to live the true life of a Parisian? Someone on the bus today tried to strike up a conversation with me, and when I very politely smiled but shook my head, the shock on this person's face gave me a sense of overwhelming accomplishment: I'm blending in. I've never been one to want to be a wallflower, but shit, it feels good to fit in here. I'm really getting into it. I get the freshest bread I've ever had in my life every other day at my favorite corner boulangerie (though I'm still trying to master the art of making it home with more than half of what I bought), I meet up with people in jazz clubs and order a glass of wine, and I can sit in a park and just watch people walk by being perfectly content in the moment. Hanging out in my friend's dorm room the other day, I totally had this moment where it felt like I was breathing for the first time. There was no television, no traffic, no static. Just the wind blowing in from another rainy night in Paris, where the only traffic to be heard is the hustle and bustle of city life. The lazy buzzing of the city slowing down at night has become my sleeping pill, for lack of a better word. We

were in the middle of this conversation about something totally a propos to all else, when, very subtly, both our voices trailed off, and we both just took this big sigh and said, Ah, Paris...

## Appendix 4: Lola Transcript Excerpts 7-11

### Excerpt 7.

L: Sometimes I would find myself in places were it would just be *so::* (.1) *beautiful*, not the scenery, but I'll give you one example (.4) I was in the (.1) I was meeting my mom's friend one day in the Tuileries (.2) (or at the) Tuileries station and I walked into the park while I was waiting for her (.1) and I was sitting on the (.1) fountain and they you know the kids that go around with their um (.1) the sticks to push the boats in when they come to the edge (.2) and it was just *so:: beautiful* I like started *crying* I was like [higher pitch] 'this is the most beautiful place on earth!' cause it was just=

### Excerpt 8.

=L: Just the *people* it's not even like the fact that the Tuileries is so beautiful it's the *people IN the city* it's the (.1) the city's *gorgeous* obviously and the people can be *dicks* but you know in the way they treat if you know, if you don't (.1) my thing is you have to know these like (.2) you have to follow their rules if you want them to be nice to you (.1) they have very *high* standards for politeness but if *you* don't follow the rules *they* won't follow the rules back so if you don't say (higher pitch) 'excusez-moi monsieur' you know if you go up to someone and say (higher pitch) 'excusez-moi de vous deranger' they're like what can I do for you, you know? ((laughs))

### Excerpt 9.

=L: Um, [drags on cigarette] but that's great, cuz I had studied [exhales] I had studied up on all this, um, on, I'd read all these books about French culture and French, French ways, you know polly platt's book, uh, French or foe, and all that stuff, so I kinda came in like knowing a little more and, you know other students would be like oh they're *so rude* and I'm like just say *this!*, just say the codes and then they'll say, do the codes back, um (.3) but so, I just find that the French people they're, they're uh, you just look at them and they're walking through the park after work and they just know how to enjoy life, you know, and they bring their kids to the park and they just sit in those chairs that lean back, and their kids just run around and push the sailboats, it's just *so beautiful!* Like the *society*, the way that they are, um (.3) the way that they live, the whole thing about (.1) *food*, high quality food, and, good, you know, high quality museums high quality *everything*, high quality clothes, high, everything, it's just *so*, it's like the highest, it's the most *civilized* country I find in their, in their, you know, cultural, in their cultural things, [296] but also (.1) one day I was walking back from the Petit Palais which is the museum I'm doing for my paper in Art (.1) and um (.1) which was *gorgeous* I fell in love with it when I went in that's why I decided to do it (.1) and I was walking across the street and it was a *beautiful* day and I looked over at the Invalides and I was like *ah* (.1) *Paris* you know (unintelligible in French) *so:* beautiful and then I go back to the metro and right outside the metro there were these little puddles from where it was raining (.1) and these *little* kids are going around on their tricycles and like going through the puddles and

making this kind of *spiral* design with the water (.1) around the puddles I was like (.1) [higher pitch] *that is SO beautiful* (.1) French children, I don't I'm not a big kids (.1) little kids person but (.2) French children, that makes me really happy they're *so:: cu::te* and then they speak their with their little French voices and the little kids who play ball in the courtyard and they're all speaking French I'm just like (.2) their French is so *good* you know ((laughs))

#### **Excerpt 10.**

=L: I just, I don't know, part of me wishes (.1) cause we were *supposed* to come, to live in Paris I was supposed to be raised French (.1) and it like changed all at the last minute, my mom and my dad split up when I was like two weeks old, but she had bought an *apartment* and had it all *furnished* and ready to go, and we were all supposed to come back to France (.1) and then they split up, and we stayed in California but I would have *been* like (.4) I would have been a French person like going to bilingual school, you know, so it's kind of like=

#### **Excerpt 11.**

=L: I was like just a day, I was like just born [sips water] I was a new-born when they split up but I found out *later*, like she told me later on, 'you know you were supposed to, we were supposed to live in *France*,' and I was like 'oh great' but now I'm like *WHOA* what if *I* had been a *French person!* (.2) and I'm kinda happy that I, that I've had English as my first language just cause it's such an advantage (.2) um, internationally, and you know, just makes everything a lot easier (.1) um (.2) and also I can still *be French*, I can still take advantage of everything, that it has to offer, and=