

FRENCH IMMERSION IN LOUISIANA: INSTRUCTOR PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

French Immersion programs in Louisiana provide a unique opportunity to examine factors that have an effect on preservation and revitalization efforts of language and culture in the United States. In this study, I attempt to identify the language attitudes and classroom practices of immersion teachers in Louisiana's immersion programs due to the critical role that these programs play in the movement to encourage the revitalization of French in Louisiana. Participants included five teachers in French immersion programs employed by a public school in East Baton Rouge Parish during the 2014-2015 academic year. I also identify the perceptions of two current CODOFIL representatives, and examine how their perceptions impact those of the immersion teachers.

Findings suggest that the French immersion teachers believe that some aspects of Louisiana French should be incorporated into the schools; however, they believe that Standard French is generally more useful and should remain the primary variety of French for instruction. The interview with the CODOFIL representatives suggests that there is a developing "new wave" of French immersion in Louisiana with the creation and implementation of new programs such as the "Escadrille" program. I also attempt to identify areas that merit further research.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

As I was born and raised in Virginia, my first-hand knowledge of Louisiana and its French history was not extensive. I had learned a negligible amount about the French possession of Louisiana prior to the Louisiana Purchase in my history classes and was exposed to some cultural information in my high school French textbooks; mostly accompanied by stereotypical photographs of Mardi Gras parades or beignets at Café du Monde in New Orleans. Upon my first visit to Louisiana, I was surprised by how narrowly the state had been portrayed in my studies of French, as well as how culturally and historically rich Louisiana was compared to how downplayed its place in Francophone history had been throughout the course of my French studies. I was immediately fascinated by the history, culture, and unique atmosphere around me. I thought about how strange it was that I had been to France and other European countries numerous times from a very young age well before having the opportunity to visit a Francophone area in the United States. Additionally, as someone who has an equal appreciation for French history and culture and that of that southern United States, Louisiana seemed to be a perfect blend of those two interests.

Through this reflection, I decided to learn more about why Louisiana was minimized in my French classes. What I came to find was, of course, that French gradually became less and less used after the territory was acquired by the United States. The history of French in Louisiana and its place in society was a turbulent one. Anglicization had far-reaching effects, and, along with the abolition of French in the school setting, had attached a certain stigma to

Louisiana French language and cultural identity. I decided that because the number of native French speakers in Louisiana had drastically decreased over the years, I wanted to focus on the future of French in Louisiana, concentrating on language revitalization and cultural preservation efforts being made in the state.

Perhaps the most critical component of Louisiana's French language revitalization efforts is its immersion programs in public schools. Before discussing how these programs developed, it is important to understand immersion education in general and the benefits it affords learners in that environment. Johnson and Swain (1997, pp. 6-8) list the following as typical defining characteristics of an immersion program:

- 1) The L2 is a medium of instruction.
- 2) The immersion curriculum parallels the local L1 curriculum.
- 3) Overt support exists for the L1.
- 4) The program aims for additive bilingualism.
- 5) Exposure to the L2 is largely confined to the classroom.
- 6) Students enter with similar (and limited) levels of L2 proficiency.
- 7) The teachers are bilingual.
- 8) The classroom culture is that of the local L1 community.

They also describe several factors to differentiate between immersion programs, such as whether the immersion is full or partial, the ratio of L1 to L2 usage, how the success of the program is measured. They also note that attitudes towards the target language are a differentiating factor amongst immersion programs, and emphasize the importance of culture in language revival, stating, "...from the language revival perspective, the culture and the language are inseparable.

The language is to be acquired so that the culture will survive, thrive, and develop” (p. 10). We will explore the extent to which that statement applies to Louisiana immersion programs later.

Camp (2010) states:

There are generally two main purposes for immersion education. Either, immersion classrooms can be used to help students who already speak a minority language transition into classrooms where the majority language is used, or the immersion classrooms can be used as a form of enrichment to allow students to learn a target language (2010, p. 5).

In the case of Louisiana, French immersion programs are largely considered enrichment, since the majority of students enter the programs with little knowledge of French. Picone (1997) confirms this stating “French-speaking children are certainly to be found elsewhere in Louisiana...Yet such children constitute only a minute percentage of the total population of youth in South Louisiana. (p. 125). The goals of this study are to identify the perceptions and classroom practices of teachers pertaining to Louisiana French in Louisiana’s immersion programs, and to identify the perceptions of current CODOFIL representatives, and examine how their perceptions affect those of the immersion teachers.

Chapter 2

French Immersion in Louisiana

Background Information

To best understand the current situation of French immersion in Louisiana, it is necessary to have background knowledge on how and why the programs came into existence. Ancelet (1988) explains that even after the Louisiana Purchase took place, French remained somewhat of a common language that, by the 19th century, was a reflection of the linguistic and culture mix of different groups in Louisiana. However, in the 20th century, due to the far-reaching effects of Anglicization, the legal status of French changed and Anglicization gained momentum in the area. Picone (1997) concurs and states “A conscious initiative aimed at the Anglicization of Louisiana culminated with the state constitution of 1921, which forbade the use of any language other than English for instructional purposes” (p. 123). He continues with a description of how this policy led to harsh and cruel implementation, which left many French speakers scared and reluctant to pass French on to their children. He explains:

Virtually every elderly French speaker in rural and semirural Louisiana can recite the cruel and humiliating details of the continued implementation of this policy. Partly to spare their children similar humiliation, partly through self-stigmatization and the desire to assimilate in order to gain social and economic advantage, parents stopped speaking French to their children. (1997, p. 123).

Ancelet also touches on this notion of shame declaring, “Several generations of Cajuns and Creoles were eventually convinced that speaking French was a sign of cultural illegitimacy” (1988, p. 345). They were forced to write sentences such as “ ‘I will not speak French on the school grounds’ a few thousand times” (1988, p. 346). Methods such as these continued for a

while, with later activists “apologizing that their language was “not the real French, just broken Cajun French” (1988 p. 346). Murphy (2008) summarizes the process within the context of a nation-building ideal on the part of the United States saying that the Anglicization that occurred in Louisiana was simply part of a larger project to create national identity. He highlights the State Board of Education banning French from schools in 1915, the Mandatory Attendance Act in 1916, which required parents to send their children to school, where English was the language of instruction, and, finally, the recognition of English as Louisiana’s sole official language in 1921 as the largest contributing factors in the decline of French in Louisiana.

Creation of CODOFIL

Despite the Anglicization and the elimination of French in schools in the early twentieth century, there was a resurgence of hope for the future of French in Louisiana. Ancelet (1988) explains that during World War II, soldiers who spoke Louisiana French who were placed in francophone areas discovered that they were able to serve as interpreters, which facilitated communication and helped their chances of survival. This caused a shift in how they perceived Louisiana French. Suddenly, their association with Louisiana French was valuable and a skill that they could use and served as a source of pride. Their interest in the local francophone culture increased, which was particularly evident in the Cajun music that began to be frequently played again. Despite the increase in interest and enthusiasm, there needed to be an official organization to oversee the bringing back of the language. The State of Louisiana created an organization by the name of CODOFIL or Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (1988, p. 345). Ancelet mentions the difficulty of the duty they were assigned in that “ CODOFIL was

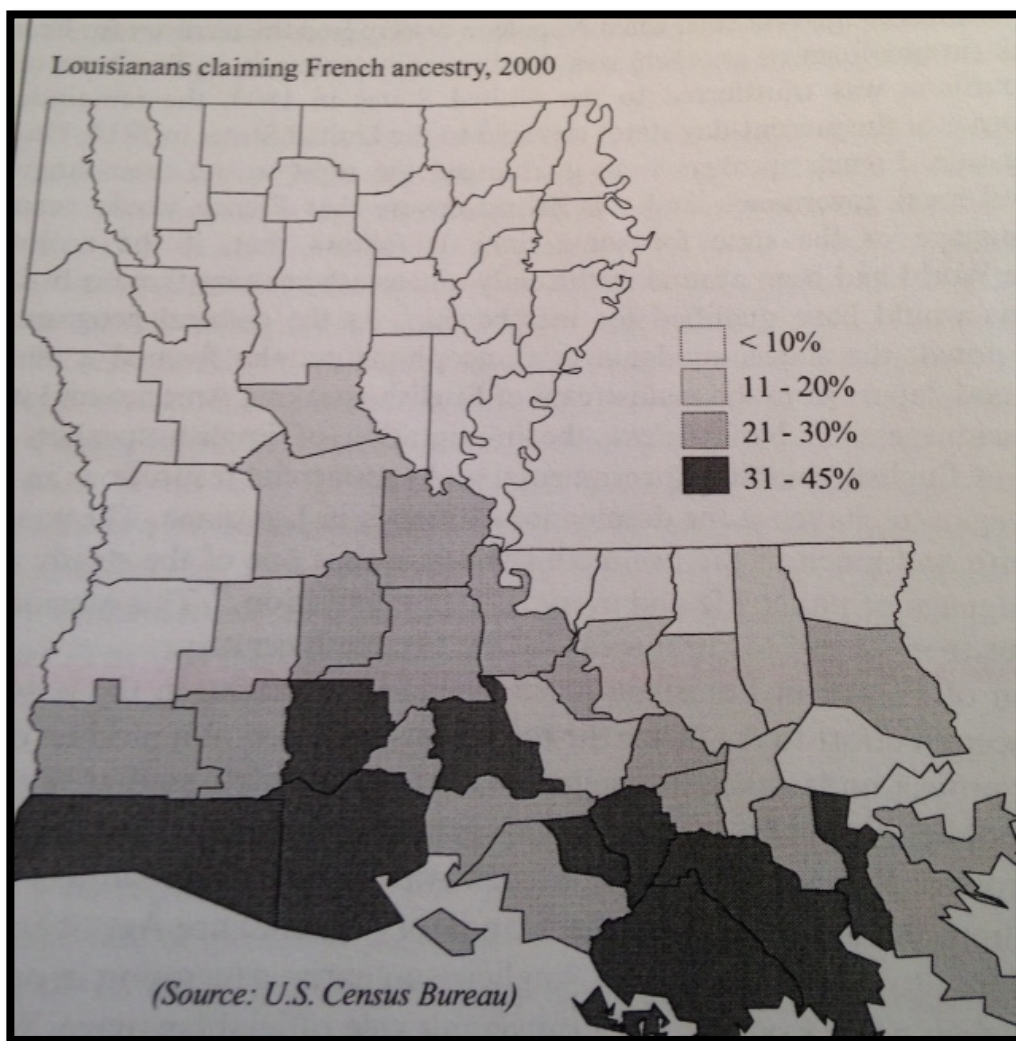
immediately faced with the monumental task of creating a quality French language education program from scratch in a state with a poor track record in education of any kind” (1988, p. 346).

However, their efforts were not always without controversy. Teachers for the French immersion programs were largely imported from outside of the United States, which led to some Louisiana residents being upset that very little Louisiana French was being incorporated into the immersion programs. St. Hilaire (2005) explains “As French language instruction increased its presence in public schools in Acadiana, tensions grew between proponents of teaching standard French and the culture of France and proponents of teaching Louisiana French and local francophone culture” (p. 161). One of the reasons this was a source of conflict was that children with relatives who spoke Louisiana French experienced difficulty communicating with them. Some were under the impression that CODOFIL, if anything, was only helping along the extinction of local French and culture by treating it inferior to standard French in the immersion programs. Another complaint reinforcing this notion is mentioned by Waddell (1993), quoted in Lindner (2008) stating “ the kind of language promoted is so removed from local reality and experience that it becomes only a formal exercise, with no content that means anything to the Cajun” (p. 40). Many who self identify as “Cajun” happen to live in the area where the most immersion programs are located, which also coincides with the area where the most people claim French ancestry.

In table 1 on the following page, Murphy (2008) shows that it is apparent by the percentages that the majority of people claiming French ancestry reside in southern Louisiana, where the majority of the French immersion programs exist. Therefore, it is not surprising that there were a sizeable number of people in support of increased incorporation of local francophone materials into the classroom. One of the obstacles to making their incorporation a

reality was a lack of pedagogical materials in local varieties. Picone notes that most teachers come from France, Belgium, and Québec and then explains “...Pedagogical materials in local French dialects were nonexistent...and teachers who could speak local dialects were few- the curricula used in the classrooms of Louisiana were, and still are, based on standardized French” (1997, p. 132).

Figure 1: Louisianans Claiming French Ancestry



Source: Murphy (2008, p. 369)

This practice led to issues in local support. Ancelet claims “CODOFIL consistently found itself frustrated in its attempts to generate grassroots support among the Cajuns” (1988 p. 346). Additionally, several social scientists and research projects reported “CODOFIL may have done as much harm as good by superimposing “standard” French in south Louisiana” (1988, p. 348). Their attempts to include Cajun French in the schools were sometimes described as “well-meaning but inadequate” (1988, p. 348).

Partly in response to this sentiment, CODOFIL and the State Department of Education created a program for Second Language Specialists in order to allow Cajun French and/or creole speakers native to Louisiana to potentially replace the teachers that had been imported from outside of the United States. Ancelet claims, “The program proved quite effective in South Louisiana. It ultimately fell victim to its own success, however, as teachers in non-French speaking areas demanded the same opportunity” (1988, p. 351). Although it is not exceedingly clear from the quote which other teachers were seeking which exact same opportunities, it is apparent that an internal struggle contributed to the discontinuation of the program.

Another attempt to incorporate Louisiana French into the immersion programs came with the hiring of Richard Guidry, who was charged with supervising French teaching in Acadiana. Ancelet explains that “...Guidry was an ardent defender of Cajun French and an outspoken critic of the policy of unchecked cultural and linguistic superimposition from outside” (1988, p. 351). He incorporated texts to teach native vocabulary and discouraged teachers from using the terms “standard” or “proper” French “which contributed to the denigration of Cajun French by implying that it was “substandard” or “improper” by comparison” (1988, p. 352). After all, one of CODOFIL’s most popular slogans was “L’école a détruit le français, l’école doit le restaurer” (1988, p. 353) ‘School destroyed French, school must restore it’. However, restoring the variety

of French that was destroyed was also considered a failed attempt by many. Degrove (2013) points out that CODOFIL "... has proven unable to hinder the decline of the language it was supposed to champion, a decline that may be regarded as irreversible" (p. 2). He mentions article Legislative Act 409, which stated that "CODOFIL is empowered to "do any and all things necessary to accomplish the development, utilization, and preservation of the French language as found in Louisiana for the cultural, economic and touristic benefit of the state" (p. 2) and the French that is taught in the immersion schools is largely not the French language as found in Louisiana.

The method of restoring the language also continued to be a source of contention for some and shows a more utilitarian view of the immersion programs compared to a view of the immersion programs as a way to preserve or revitalize Louisiana French alone. St. Hilaire (2005) states "...Parents, educators, and cultural activists began to advocate for and implement French immersions programmes as a way for students...to perpetuate French as a language of the wider community within southern Louisiana" (p. 160). However, not all parents were in agreement, with opinions varying from indifference concerning Louisiana French to preferring standard French. Plaisance (2011) quotes a mother of an immersion student who explains that she chose French in part due to New Orleans' history but mostly because of the language's global importance. She says "knowing French, knowing another language, it opens up the world...it will make my son more interested in the world and make him more relevant in the world. He will be able to do anything he wants to do" (p. 1). This shows that parents are not necessarily motivated by Louisiana French heritage as much as they are the global importance of the language and the benefits of bilingualism.

This point is reiterated by Barnett (2010), showing that many parents are partial to their children learning International French. He asked immersion teachers “What type(s) of French do the parents of your students want their children to learn in school?” The majority, at just over half, (57 teachers) responded “International French.” However, about twenty percent of teachers (22) responded “Cajun French.” However, an additional estimated twenty-three percent of teachers (26) indicated that they were unsure which variety parents wanted their children to learn in school (p. 219). Kristmanson and Dicks (2014) cast a positive light on the hiring of French teachers from outside of the United States, declaring “...a recruitment initiative aimed at the hiring of French-speaking teachers from around the world...has resulted in a culturally diverse teaching complement. This is considered to be a unique and positive demographic feature of these FI programs” (p. 276). The above examples show the pull of some local inhabitants to have the immersion schools serve as a way to revitalize Louisiana French, with the opposing, more utilitarian view of the programs on a more global scale.

Becoming an Immersion Teacher in Louisiana

Camp (2010) states that the majority of French immersion teachers in Louisiana continue to come from outside of the United States. He claims that “these Foreign Associate Teachers are typically given 3 year visas and most are unable or choose not to stay beyond that time. The positions are not particularly well paid and often employ foreign teachers with little or no experience” (p. 14). He identifies this recruitment and employment practice as a potential detriment to the immersion programs saying “these factors combined with the constant flow of changing foreign teachers provide logical impediments to the success of immersion programs in Acadiana” (p. 14).

What steps have been taken to try to find teachers for the program with more experience, qualifications, and ability to stay permanently in Louisiana? Barnett (2010) explains that none of the major universities in Louisiana offer a direct path for interested individuals to become immersion teachers, as there is no formal immersion teacher training program. He states “If a student wishes to become an immersion teacher, he/she would first have to be certified in elementary education as well as adding a French language degree. Courses are also not available that focus on immersion methodology” (p. 33). However, despite the lack of native Louisiana teachers employed by the program, efforts have been made to incorporate local language and culture.

Picone states that “imported teachers now undergo initiation into the local dialects of Louisiana and are trained to allow for use of regionalisms when they surface and even to incorporate some elements of regional vocabularies and usage into the curriculum” (1997, p. 133). Barnett (2010) explains the training process in greater detail. He claims that immersion teachers typically undergo a training session in Baton Rouge, LA over a three-day period. Over this period, one training session is dedicated to informing the immersion teachers about Louisiana French. Additionally, he states “Teachers also are given the opportunity to attend a panel discussion composed of Louisiana French speakers” (p. 33-4). The phrasing suggests that training where immersion teachers learn more about Louisiana French is not mandatory. He continues by explaining that a thirty-two slide Powerpoint Presentation entitled *La place du français louisianais dans votre classe de langue* “The place of Louisiana French in your Language Classroom” was developed by Amanda LaFleur to show newly arrived immersion teachers in a session workshop but that she “realizes the information could be overwhelming for teachers being introduced to the Louisiana French varieties” (p. 34). Essentially, while new

immersion teachers are given minimal exposure to Louisiana French, their participation in learning about it is not always mandatory nor is it strongly emphasized.

French Immersion as Promoted by CODOFIL

When I traveled to the CODOFIL office to conduct my interview with their representatives, I was given several postcard-like pamphlets used to promote French immersion in Louisiana. On the front side of the card, there are photographs of students in the immersion programs, and on the back, there are several sections of information pertaining to immersion in Louisiana. It is interesting to note that some of the phrases on the front pertain to Louisiana culture such as “Laissez les bons temps rouler” ‘Let the good times roll’ but also other standard French words such as “Bon Voyage” or “Joie de vivre.” Below is an example of one of these cards:

Figure 2: Immersion Program Promotional Card from CODOFIL



Source: CODOFIL

CODOFIL's definition of French immersion is "...an effective method of schooling and learning French. The immersion concept is the way all of us learned our native language" (CODOFIL). They emphasize children's eagerness to learn, curiosity, and the fact they are often less self-conscious than adults as factors that aid them in learning a foreign language. They clarify that "French Immersion students follow the approved school curricula taught in French. In other words, French is not taught as a subject itself but is used as the language of instruction for math, science, social studies, arts, etc." (CODOFIL).

The first of these promotional cards states "French Is *NOT* A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN LOUISIANA" and lists several typical Louisiana terms in order to prove this point, including *étouffée* and *gris-gris*, *boudin* and *zydeco*. They also mention that it's a heritage language spoken by more than 200,000 people. It attributes Louisiana's unique atmosphere to the French heritage cultural and linguistic saying that "Louisiana without *Ville Plate*, *gratons*, and *lagniappe* is just Anywhere, USA"(CODOFIL).

However, the primary focus of most promotional cards is not Louisiana French. The focus quickly shifts to economic, employment, and school performance factors. For example, the cards claim "Speaking French leads to jobs, with the economic impact of Francophone countries in Louisiana reaching into billions of dollars per year. Abroad, Louisianians work in embassies, law firms, and global corporations, because they learned French here" (CODOFIL). Another example is "Having proficiency in a second language can open doors down the road to greater opportunities in education, business, and travel" (CODOFIL). This asserts that the immersion programs are showing the benefits of bilingualism on a global scale, not uniquely for the use of French in Louisiana. The status of French in an international context is reiterated when the cards mention that "English ranked first in the 2011 Bloomberg Business International Language

Rankings. Following English was Mandarin, and then French, as the most important international business languages” (CODOFIL).

The lack of emphasis on Louisiana French is again evident when the cards display the linguistic, academic, and cultural goals of the immersion programs. Linguistically, the goal is that students communicate fluently in French at a level appropriate to their age. The academic section highlights the fact that students perform at or above the level of non-immersion students in all areas of the curriculum. They also give a timeline for when immersion students often surpass their peers’ English language skills claiming, “Immersion students match and often surpass non-immersion students’ performance in English language skills by Grade 3” (CODOFIL). The cards also claim that French Immersion students have an enhanced creativity and problem-solving ability (CODOFIL).

This reassures parents that their child’s participation in immersion programs will not hinder their performance in the state curriculum. Further reassurance is provided with the following facts “Research suggests that second language learning can greatly strengthen first language skills by deepening students’ understanding of language function and structure” (CODOFIL), suggesting that by learning French, a child’s English skills are also likely to improve. Another statement is” Immersion students are taught the same math skills as non-immersion students. Research shows that Immersion learners demonstrate superior skills in math” (CODOFIL). Again in this example, student proficiency in subjects outside of French is emphasized. A certain level of reassurance is also offered to parents who don’t speak French, with the claim “Parents who register their children in French Immersion don’t need to know French. They can help with their children’s schooling in English” (CODOFIL). Parents are, however, encouraged to help in three ways: making a long-term commitment to immersion,

developing an understanding of immersion education, and encouraging the use of French outside of school (CODOFIL).

In terms of cultural goals, immersion programs permit students to” acquire greater knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of cultures. They gain deeper insights into themselves and into other ways of thinking and expressing themselves” (CODOFIL). It is interesting to note that, again, the global idea of learning more about cultures in general is being promoted over simply gaining an appreciation for francophone Louisiana culture. In fact, one card states that “Children do not need prior knowledge of French. Immersion is designed for children whose families do NOT speak French” (CODOFIL). This is an interesting statement when considered from the point of view of a family with a child who would potentially bring heritage use of Louisiana French to the classroom. It is possible that a statement such as this may potentially dissuade a child who does come from a francophone family from enrolling in the immersion programs.

Conclusion

The Anglicization that occurred in Louisiana following the United States’ acquisition of the territory and especially following the early 1900’s left a colossal impact on the status of French in Louisiana. Following renewed interest in the language after World War II and the establishment of the CODOFIL organization, many have advocated language revitalization in Louisiana. It has not been an easy task due to conflict on how and why the language was being revived. Immersion programs, with the help of CODOFIL, continue to recruit new teachers and students using various strategies and incentives, most of which do not seem to put an emphasis on Louisiana French. The examination of the promotional cards provides insight into how the

program is being presented to parents and which factors are considered the most beneficial by
CODOFIL.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Goals of the Study

The goal of my study is to identify some of the language attitudes and classroom practices of immersion teachers in Louisiana's immersion programs due to the critical role that these programs play in the movement to encourage the preservation of French in Louisiana. I would like to see to what extent their language attitudes towards varieties of Louisiana French impacted their classroom practices in terms of which varieties they accepted from students and how much Louisiana French they incorporated into the teaching relative to how they perceived the language. I attempt to identify the perceptions of two current CODOFIL representatives, and examine how their attitudes towards Louisiana French impacted their recruiting and training processes of French immersion teachers. I also aim to identify whether or not attitudes were changing or staying relatively the same to establish whether this is an area that merits further research.

Literature Review

Before beginning my research, it was necessary to conduct a literature review to explore other research that had been published related to this subject. The first work I found was a Master's thesis written by Albert Camp (2010). The goal of his study was to explore how French was being spoken by students in Louisiana's immersion programs. He concluded that although

the students were fairly bilingual, he could not characterize them as completely or balanced bilingual, due to the fact that their mistakes in basic grammar, syntax, and vocabulary make it evident that their English abilities outweigh their French abilities. One can see in Camp (2010) that the perceptions of the immersion teachers and how they affect their classroom practices can influence the way immersion students perceive local varieties. He mentions "...The majority of students responded that they have Cajun French-speaking family members. I then asked the students if they have trouble understanding their Cajun-speaking relatives. Approximately one third of the class responded yes." (2010, p. 52). Camp shows this may be due to the fact that not even children who speak Louisiana French at home speak it in the immersion classroom. When speaking about an immersion teacher, he explains "She did say that she knew one student could speak a truly Cajun variety of French and he did speak it at home but this student would only speak a more standard variety at school" (2010, p. 54). This may be indicative that, because there is a lack of Louisiana French spoken by immersion teachers and students, students who do have knowledge of Louisiana French choose not to demonstrate it. However, this does not necessarily mean that they don't want to learn it and pass it on to their children. Although the results of his study were not directly applicable to my own, this thesis provided background information related to CODOFIL and the recruitment and hiring process for French immersion teachers in Louisiana. His study focused more on linguistic phenomena in immersion students, but provides some feedback from students pertaining to language attitudes that he asked them during an informal interview, which were beneficial.

The second attitudes study I found was a doctoral dissertation by Tamara Lindner (2008). Her study, entitled "Attitudes Toward Cajun French and International French in South Louisiana: A Study of High School Students." In this study, Lindner analyzed the language

attitudes of students in immersion programs throughout toward Louisiana French and Standard French. She asked students in high schools in various parishes whether or not they would like for their children to speak Cajun French. 19.8% strongly agreed, 25.1% agreed, and 39.2% were neutral (p.147). This shows that a very small percentage either disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that perhaps the negative perception and stigma once attached to Louisiana French has continued to fade. She concludes that there is a generally positive attitude toward Cajun French, and many people who self-identify as Cajun are interested in learning Cajun French (Lindner, p. v). However, despite the efforts to revitalize the language, the ability to speak French of any variety has not yet been achieved on a large scale. This study provided a fair amount of background and also served as a useful tool to compare teachers' attitudes toward student attitudes.

The study I found which is most closely related to my own is a doctoral dissertation by Brian Barnett (2010) entitled "French Immersion Teacher's Attitudes Toward Louisiana Varieties Of French And The Integration Of Such Varieties In Their Classroom : A Quantitative And Qualitative Analysis." In this study, Barnett examines language attitudes of immersion teachers towards Louisiana French. He also sheds light on the lack of immersion training in Louisiana. He explains that none of the major Louisiana universities have a training program for immersion teachers.

He provides quotes from teachers during an interview which also indicate that CODOFIL promotes Standard French, even if just passively. Examples of these quotes are "In my opinion, yes, for the time being it plays a small role because...I also think that the recruiters are trying to promote traditional French," "I think that they would tell us during the interview that they need people who teach Cajun French. But I don't think that that is really their goal. The goal is to

preserve the language, be it Cajun or standard French,” and “In our immersion programs they don’t tell us, because all they say is “French.” Since I come from France, the “French” that I’m going to teach is standard French” (2010, p. 213).

His findings conclude that immersion teachers’ attitudes towards Louisiana French are largely neutral and that most would be willing to incorporate more Louisiana French into the classroom but don’t know how and that, at present, more efforts to incorporate Louisiana French need to be made if the immersion programs want to be considered language maintenance programs (2010, p. vii-viii). Barnett provided a wealth of background information relative to my study, and was the only study I found that focused on French immersion teachers’ language attitudes without including those of the students. The data he collected through his various methods provided me with background knowledge of teacher’s language attitudes and classroom implementation. This served as a point of reference when analyzing my own data because, as this data was collected during the 2008-2009 school year, it allowed me to see how much, if at all, immersion teachers’ language attitudes had shifted and whether or not this is an evolving issue that warrants further research in the future. The notion of immersion teachers being willing to implement more Louisiana French but not knowing how also encouraged my decision to conduct interviews at CODOFIL to make connections between their perceptions and practices and those of the immersion teachers.

Research Process

After deciding that I wanted to explore the subject of teachers’ language attitudes, I communicated with CODOFIL to see if they could provide me with any contacts or advice on where to begin identifying potential participants. The representative with whom I spoke was very helpful. He mentioned Lafayette Parish, of course due to it being home to many immersion

programs, as well as the location of the CODOFIL office. He let me know, however, that many researchers focus on Lafayette area schools and that I may want to look into immersion programs in Baton Rouge or New Orleans. I contacted several school boards and principals about conducting my research at their schools and got positive responses back from two schools. My plan was originally to observe classes and interview the immersion teachers. However, a recent change in a state policy dictated that in order to observe a class, even if just to observe the teacher and not the students, it was necessary to obtain parental or guardian permission forms from every child in the classes.

One school expressed that having to obtain permission from each child's parent or guardian would be a fair amount of extra work for the teachers to organize. Therefore, I changed my study to include data from two sources, surveys distributed to immersion teachers and an in-person interview conducted with two CODOFIL representatives. However, fairly late into the allotted time for the study to be completed, one school indicated that it no longer wanted to participate in the study because, while the teachers had no problem with me coming to observe, they were hesitant to ask them to complete written surveys due to the fact that they already have a lot of paperwork to complete. Therefore, I was left with one participating school in East Baton Rouge Parish and an interview at CODOFIL for my data. This left me with a smaller than desired participant pool, which will be addressed later in the study limitations.

After the school's immersion teachers expressed an interest in participating in my study and the principal had also agreed, it was necessary to obtain permission to conduct research from the East Baton Rouge Parish School System. The research request form states the following:

All research conducted within the school district that is not specifically carried out by employees as part of their duties and that is not part of a district initiative requires advance approval from the EBRPSS Accountability and Assessment Department. This includes research by district employees or students outside the

district seeking an advanced degree and research by outside professionals or agencies. The district reserves the right to limit the number of studies conducted annually. Data collection activities must take into account schools' primary instructional mission and conflicting demands upon schools that may arise at certain times of the year (e.g. state mandated testing).

The permission form also states that it's the responsibility of the researcher, not the school system, to find schools willing to participate and that the individual principals have the right to refuse research being conducted at the school. They also recommended contacting the administrators at the specific schools where the researcher wanted conduct the research. Finally, it lists what is required of the researcher in the even that his/her research is approved. Criteria include submitting an approved IRB from the sponsoring university or research agency, copies of all instruments used in the study, and copies of parent and student permission forms. Researchers must also prepare a summary of research that includes the timeline and locations for collecting data and agree to confidentiality of all participants and data, excluding scores for any groups with less than ten members, and agreeing to provide a summary of findings to the district upon completion of the research. After my request for permission was granted and I was issued an approval letter from the school system, which included several more requirements, including protecting the participants' anonymity and providing the school system with a summary of my findings once my research had been completed.

To organize a meeting with the two CODOFIL representatives, I contacted one of them whose name I found on their website, briefly explained the nature of my research, and asked if there were any CODOFIL employees who would be willing to be interviewed by me both to get a better understand of CODOFIL and to answer questions specifically pertaining to my research.

Within a short period of time I received a response that two CODOFIL representatives were willing to meet with me in January, 2015.

Survey Methods

Because surveys were the only instruments I had the opportunity to use for data retrieval from the immersion teachers, I wanted to create a tool that incorporated background information such as their origins, their knowledge of Louisiana French, their classroom practices, etc. The survey began with a “disclaimer” of sorts about what was meant by “Louisiana French.” Some studies choose to differentiate between Cajun French and Louisiana Creole, as in Barnett (2010). However, Djako (2012) states that there is a large overlap in this terminology and that “As it turns out, Cajuns *do* speak Creole and Creoles *do* speak Cajun, but this simple statement belies a far more complex situation” (p. 292). For the purpose of this study, because I wanted to identify teachers’ attitudes towards all varieties of Louisiana French, the following statement was listed at the top of the survey: *“Please note that “Louisiana French” is a complex and ambiguous term that is difficult to define with certainty. Therefore, when completing this survey, please consider “Louisiana French” to be any variety of French that was or still is spoken in Louisiana.”* There could be arguments for mentioning Louisiana Creole separately as it is not necessarily a variety of French, especially considering its genesis and sustained morphosyntactic distinctions. However, because the teachers being surveyed are not language specialists, I decided it was best to not single out Louisiana Creole. For the purposes of this study, I chose to simplify the issue by subsuming Louisiana Creole with other varieties as part of “Louisiana French.” The surveys were then divided into three sections. Section one contained statements pertaining to opinions about Standard French and Louisiana French, including which variety(ies) should be taught in the immersion programs, which are more useful, whether or not each was important, etc. This

section also asked whether or not teachers believe they include an adequate amount of Louisiana French language and/or culture in their teaching. For this section, teachers were asked to select the response that most closely matched their opinion using a Likert scale from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree.”

Section two posed questions instead of statements, and generally focused on the incorporation of Louisiana French into their classrooms, and personal exposure to Louisiana French. Questions were asked such as “How often do you teach or discuss aspects of Louisiana French Language in your class?” and “How much instruction and information did you receive related to Louisiana French before you began teaching in the immersion program?” Questions such as these were ranked on a Likert scale from “very often” to “never” or “a lot” to “none.”

Finally, the third section is a general section that asks for background information such as continent of origin, how long the participants have lived in Louisiana, how familiar they are with CODOFIL and its goals, etc. I asked for continent of origin in lieu of the country of origin because the amount of participating teachers was so limited that I worried that they may have had concerns over the anonymity of their surveys if they were asked to put their specific country of origin. This choice did not greatly affect the surveys because I was primarily interested in seeing how many teachers were from Europe versus Africa, Canada, etc. This section was either fill-in-the-blank response or multiple choice. I organized the survey in this way because it allowed for the collection of responses to attitudes questions while also enabling the correlation between attitudes and classroom practices in terms of Louisiana French incorporation to be seen.

For my interview at CODOFIL, my goal was to compose a series of questions that would allow me to gain insight into several aspects of French Immersion in Louisiana. First of all, I wanted more information regarding the recruitment and training process. Then, I attempted to

identify any obstacles that the organization faces in terms of hiring immersion teachers native to Louisiana. I also sought to see how much exposure to Louisiana French foreign associate teachers received in their training, as well as how much emphasis was placed on the incorporation of Louisiana French into the classroom. Lastly, I wanted to identify their long-term goals for COFODIL in terms of incorporating Louisiana French, as well as how they would rate the success of the immersion programs this far. My aim in asking these questions was not only to get the aforementioned information from CODOFIL's perspective, but to also compare their perception of how much they trained on and emphasized Louisiana French with how much training and emphasis the teachers feel they received from CODOFIL during their recruitment and training process.

Data Collection Process

After identifying participants and obtaining all necessary permissions, I was able to go about conducting the research. The surveys were distributed to the teachers who volunteered to participate in the study. After identifying participants and obtaining all necessary permissions, I was able to go about conducting the research. One teacher in the immersion program had volunteered to help facilitate my visit. I briefly spoke with her about the survey distribution process and left a folder for the teachers to place their anonymous surveys in upon completion, and picked them up at the school two weeks later. Participants included five teachers in the immersion program, all of whom were from Europe. Of these participants, two had lived in Louisiana for between one and two years, and the other three have been living in Louisiana for over five years. As mentioned earlier, all were teachers at the same school in East Baton Rouge Parish.

Upon arrival at the CODOFIL office, currently located in the International Center in Lafayette, I was warmly welcomed by the two representatives. Throughout the course of the interview they answered all my questions graciously, including those regarding the potential lack of incorporation of Louisiana French. After the interview they gave me the promotion postcard pamphlets discussed earlier to give me more information on the immersion programs, and gave me business cards to contact them if I needed anything else for my research.

The choice to do surveys with the teachers and interviews with the CODOFIL representatives was made in order to have a variety of types of data to analyze. The use of a Likert scale for the teacher surveys allowed for clear comparison of their perceptions and classroom practices. Due to the fact that all teacher participants were using the same scale and had the same choices and methods of response, this data collection instrument facilitated the assembly and comparison of the various teacher perceptions. The choice to have an interview with the CODOFIL representatives allowed for more open-ended with questions with the ability to gain insight into their views and goals for the program.

Chapter 4

Results

Survey Results

Despite having a limited participant pool, the data collected from participants offers some interesting insight into the basic attitudes and perceptions of language teachers employed by this immersion program. The results from the surveys can be shown in three main areas: attitudes, classroom practices, and knowledge of CODOFIL and its goals. In the first section, I wanted to determine the teachers' attitudes as they pertained to the importance of Standard French versus that of Louisiana French, as well as the opinions about the roles each language should have in Louisiana French Immersion Programs.

To determine attitudes about Standard French versus Louisiana French, I presented statements such as "It is important for French to be taught in Louisiana public school immersion programs," "Standard French is the only variety of French that should be taught in Louisiana public immersion programs," "Louisiana French is the only variety of French that should be taught in Louisiana public school immersion programs," "Standard French is more useful than Louisiana French," and "Standard French should be the variety of French taught to students, but students should learn about Louisiana French history and culture." Results to the questions indicate that the majority of these immersion teachers (80%) believe that Standard French is more useful than Louisiana French. Another response that is telling of their attitudes came to the statement "Standard French should be the variety of French taught to students, but students should learn about Louisiana French history and culture," to which three participants marked

“strongly agree” and the other two participants marked “agree.” This shows that the immersion teachers, who, according to their responses, believe that Standard French is more useful, also believe that Standard French should be the language variety taught, but that teaching this variety can be supplemented with education about Louisiana French culture.

In order to determine classroom practices concerning the incorporation of Louisiana French, section two posed questions about classroom practices on scale from “never” to “very often” or “none” to “a lot.” Example of these questions include “How often do you teach or discuss aspects of Louisiana French **language** in your class(es)?,” “How often do you teach or discuss aspects of Louisiana French **culture** (music, cuisine, etc.) in your class(es)?,” “How often do you correct students who speak Louisiana French?,” and “How often do your students express an interest in you teaching them more about any aspects of Louisiana French?” Results show that none of the teachers teach or discuss aspects of Louisiana French language often or very often. Three teachers indicated that they “sometimes” do, while one replied “rarely” and one replied “never.” However, these immersion are more likely to incorporate Louisiana French culture than language, with one saying they teach or discuss Louisiana French culture “often,” three “sometimes, and one “rarely.” This tendency is mirrored in two statements that follow : “If you could choose, how much use of Louisiana French **language** would you incorporate into your class(es)?” and “If you could choose, how much use of Louisiana French **culture** would you incorporate into your class(es)? To this question, none of the teachers answered that they would incorporate “quite a bit” or “a lot” of Louisiana French language into the classroom. However, a teacher did answer that “quite a bit” to the question of how much culture they would implement if given the choice.

Lastly, half of the teachers indicated that they do have students who bring heritage use of Louisiana French to the classroom. To the question “How often do you correct students who speak Louisiana French?” four answered “rarely” and one answered “never.” It is unclear whether or not the teachers accept answers in Louisiana French from students with heritage use, or if students rarely use Louisiana French in the classroom. However, it seems that if students do use Louisiana French to answer questions in class, the immersion teachers rarely, if ever, correct them.

In the third section, in addition to providing background information, teachers were asked questions about CODOFIL and the organization’s goals. In section three, the question “How much instruction and information did you receive related to Louisiana French before you began teaching in the immersion program?” was posed to the teachers. Four responded “a little” and one responded “none.” This indicates that the role and importance of Louisiana French is not emphasized to new immersion teachers during the recruitment or training process. I then wanted to see how familiar the teachers were with CODOFIL’s general goals. In response to the question “How familiar are you with the CODOFIL organization and its goal to develop, support, and expand French immersion and various other francophone communities in Louisiana?” two participants responded “very familiar,” two responded “familiar” and one responded “not familiar.” The final question posed to the immersion teachers in the surveys was “Do you believe that CODOFIL should recruit native speakers of Louisiana French to teach in French immersion programs along with native French speakers from other countries?” Four participants responded “yes” and one responded “no.”

Interview Results

The interview was conducted in person using written notes as the method of data collection. The responses to my questions below are described as best I could demonstrate them from my notes. When conducting the interviews, my goal was to obtain more information regarding three principal areas: the role CODOFIL plays in the recruitment and training of immersion teachers, the preferences and obstacles related to finding immersion teachers who are native speakers of Louisiana French, and the long-term vision and goal of the organization.

To begin my interview, I asked how large of a role CODOFIL plays in the management of the French immersion programs in Louisiana public schools. The interviewees mentioned that the organization was influential in spearheading the movement to found and maintain French immersion programs in Louisiana. They also conduct yearly school visits where they meet with immersion teachers, observe classes, and meet with the administration regarding the immersion teachers' performance. They recruit instructors to teach through a joint effort between CODOFIL and the Louisiana Department of Education. They recruit teachers from both Louisiana and abroad, namely from France, Belgium, and Canada. For the recruitment of teachers in France, interested applicants apply through CIEP. In the spring of each year, a representative from the Louisiana Department of Education, CODOFIL, and the French Consulate travel to France to interview candidates. The factors they take into consideration are the teacher's level of experience, level of English, and their family situation, such as whether they have a spouse or children who would be traveling with them to the United States. The most current figure from France alone was 300 applicants, of whom about 45 were accepted.

In terms of recruiting teachers who are native speakers of Louisiana French, they indicated there has been an increased push to raise the number of teachers from Louisiana in the past

couple of years. They established a program called “escadrille,” which sends students with Bachelor’s degrees from Louisiana to teach in France with the hope that they will return to Louisiana as teachers in the immersion schools. They had eight teachers the first year and they’re working up to a goal of 10 per year. It is worth noting that this response does not provide a direct answer to the question. The respondents may have intentionally answered in this way to discuss the “escadrille” program, or it may show that the distinction was not made between teachers who speak a variety of local French dialects and teachers from Louisiana who speak other varieties of French. They did indicate that finding and hiring native speakers of Louisiana French in the immersion programs is 100% a priority. One interviewee called this “the most important thing.” However, doing so is not often easy. They explained that one of the biggest obstacles is the numbers, there are simply not a lot of native Louisiana French speakers. They indicated that they higher numbers of Louisiana teachers in the 1990s than currently, but they lost teachers.

The main intent of hiring speakers of Louisiana French is to create a more equal balance between Louisiana teachers and foreign associate teachers. When asked if they would ever move to a system of hiring only Louisiana French speakers, they stated that even if the number of native Louisiana French speakers were to increase, that they would not ever completely replace the foreign associate teachers with teachers from Louisiana for several reasons. Firstly, they have come to establish good working relationships with educational organizations in francophone countries due to the hiring of foreign associate teachers. They also highlighted the added benefit of foreign associates in terms of their ability to offer a cultural mix that students from which students benefit and learn more than if they were learning from teachers who all came from the

same place. They ended by adding that a better balance between Louisiana teachers and foreign associate teachers would be ideal.

When asked if there is enough emphasis on Louisiana French in the immersion schools, the question was not answered directly. However, they mentioned some of the difficulties new immersion teachers face that may hinder them from incorporating and emphasizing Louisiana French into the classroom. For example, they cite that it's difficult for them when they first arrive to acclimate to their new environment and get used to being away from their families. There is also a small turnaround in teachers' time spent in Louisiana as most teachers are typically here for only three years, which is not a lot of time to learn a lot about Louisiana French language and culture while also tending to their responsibilities as immersion teachers. They mentioned that Louisiana French is sometimes emphasized at teacher service days and other workshop days that immersion teachers attend. Topics can range from pedagogy and literacy to cultural identity. Sometimes, Louisiana culture and practices are discussed during workshops such as these. One interviewee emphasized that while Louisiana French is important, they're promoting French and it's all the "same language," just different dialects. This person believed that the lingering issue of Louisiana French v. Standard French was "overblown" and that diversity was a positive factor to the program. Along the same lines, one of the interviewees again emphasized that "French is French" and that diversity and a good balance of exposure to different dialects was a positive contributor to the program. They stated that there is no official policy about what type of French the students learn, but that teachers are told to be accepting of different varieties.

Regarding the long-term goals of the program, the interviewees emphasized that immersion programs were critical to the revitalization of French in Louisiana. Not only can the

immersion help to create a population identifying with French, it also improves education and creates pathways to careers for the students. They mention, however, that, although a critical part, immersion programs are only part of their entire effort for this development and revitalization in Louisiana. They highlighted several current events and projects that are also working toward this goal. For example, they are offering scholarships for students, teachers, and young professionals to travel to France, Canada, and Belgium. They also contribute and are present at local festivals in the state. A new project that they are helping with is a training partnership of some kind between the Louisiana National Guard, Haiti, and some African countries. Additionally, they collaborate with the Louisiana Department of Transportation for signage, participate in sister city activities, and have several state representatives who twinned with others in Belgium.

In terms of the importance for teachers in the French immersion programs to be instructed or familiarized with Louisiana French before beginning to teach in the immersion programs, they indicated that this process involves a lot of give and take. A better balance would be great. However, parents and students see the benefits of bilingualism and aren't necessarily participating for the Louisiana French aspect in particular. They don't receive many complaints and children who do come into the immersion programs with heritage use of Louisiana French do not lose their dialects or accents. One interviewee notes that parents of current immersion students are younger than the parents of immersion students when the programs were created and they're less concerned with the emphasis on Louisiana French. This interviewee believes this is the beginning state of a new wave for the immersion program, where the emphasis is put on bilingualism and competency in French, not necessarily on any one variety.

Concerning the long-term goals of the program, they claimed the number one goal at present is to continue to grow the number of immersion programs in the state. As of the interview date, there were 29 immersion programs in Louisiana and they're actively working to increase that number. They mention one expansion goal in particular; that currently all of the immersion programs are in south Louisiana, but they have recently heard from interested parishes in other parts of the state. They want the cultural identity of the state cemented and associated with French. However, this aim is not necessarily to be associated with Louisiana French varieties in particular, but rather to cement Louisiana's status in the francophone community. Overall, they would rate the French immersion programs as very successful. They mentioned having to clear hurdles and obstacles such as having to close a program down. However, the number of students in immersion programs is currently at 4,500. They feel that they have been growing at a steady pace, which is good because they don't want to outpace the demand for growth. They ended by mentioning that there are 20,000 adults who once went through the immersion programs.

Chapter 5

Discussion

When discussing the results of the surveys, it is possible to correlate the teachers' responses to those of the CODOFIL representatives. For example, in the interviews, the participants indicated that exposure to a variety of dialects and bilingualism for future job opportunities are some of the most beneficial aspects of the immersion programs. They also emphasized that they would never move to a system where Louisiana French was the only variety taught in immersion schools due to the potential for job opportunities and the cultivation of partnerships with francophone countries. While the majority of immersion teachers marked either "Strongly agree" or "agree" that both Standard French and Louisiana French should be taught in the immersion programs, they all also either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that Standard French should be the variety of French taught to students, but students should learn about Louisiana French history and culture.

This indicates to me that with the so-called "new wave" of the immersion program mentioned in my interview with the CODOFIL employees, the focus is more on a diverse and global approach that promotes functional bilingualism and enhances employment opportunities outside of Louisiana than an actual attempt at revitalizing Louisiana French varieties. The CODOFIL website describes the Escadrille program as follows:

Escadrille Louisiane is a program for Louisianians with a college degree who aspire to teach French in Louisiana schools. Named after Escadrille Lafayette, a group of 200 Americans who trained as pilots to fly for the French during World War I, the goal of Escadrille Louisiane is to fill Louisiana schools with qualified and certified fluent-French speakers from Louisiana who have their state's heritage languages and culture at heart

(CODOFIL).

The website then describes the application process and benefits as follows:

To apply for Escadrille Louisiane, prospective participants must first submit a Teaching Assistant Program in France application (tapif.org) by January 15th, 2015 and check the box indicating interest in the Escadrille Louisiane program. TAPIF will then send the results for all Louisiana applicants to the Consulat Général de France in New Orleans. Potential Escadrille Louisiane participants will then be contacted to schedule an interview. Prior to the interview, Escadrille Louisiane applicants will send an official college transcript and a letter of motivation as well as any other additional requested information to La Fondation Louisiane (735 Jefferson Street, Lafayette, LA 70501). This interview should take place in early March in Lafayette.

The Escadrille Louisiane committee will select the 10 best candidates who will agree to dedicating the three years following their participation in the program to teaching French in a Louisiana school, In exchange, the program offers each participant coverage for the PRAXIS exams, round-trip airfare to France, a teaching stipend of approximately \$1,000/month and pedagogical training.

Degave (2013) explains that the fairly newly appointed CODOFIL Board was largely responsible for the development of the escadrille program, stating “...the new board of CODOFIL came up with a plan to supply immersion programs with 200 teachers in the next ten years...these students will be granted a French K-12 certification and offered teaching positions in immersion classes” (p. 7). It is important to note that while the plan is to offer them teaching positions in the immersion schools with the hope that the teachers will take the positions upon return to Louisiana, it is difficult to enforce and not all teachers from the program go on to teach in the immersion schools.

The mention that the Escadrille is for students from Louisiana that “have their state’s heritage languages and culture at heart” is an appealing description of the program’s goal and their efforts to add teachers from Louisiana as teachers in the immersion schools is a positive sign that they are working toward the balance of backgrounds between teachers from Louisiana and foreign associate teachers mentioned in the interview. There are currently twelve applicants for the 2015-2016 year, so it appears that the Escadrille program is continuing to grow and that

CODOFIL has reached its goal of ten participants per year. CODOFIL also mentioned that they have been visiting all the universities in Louisiana to promote the program and have even been speaking to high school students about it so they will be aware of the opportunity well in advance.

It is also possible to see a correlation between the CODOFIL representatives and the teachers regarding training of immersion teachers. For example, this is shown in one of survey questions which asked “How much instruction and information did you receive related to Louisiana French before you began teaching in the immersion program?” Four teachers responded “A little” and one responded “none.” This falls in line with what I was told in my interview, which is essentially that Louisiana French is discussed during the teacher training. However, it is likely not emphasized due to the factors mentioned in the interview, such as it being too overwhelming for an incoming teacher to have to learn about Louisiana French and implement it in the classroom on top of adjusting to life in a new country, etc.

Teacher perception of the importance of Louisiana French is evident in the statement “Louisiana French is the only variety of French that should be taught in Louisiana public school immersion programs,” to which one teacher responded “not sure,” two responded “disagree,” and two responded “strongly disagree.” When being asked whether or not CODOFIL should recruit speakers of Louisiana French to be immersion teachers, the participant who responded “no” added this comment: “ Because Louisiana French is good but nobody speak it around the world. It’s only a Louisiana culture.”

This reinforces what I was told in my interview at CODOFIL that a “new wave” of immersion education in Louisiana is currently underway, whose aim seems to be more to establish Louisiana as a francophone community than to actually revitalize the use of Louisiana

French and incorporate more local culture. That is not to say, however, that all immersion teachers feel that way. The majority of participants responded that teachers from Louisiana should be recruited and other immersion teachers agree. This is shown Sills (2009), quoting the then-lead immersion teacher in the Lafayette Parish School System who claimed, “A better mix of foreign associate teachers and local ones is needed to enrich the students’ experience” (p.1). It is also worth noting that in this study, when asked “The amount of Louisiana French I incorporate and/or teach in my classroom is adequate,” the majority responded “not sure.” This indicates that they didn’t receive any official or formal training in incorporating Louisiana French into their classes or any notification of how much or often they should be doing so. The after-effects of teachers not being told to incorporate Louisiana French are shown in Barnett (2010):

a few participants stated that during the recruitment phase of becoming a Louisiana French immersion teacher, CODOFIL did not outright state that teachers should promote any particular variety of French. Since no particular variety is mentioned by CODOFIL, this leads participants to believe that they should be using their own variety in the classroom and not focus on Louisiana French...(2010, p. 213).

While this is a natural and logical decision by the immersion teachers, their choice to use their own variety of French in the classroom highlights the confirmed lack of training for or emphasis on varieties of Louisiana French being taught. All teachers responded “a little” or “none” when asked how much information they received pertaining to Louisiana French before beginning to teach in the immersion programs. Again, this can be connected to the CODOFIL representatives’ response that exposing the incoming immersion teachers to Louisiana French and trying to have them implement it can be too overwhelming.

It appears that globalization is playing a major role in the lack of emphasis put on Louisiana French in the immersion programs, along with the view that exposure to multiple dialects is a beneficial aspect of the program. Kramersch (2014) discusses the notion of globalization in foreign language and its effects on foreign language learning in the United States today. She states that “The purpose...is, rather, to strive to make our students into multilingual individuals, sensitive to linguistic, cultural, and above all, semiotic diversity, and willing to engage with difference, that is, to grapple with differences in social, cultural, political, and religious worldviews” (p. 305). It would seem that the above quote accurately portrays the goals of CODOFIL for the immersion programs. While the organization is actively trying to recruit more teachers from Louisiana to achieve a better balance, they do not want to emphasize one dialect over the other and cite the diversity of immersion teacher backgrounds as being extremely beneficial to the program so that students can learn about a variety of global cultures as opposed to only learning about local francophone culture.

Globalization ties in as well when exploring how the programs are promoted by CODOFIL. Based on the responses to interview questions and the promotional materials given to me by the representatives, one of the most reiterated selling points of the program is that bilingualism can lead to increased job opportunities. If the emphasis of the immersion programs were to be placed predominately on Louisiana French, the program’s marketability may decrease for many because the potential for increased job opportunities is not maximized due to the fact that Louisiana French is not the most widely-spoken variety of French worldwide.

However, there is also marketability to be found in putting more emphasis on Louisiana French. As Picone (2014) explains, “tourists who visit Louisiana desire to hear recognizable

elements of what they perceive as Cajun French, whether it actually is or not. The importance of the Cajun identity to the state's tourism would perhaps be a reason to place more emphasis on Louisiana French in the immersion programs. After all, CODOFIL's mission mentions taking action for the economic and touristic benefit of the state, not solely educational.

In conclusion, the data I have collected from the teachers' surveys reflects the CODOFIL representatives' responses to my interview questions. We can see the correlation between CODOFIL's recruiting and training practices and the teachers' language attitudes and classroom practices pertaining to the incorporation of Louisiana French. The so-called "new wave" of French immersion seems to have begun which focus on language proficiency, a variety of dialects, and the cementing of Louisiana's francophone status. There is little emphasis on incorporating aspects of Louisiana French into the classroom. However, the creation and implementation of the Escadrille program suggests that the organization is taking steps to bring in more teachers from Louisiana, whether they speak Louisiana French or Standard French. The fact that the escadrille teachers are sent to France to teach for a year suggests that the organization is either passively permitting or encouraging the use of standard French as the language of instruction in schools. In lieu of ardently attempting to preserve French as it is in Louisiana, it seems that CODOFIL's main promotional aspects are the benefits and bilingualism and multiculturalism, predominately for employment purposes, coupled with the fact that children in immersion programs score at or above average in state tests.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This study has shown some of the French immersion teachers' perceptions toward Louisiana French and how these perceptions affect their classroom practices, especially as they relate to the incorporation of Louisiana French into their teaching. I sought to identify the role CODOFIL plays in the recruitment and training of the immersion teacher and how their policies during these phases influence the amount of Louisiana French to which the teachers are exposed before they begin teaching in immersion programs.

Through the surveys and the interviews, we can conclude that a general consensus amongst participants of this study is that Louisiana French is valuable to the state and should not be neglected. However, there is an indication that those involved in the immersion programs today have begun to back away from the idea of revitalizing Louisiana French varieties in favor of teaching Standard French. This is especially evident in the relatively new program "Escadrille Louisiane," where students who wish to become teachers in Louisiana immersion schools receive stipends to spend a year in France as a teacher before returning to teach in Louisiana Immersion programs.

The limitations of this study include a quite miniscule teacher participant pool of five teachers from the same school in East Baton Rouge Parish. In order to confirm these attitudes or apply them to French immersion teachers in general, more extensive data from a greater number of teachers other parishes would be necessary.

However, this data offers insight into current perceptions and practices by both the

immersion teachers and CODOFIL representatives. I have identified the sentiment commonly mentioned by CODOFIL and by teachers that Standard French should be the variety taught in schools, while still incorporating Louisiana French history and culture. Ancelet states that “Efforts to preserve/regenerate French in the schools must be underscored with efforts to make the language more than just an enrichment exercise” (1988, p. 354). However, St. Hilaire (2005) recognizes that:

If current trends are indicative, while first language speakers of Louisiana French are passing on from old age, the language will continue to make gains among the steadily growing numbers of English-mother-tongue young people gaining fluency in the language through immersion educations (St. Hilaire, p. 170).

Due to this trend, the immersion programs in Louisiana are the most critical factor for the successful revitalization of French in Louisiana. While the results of this study seems to point to Standard French being the overwhelming language variety of instruction, the growing number of students in these immersion programs will hopefully renew interest in the French language while cementing Louisiana’s status in the francophone world.

Areas that would warrant further research are perceptions of native Louisianan student teachers in the “Escadrille Louisiane” program toward Louisiana French after returning from teaching in France, the extent of the effect of CODOFIL’s recruitment and training practices on the immersion teachers’ perceptions of Louisiana French. Lastly, several studies relate to either teachers’ language attitudes or students’ language attitudes. It may be worthwhile to explore them together by analyzing how an individual teacher’s perceptions and use of Louisiana French affect those of his/her students. Given the extensive joint efforts of CODOFIL and the Louisiana Department of Education to create and expand French immersion programs, coupled with the

various benefits of bilingualism, it is hopeful that the immersion students of today will identify with the French language and culture in any or multiple varieties so that efforts to preserve local culture and cement Louisiana's place as a francophone community will continue indefinitely in Louisiana.

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Appendix A

Survey/Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in this study. Please answer the questions listed below. Please note that “Louisiana French” is a complex and ambiguous term that is difficult to define with certainty. Therefore, when completing this survey, please consider “Louisiana French” to be any variety of French that was or still is spoken in Louisiana. Thank you again for your participation.

Section 1- Please answer the questions below by checking the box that most closely represents your opinion.

1) It is important for French to be taught in Louisiana public school immersion programs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

2) Standard French is the only variety of French that should be taught in Louisiana public school immersion programs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

3) Louisiana French is the only variety of French that should be taught in Louisiana public school immersion programs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

4) Both Standard French & Louisiana French should be taught in Louisiana public school immersion programs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

5) Standard French is more useful than Louisiana French.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

6) Standard French should be the variety of French taught to students, but students should learn about Louisiana French history and culture.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

7) It is important for teachers in Louisiana public school immersion programs to be familiar with Louisiana French.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

8) The amount of Louisiana French I incorporate and/or teach in my classroom is adequate.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

9) I have students who bring “heritage” use of Louisiana French to the immersion classroom.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

10) I know a lot about Louisiana French history, language, and culture.

Strongly	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly
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Agree				Disagree

Section 2- Please respond to the following questions by checking the box that most closely applies to you.

1) How often do you teach or discuss aspects of Louisiana French **language** in your class(es)?

Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

2) How often do you teach or discuss aspects of Louisiana French **culture** (music, cuisine, etc) in your class(es)?

Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

3) How often do you correct students who speak Louisiana French?

Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

4) How often do you spend time with native speakers of Louisiana French?

Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

5) How often do your students express an interest in you teaching them more about any aspects of Louisiana French?

Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

6) How often are you exposed to Louisiana French in any setting?

Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

7) How much instruction and information did you receive related to Louisiana French before you began teaching in the immersion program?

A lot	Quite a bit	Some	A little	None

8) If you could choose, how much use of Louisiana French **language** would you incorporate into your class(es)?

A lot	Quite a bit	Some	A little	None

9) If you could choose, how much use of Louisiana French **culture** would you incorporate into your class(es)?

A lot	Quite a bit	Some	A little	None

Section 3- Please answer the following questions.

1) On which continent were you born? _____

2) How long have you lived in Louisiana?

- A. Less than 1 year
- B. 1-2 years
- C. 3-5 years
- D. 5-10 years

3) How familiar are you with the CODOFIL organization and its goal to develop, support, and expand French immersion and various other francophone communities in Louisiana?

- A. Very familiar
- B. Familiar
- C. Somewhat familiar
- D. Not familiar

4) Do you believe that CODOFIL should recruit native speakers of Louisiana French to teach in French immersion programs along with native French speakers from other countries?

- A. Yes
- B. No

Appendix B

Interview Questions for CODOFIL Employees

- 1) How large of a role does CODOFIL play in the management of the French immersion programs in Louisiana public schools?
- 2) How does CODOFIL recruit instructors to teach in French immersion programs?
- 3) How many instructors are native speakers of Louisiana French?
- 4) Is it a priority to find and hire native speakers of Louisiana French in the immersion programs?
- 5) What are the obstacles to finding and hiring native speakers of Louisiana French for the immersion programs?
- 6) If there were to be an increase in the number of people speaking Louisiana French natively, would the system change to hiring them exclusively to teach in the immersion programs or would there always be instructors from other Francophone countries?
- 7) Do you think there is enough emphasis on Louisiana French, whether it be language, history, or culture, in the immersion programs?
- 8) What measures, if any, do you take to emphasize the importance of Louisiana French in immersion programs?
- 9) What are the benefits to students of learning Standard French as opposed to Louisiana French and vice versa?
- 10) How important are French immersion programs in public schools to the development and revitalization of French language and culture in Louisiana?

11) Do you think it's important for instructors in the French immersion programs to be instructed or familiarized with Louisiana French language, history, or culture before beginning to teach in the immersion programs?

12) What is CODOFIL's long-term goal for the French immersion programs? For example, that students are familiar with Louisiana French language and culture, that they are fluent in Standard French, etc.?

13) How would you rate the success of the French immersion programs so far?

Appendix C

Interview Response Notes

The interview was conducted in person using written notes as the method of data collection.

Below are the responses to my questions as best I could demonstrate them from my notes :

1) How large of a role does CODOFIL play in the management of the French immersion programs in Louisiana public schools?

Response: The interviewees mentioned that the organization was influential in spearheading the movement to found and maintain French immersion programs in Louisiana. They also conduct yearly school visits where they meet with immersion teachers, observe classes, and meet with the administration regarding the immersion teachers' performance.

2) How does CODOFIL recruit instructors to teach in French immersion programs?

Response: The process was described as a joint effort between CODOFIL and the Louisiana Department of Education. They recruit teachers from both Louisiana and abroad, namely from France, Belgium, and Canada. For the recruitment of teachers in France, interested applicants apply through CIEP. In the spring of each year, a representative from the Louisiana Department of Education, CODOFIL, and the French Consulate travel to France to interview candidates. The factors they take into consideration are the teacher's level of experience, level of English, and their family situation, such as whether they have a spouse or children who would be traveling with them to the United States. The most current figure from France alone was 300 applicants, of whom about 45 were accepted.

3) How many instructors are native speakers of Louisiana French?

Response: They indicated there has been an increased push to raise the number of teachers from Louisiana in the past couple of years. They established a program called “escadrille,” which sends students with Bachelor’s degrees from Louisiana to teach in France with the hope that they will return to Louisiana as teachers in the immersion schools. They had eight teachers the first year and they’re working up to a goal of 10 per year.

It is worth noting that this response does not provide a direct answer to the question. The respondents may have intentionally answered in this way to discuss the “escadrille” program, or it may show that the distinction was not made between teachers who speak a variety of local French dialects and teachers from Louisiana who speak other varieties of French.

4) Is it a priority to find and hire native speakers of Louisiana French in the immersion programs?

Response: They indicated that this is 100% a priority. One interviewee called this “the most important thing.”

5) What are the obstacles to finding and hiring native speakers of Louisiana French for the immersion programs?

Response : They explained one of the biggest obstacles is the numbers, there are simply not a lot of native Louisiana French speakers. They indicated that they higher numbers of Louisiana teachers in the 1990s than currently, but they lost teachers.

6) If there were to be an increase in the number of people speaking Louisiana French natively, would the system change to hiring them exclusively to teach in the immersion programs or would there always be instructors from other Francophone countries?

Response: They mentioned that even if the number of native Louisiana French speakers were to increase, that they would not ever completely replace the foreign associate teachers with teachers from Louisiana for several reasons. Firstly, they have come to establish good working relationships with educational organizations in francophone countries due to the hiring of foreign associate teachers. They also highlighted the added benefit of foreign associates in terms of their ability to offer a cultural mix that students from which students benefit and learn more than if they were learning from teachers who all came from the same place. They ended by adding that a better balance between Louisiana teachers and foreign associate teachers would be ideal.

7) Do you think there is enough emphasis on Louisiana French, whether it be language, history, or culture, in the immersion programs?

Response: This question was not answered directly. However, they mentioned some of the difficulties new immersion teachers face that may hinder them from incorporating and emphasizing Louisiana French into the classroom. For example, they cite that it's difficult for them when they first arrive to acclimate to their new environment and get used to being away from their families. There is also a small turnaround in teachers' time spent in Louisiana as most teachers are typically here for only three years, which is not a lot of time to learn a lot about Louisiana French language and culture while also tending to their responsibilities as immersion teachers.

8) What measures, if any, do you take to emphasize the importance of Louisiana French in immersion programs?

Response: They began their response by mentioning teacher service days and other workshop days that immersion teachers attend. Topics can range from pedagogy and literacy to cultural identity. Sometimes, Louisiana culture and practices are discussed during workshops such as

these. One interviewee emphasized that while Louisiana French is important, they're promoting French and it's all the "same language," just different dialects. This person believed that the lingering issue of Louisiana French v. Standard French was "overblown" and that diversity was a positive factor to the program.

9) What are the benefits to students of learning Standard French as opposed to Louisiana French and vice versa?

Response: In this response, one of the interviewees again emphasized that "French is French" and that diversity and a good balance of exposure to different dialects was a positive contributor to the program. They stated that there is no official policy about what type of French students learn, but that teachers are told to be accepting of different varieties.

10) How important are French immersion programs in public schools to the development and revitalization of French language and culture in Louisiana?

Response: The interviewees emphasized that immersion programs were critical to the revitalization of French in Louisiana. Not only can the immersion help to create a population identifying with French, it also improves education and creates pathways to careers for the students. They mention, however, that, although a critical part, immersion programs are only part of their entire effort for this development and revitalization in Louisiana. They highlighted several current events and projects that are also working toward this goal. For example, they are offering scholarships for students, teachers, and young professionals to travel to France, Canada, and Belgium. They also contribute and are present at local festivals in the state. A new project that they are helping with is a training partnership of some kind between the Louisiana National Guard, Haiti, and some African countries. Additionally, they collaborate with the Louisiana

Department of Transportation for signage, participate in sister city activities, and have several state representatives who twinned with others in Belgium.

11) Do you think it's important for instructors in the French immersion programs to be instructed or familiarized with Louisiana French language, history, or culture before beginning to teach in the immersion programs?

Response: They indicated that this process involves a lot of give and take. A better balance would be great. However, parents and students see the benefits of bilingualism and aren't necessarily participating for the Louisiana French aspect in particular. They don't receive many complaints and children who do come into the immersion programs with heritage use of Louisiana French do not lose their dialects or accents. One interviewee notes that parents of current immersion students are younger than the parents of immersion students when the programs were created and they're less concerned with the emphasis on Louisiana French. This interviewee believes this is the beginning state of a new wave for the immersion program, where the emphasis is put on bilingualism and competency in French, not necessarily on any one variety.

12) What is CODOFIL's long-term goal for the French immersion programs? For example, that students are familiar with Louisiana French language and culture, that they are fluent in Standard French, etc.?

Response: They claimed the number one goal at present is to continue to grow the number of immersion programs in the state. As of the interview date, there were 29 immersion programs in Louisiana and they're actively working to increase that number. They mention one expansion goal in particular; that currently all of the immersion programs are in south Louisiana, but they have recently heard from interested parishes in other parts of the state. They want the cultural

identity of the state cemented and associated with French. However, this aim is not necessarily to be associated with Louisiana French varieties in particular, but rather to cement Louisiana's status in the francophone community.

13) How would you rate the success of the French immersion programs so far?

Overall, they would rate the French immersion programs as very successful. They mentioned having to clear hurdles and obstacles such as having to close a program down. However, the number of students in immersion programs is currently at 4,500. They feel that they have been growing at a steady pace which is good because they don't want to outpace the demand for growth. They ended by mentioning that there are 20,000 adults who once went through the immersion programs.

Appendix D

Survey Results

Section 1

1) It is important for French to be taught in Louisiana public school immersion programs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3	2			

2) Standard French is the only variety of French that should be taught in Louisiana public school immersion programs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	2	2		1

3) Louisiana French is the only variety of French that should be taught in Louisiana public school immersion programs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		1	2	2

4) Both Standard French & Louisiana French should be taught in Louisiana public school immersion programs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2	2		1	

5) Standard French is more useful than Louisiana French.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	4	1		

6) Standard French should be the variety of French taught to students, but students should learn about Louisiana French history and culture.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3	2			

7) It is important for teachers in Louisiana public school immersion programs to be familiar with Louisiana French.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2	1	1	1	

8) The amount of Louisiana French I incorporate and/or teach in my classroom is adequate.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	1	3	1	

9) I have students who bring “heritage” use of Louisiana French to the immersion classroom.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	2	1	2	

10) I know a lot about Louisiana French history, language, and culture.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	2	2	1	

Section 2

1) How often do you teach or discuss aspects of Louisiana French **language** in your class(es)?

Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
		3	1	1

2) How often do you teach or discuss aspects of Louisiana French **culture** (music, cuisine, etc.) in your class(es)?

Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	1	3	1	

3) How often do you correct students who speak Louisiana French?

Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
			1	4

4) How often do you spend time with native speakers of Louisiana French?

Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
		2	1	1

5) How often do your students express an interest in you teaching them more about any aspects of Louisiana French?

Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
	1		1	3

6) How often are you exposed to Louisiana French in any setting?

Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
		1	4	

7) How much instruction and information did you receive related to Louisiana French before you began teaching in the immersion program?

A lot	Quite a bit	Some	A little	None
			4	1

8) If you could choose, how much use of Louisiana French **language** would you incorporate into your class(es)?

A lot	Quite a bit	Some	A little	None
		3	2	

9) If you could choose, how much use of Louisiana French **culture** would you incorporate into your class(es)?

A lot	Quite a bit	Some	A little	None
	1	3	1	

Section 3

1) On which continent were you born? Europe (All 5 participants)

2) How long have you lived in Louisiana?

- A. Less than 1 year
- B. 1-2 years – 1 Participant
- C. 3-5 years
- D. 5-10 years – 4 Participants

3) How familiar are you with the CODOFIL organization and its goal to develop, support, and expand French immersion and various other francophone communities in Louisiana?

- A. Very familiar – 2 participants
- B. Familiar – 2 participants
- C. Somewhat familiar
- D. Not familiar – 1 participant

4) Do you believe that CODOFIL should recruit native speakers of Louisiana French to teach in French immersion programs along with native French speakers from other countries?

- A. Yes – 4 participant
- B. No - 1 participant

Appendix E
IRB Approval

Office for Research
Institutional Review Board for the
Protection of Human Subjects



January 13, 2015

Meredith Haskins, MA
Department of Modern Languages & Classics
College of Arts & Sciences
The University of Alabama
Box 870246

Re: IRB # EX-15-CM-003 "French Immersion in Louisiana: Instructor Perceptions and Practices"

Dear Ms. Haskins:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your protocol has been given exempt approval according to 45 CFR part 46.101(b)(2) as outlined below:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
- (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and
 - (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Your application will expire on January 12, 2016. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of Continuing Review and Closure Form. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of FORM: Continuing Review and Closure.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the assigned IRB application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,



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