



Perceptions of Culture Impacted by a Short Study Abroad Program

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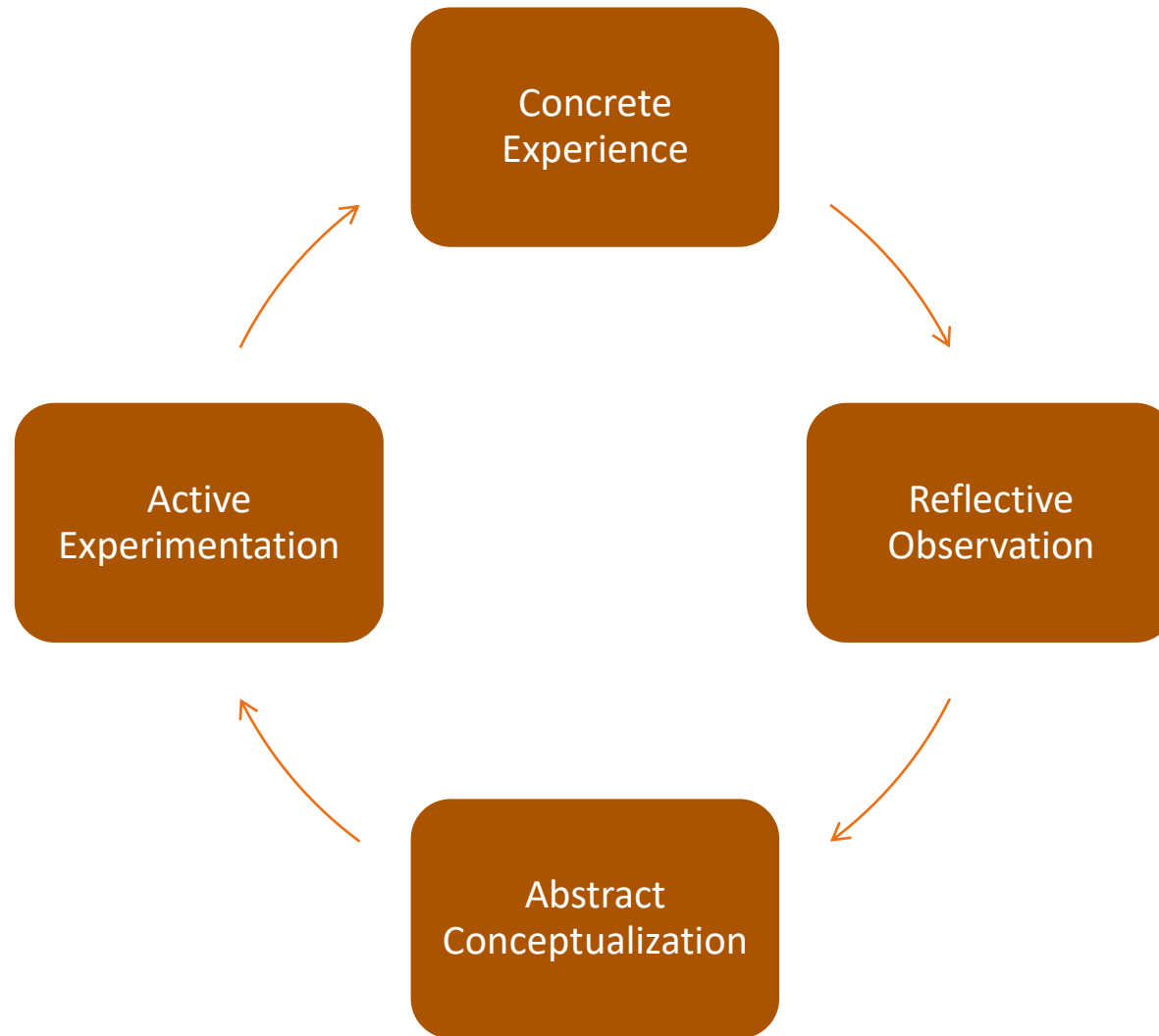




Introduction

- Employees have to be able to function in a global context (Jones, 2013)
- Internationalization a university priority (Knight, 2003)
- Study abroad experiences can provide students cultural skills (Goldthorpe et al., 2012)
- Need to understand how to develop these experiences to create the most impact (Renn et al., 2014)

Experiential Learning



Kolb, 1984



Experiential Learning

- Students can move through all stages (Northell et al., 2013)
- Reflective journals can be used to help student elaborate on experiences (Brockbank & McGill, 1998)
- Student need to be given opportunity to explore and discover (Edgar & Edgar, 2009)



Purpose

- Explore the impact of a short study abroad program on students' perceptions of culture



The Experience

- “Food and Culture in Southern France”
- 1 week
- Undergraduate, graduate students, & Extension agents
- Mostly nutrition students and family youth & community science students

Toulouse





While in France

- Cooked with 2 Michelin Chefs
- Visited
 - Farmer's Market
 - Apiary
 - Goat Cheese Farm
 - Olive Grove
 - Winery
- Ate at Michelin Star Restaurants



Methods

- Qualitative analysis
- 15 reflective journals analyzed
- 2 years of data (2015 & 2016)
- Constant comparative analysis (Glaser, 1965)



Reflective Journals

- What observations did you make related to food and/or culture today?
- Did your perceptions change today? How?
- Which activity had the greatest significance to you today?
- What did you learn today? How will it affect you professionally?
- What did you see or learn today that challenged or changed your previous thinking?
- What do you hope to learn tomorrow?



with quail's egg. No one seemed to like it except for me and maybe one other person, but it was still a great taste! After this we had some stuffed potato rolls and truffles. This was my favorite plate of all. The aesthetics of the plate were also incredible. Next came some black pork with caviar and white asparagus followed by the desserts. For dessert we had an amazing strawberry pastry and few lollipop looking sweets, all of different flavors. I ended the meal with a cappuccino.

We got back to the house a little late so at this point I am going to go directly to sleep. The restaurant was incredible and definitely an experience that I won't forget. Hopefully I will have the opportunity to go back some day.

Wednesday, June 23rd

Today was a bit more relaxed. We all had breakfast together as per usual. We started cooking with Robert again to make our lunch. This time we prepared monkfish with clams, carrots, and a citrus sauce. Cutting the monkfish was a bit difficult but watching them inflate as they cooked was very cool. For dessert we prepared Fontainebleau, which was just a cream prepared with cottage cheese, and we added fruits such as strawberries and raspberries. We also started to make the mix for the macaroons we would bake later. During this lunch we also got to try the foie gras, which was not exactly to everyone's liking. I think my mistake was trying a big chunk by itself all at once. Other than that, the rest of the lunch was very good.

We went to the vineyard after lunch. We got to see the early grapes, look at the blending and bottling process, and then proceeded to the wine tasting. The wines were all really great. It was really nice to try all the different flavors consecutively to really tell the difference between them. Our tour guide was also very attending and kind. I ended up buying the dessert wine to take home with me.



We went to the

house again to cook with Robert, our final cooking session. We finished up with fish in a mango and tomato sauce, sardine and anchovies spread on bread, veal, and a mixed vegetables flan, which was my favorite. We also ended up making the lemon macaroons. Making the macaroons was really easy and fun and I am definitely going to make them again at home.



Sunday June 19, 2016

Page Break

We arrived at the Toulouse airport at 12:10pm (France time), after traveling since 6:45am (U.S. Eastern time) the day before. I was only able to sleep about an hour on the flight; so I was pretty exhausted once we finally reached Toulouse. While it was very difficult to stay awake on the drive from the airport to our living quarters for the week ahead, I managed because I didn't want to miss any of the sights. I am very glad I did, because we went through absolutely gorgeous countryside. The countryside looked very different from the U.S. Once out of the city, there were fields of golden wheat and bright green sunflower plants. Old stone and pink plaster buildings dotted the landscape. It was easy to spot homes; they were guarded from prying eyes by hedges of dark green poplars. Our home for the week was protected the same way, but upon passing through the gate, we received a lovely surprise. The house was beautiful, with large arching windows, plentiful flower beds, and pots dripping with red geraniums. After arriving and settling into our rooms, we were served lunch. For lunch we had a tomato, corn, and lettuce salad, hardboiled eggs, duck mousse, and a cheese noodle bake. I particularly enjoyed the cheese noodle bake. For dessert we were served a dessert sampler, which included a French macaron cookie (mine was citrus flavored with jelly), vanilla bean ice cream (custard based), a single decoratively cut strawberry, and a chocolate entremet. After lunch, we began our foray into French cooking by making a variety of canapes. I helped make anchovy and pesto toasts, but there were also cheese twists, pesto palmiers, parmesan shortbread, and blinis with tapenade (a mixture of olives, tomatoes, red peppers, and herbs) and mascarpone cheese. My favorite was the blinis. We ate the canapes during our wine tasting session that evening. While I still did not discover my deeply hidden love of wine, the wine tasting provided much interesting information. I learned how to at least look like I know what I am doing when tasting wine. For instance, before tasting the wine, one should first examine the clarity/color (no swirling), next sniff to determine the odors, then swirl to examine the "legs" or body of the wine, and finally smell the wine again. Only after this process is completed should the wine be tasted. Our instructor also introduced us to the different types of grapes grown in the region and the AOC system.





Results

- Personal Experiences
- Desire to Learn
- Surprise
- Cultural Confidence
- Cultural Empathy
- Overcome Fear



Desire to Learn

“Bon Jour! After learning some new French today, **I've decided to incorporate it as much as possible**, whether it be in writing or speaking.”

“I could only imagine how great it would be to speak three languages. I was proud that I was able to understand bits and pieces of what we were discussing, but **it made me think that maybe I should learn how to speak French more when we go back.**”



Personal Experience

“In America, meals are often rushed and full of distractions such as cell phones and TVs. As a result, people don’t necessarily have the time to enjoy the company or food. **I think this first day was very eye opening to me because I realized how lately I have not been taking the time to relax and enjoy my meals.**”



Personal Experience

“One part of the trip **I have enjoyed most has been being able to compare the French lifestyle to the American lifestyle.** I know that we were in a more rural part of France for most of the trip, but **it provides a strong contrast to the American way of life.** In the French countryside, there is a beautiful landscape, not many buildings, a slower pace to life, fewer cars, and a peaceful feel. I think people in France are content with quiet lives. I respect that.”



Surprise

“The people selling at the market were very friendly too! **Most Americans have a negative perception of the French, but I found the opposite.** The people were more forthcoming to speak English as long as I tried to speak the language.”

“[The chef] was very friendly, **a little surprising to me because of the stereotype** that French people can be snobbish towards Americans. “



Cultural Confidence

“[Talking to locals] made me realize how amazing it is to be able to speak two languages. **I never really appreciated it before because it was just something I was born into.**”



Cultural Empathy

“I never think twice when I have to go to Publix and buy produce. However, when it is an unfamiliar setting and unfamiliar language, things get much more difficult. **This experience made me more empathetic and patient of those who I may encounter that have a language or cultural barrier.**”



Overcoming Fear

In the beginning I was not looking forward to [ordering food in French] at all because **I was afraid that I would make a fool of myself.** Later I thought that **this is a learning experience** and by practicing my French-speaking skills I would improve that much more.



Overcome Fear

I learned how important it is to be open minded about others and **to not be afraid to try new things every once in a while**. I also have to keep in mind that America is only a small portion of the world and there is so much more out there to explore.



Discussion

- Short trip did influence perceptions of culture
- Students gained confidence in own abilities
- Realized that not all stereotypes are true
- Differences are not always bad



Discussion

- Experiences outside the kitchen led to more elaboration
- Provided students concrete experience and opportunity to discover on their own
- Students wanted to learn more at the end of the trip



Recommendations

- Plan activities and excursions so students can move through all stages of the experiential learning cycle
- Unstructured time can lead to exploration and discovery
- Help students frame the experiences positively
- Students should have guided reflection



Recommendations

- In-depth interviews to have students expand on their journal entries
- Explore if the study abroad experience created lasting perceptions of culture
- Investigate alternative ways to provide reflection opportunities



Any Questions?

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