

Fall 2016

Perceptions from Across the Pond: Building Cultural Competence from Study Abroad Experiences

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Recommended Citation

Wolff, Kathleen, "Perceptions from Across the Pond: Building Cultural Competence from Study Abroad Experiences" (2016). *3210 English Undergraduate Research: Ethnography of the University*. 33.
http://epublications.marquette.edu/english_3210ur/33

Perceptions from Across the Pond: Building Cultural Competence from Study Abroad Experiences

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Introduction

When I returned home from studying abroad in Ireland in the summer of 2016, I evaluated my learning experience in my home environment when compared with my foreign one. Drawing heavily from my own personal gratification from studying abroad, I began to wonder how many students shared my interest and perspective with this new opportunity to learn. Despite the many dimensions and ways that students learn, I was interested in focusing on how culture truly impacts students. Because of my experience abroad, I feel that I developed, and continue to develop, the essential trait of being **culturally competent** (i.e., **the ability to be aware of my own identity and recognize the value of other students' differing identities, thus furthering an acceptance and appreciation for other cultures**). My own realization has led me to question the role of cultural competence among other Marquette students.

How do Marquette students value cultural competence and how does that value (or not) influence students to study abroad?



Marquette Students in Clifden, Connemara, Ireland

Methods

- Archival Research
 - Examining outlooks/awareness in relation to the individual self
 - Self-Encounter Theory, Milieu
- Interviews
 - With Marquette study abroad professor, Tyler Farrell and Director of OIE, Terence Miller
- Auto-ethnography
 - Inspiration from personal study abroad experience

*Additional research drawn from scholarly literature and a phone conversation with Jessica Lothman

Findings

Archival Research

- "A student functions only in terms of his **operational milieu**...the self determines that quality by the meaning it assigns" – *The Self Encounter Theory for Human Development*
- How does a student foster a **self-encounter**?
 - Advisors assisting students: "a student may be operating without certain important items in his factual milieu" – *The Self Encounter Theory for Human Development*
 - Limited knowledge students may have in regards to their role → path to cultural competence

Interviews:

- Students main concerns = safety, money, **'Am I going to get something out of this?'**
 - Beginning point to fostering of cultural competence
- Cultural Competence as a *process*, cultural competence as a *result* of studying abroad
 - Students may have the tendency to take for granted the idea that they "have to give up some parts of their home" (Tyler Farrell) → before/early stages of cultural competence

"When you're in college things are so much more new and you have these opportunities and I think students wanted that kind of enlightenment." – Tyler Farrell

"Our world is so fast...there are iconic experiences that students want to have." – Terence Miller

Scholarly Literature:

- Studying abroad → positive effect on students
 - Mental affects
 - Life Skills
 - Strengthening of Self Identity

Auto-ethnography: Self Reflection from time in Ireland



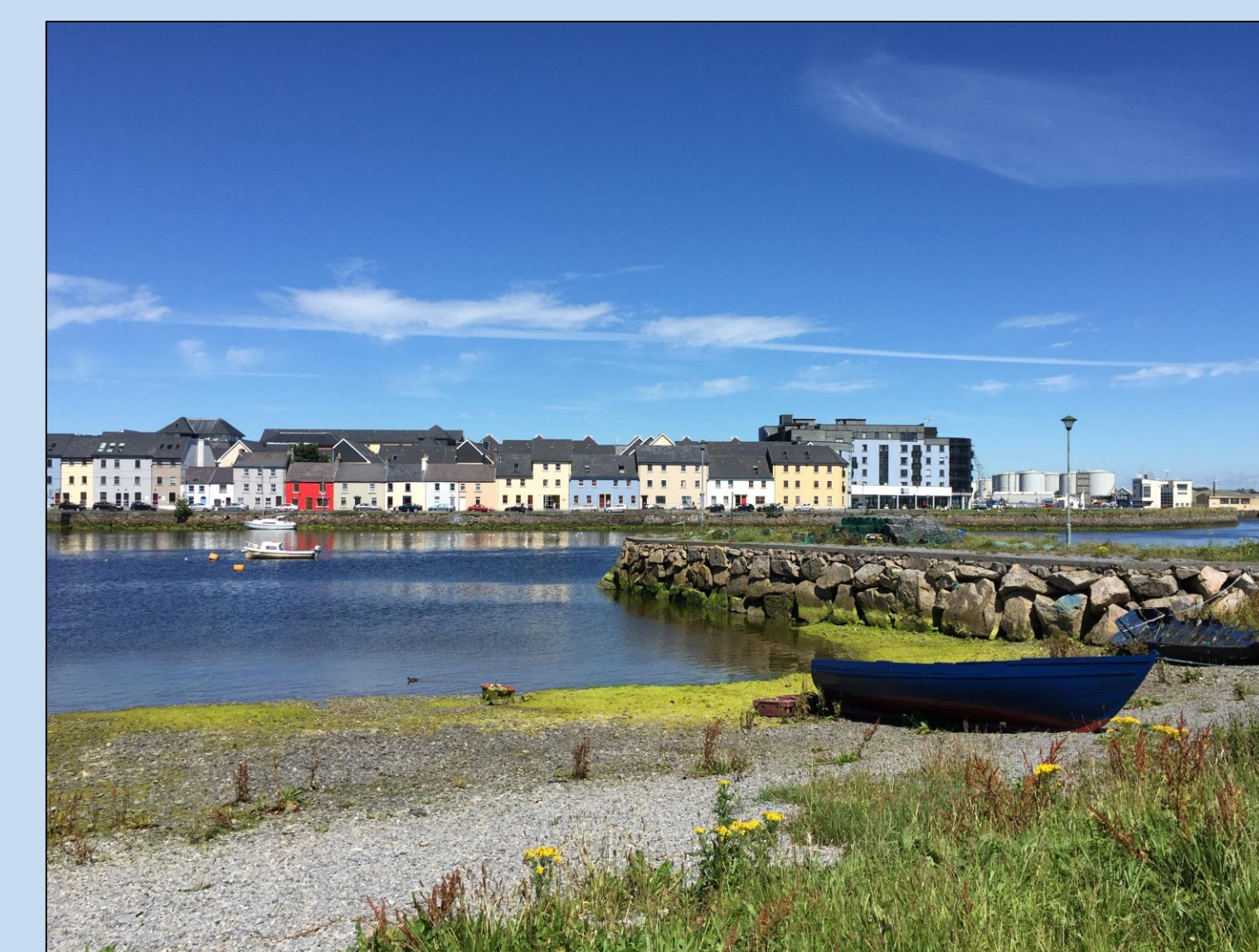
Howth, Ireland



Temple Bar, Dublin, Ireland



Dew Drop Inn, Galway, Ireland



Galway, Ireland

Proposals for Change

- Long Term: Every Marquette undergraduate student studies abroad
 - Ultimate goal = accommodate students as much as possible
- 5 Year: Participants in Marquette's study abroad program increases to **half (50%)** of the total undergraduate population
 - Increased opportunity to participate in summer study abroad
 - Every college offers at least one option for summer study abroad (3-6 credits)
 - Increased opportunity to participate in semester study abroad
 - Increased correspondence with universities abroad; full class loads accounted for
- 1 Year: Freshman Exposure
 - Class visits (to general/required freshman classes) by OIE staff
 - Advisors
 - Student Ambassadors
 - Increased advertising for various programs: students' knowledge of options increases



Marquette Students in Clifden, Connemara, Ireland

Conclusions

In a time marked by recent change in political leadership, the people of our country cannot lose sight of the importance of cultural competency. Educators, whether they be professors, advisors, parents, or fellow students, must continually support the need for a world where we are not only educated on other cultures, but where we are in the mindset of accepting and becoming curious as to the individual (and worldly) benefits that come from immersion within these cultures.

Acknowledgments

My gracious thanks to Beth Godbee for her guidance throughout this project and to Prof. Tyler Farrell, Terrence Miller, and Jessica Lothman for generously giving their time to help me gain the necessary information about Marquette's study abroad experiences.

Perceptions from Across the Pond:

Building Cultural Competence from Study Abroad Experiences

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Perceptions from Across the Pond:
Building Cultural Competence through Study Abroad Experiences

Introduction

Cultural competence: “awareness of one’s own cultural identity and views about difference...the ability to understand the within-group differences that make each student unique while celebrating the between-group variations that make our country a tapestry” (National Education Association, 2015, para. 3). In other words, my end goal from my desired time spent studying abroad. Having cultural competence (being culturally competent, or any form of these two words together) is something that I heard being articulated when I began my more in depth exploration of study abroad programs at the beginning of my sophomore year at Marquette. I was also aware of this idea during my initial investigation into studying abroad the first semester of my freshman year and throughout the second half of my high school career. Internalizing the meaning of this term led me to want, and be willing, to experience different parts of the world; studying abroad, I believed, would present me with such an opportunity.

I wanted to attend a college that would not only allow me to study abroad, but one that would hold the value of cultural competence as highly as I did. From conversations with friends, let alone my many peers at both the high school and college level, the idea of studying abroad offered an intriguing aspect that couldn’t quite be defined; it’s as if there was something out there that each of us was meant to discover. Having the passion to discover what that *something* may be, whether that passion was expressed orally or in written form through journal entries, was an essential beginning step in opening up my mind to be receptive of what other cultures have to offer. Attending Marquette, a college that offers opportunities to study abroad, has allowed me to connect with individuals who share a similar cultural interest. As observed

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

through one of Marquette's resources for study abroad students, Marquette Global, students' excitement and eagerness to study abroad is varied. Questions arise, concerns deepen, but fulfillment tends to prosper. Further examining Marquette's study abroad options heightened my perceived importance of not only choosing to study abroad, but doing so for the *right reasons*.

Some of these reasons, I believe, are universal; by immersing oneself into another country – or countries – to study abroad, a student is able to develop a social and mental kind of maturity made possible through academic guidance. This maturity begins in a standard classroom where students become well equipped to further develop cross-cultural skills and a deeper global understanding of these skills (Smith & Mirty, 2008). The country itself soon becomes a more appropriate and enterprising classroom, filled with tools and challenges that do to individuals exactly what is necessary to grow: be uncomfortable. It is through little instances of uncertainty and brief hiccups of discomfort, especially vital in the emerging era of adulthood, where there is the potential for an individual to be positively shaped, shaped for the better. The choices made daily, in addition to challenging situations, relate to the individual reasons that students find fulfillment when studying abroad as well; finding joy within different elements of a culture – whether it be the food, the literature, the music, the lifestyle – can all be done on an individual level.

In the following sections of this paper I will share the need for research about cultural competence, ultimately leading me to my research question that addresses how Marquette students value cultural competence and how this value connects to their decision to study abroad. An introduction to the benefits of studying abroad and need for an increase in study abroad programs is given through a semi-structured literature review which also includes features of my auto-ethnography. From here, the details of my mixed-method approach, which consisted of

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

interviews and archival data, will be described. My findings, broken down by students' previous knowledge and both collaborative and individual steps taken to foster cultural competencies, will be shared. I will also express my immediate and long term proposals for change, which are aimed at increasing student participation in Marquette's overall study abroad program, and concluding thoughts regarding what it truly means to be culturally competent in a time marked by a drastic change in political leadership. Interspersed within these various sections of my research paper, my voice, connecting to the auto-ethnographical feature that was not only one of my methods, but my inspiration for this topic, will be heard.

Motivations for Research

Initially, I was taken aback by the low number of students who have studied abroad in the recent past. Only 24% of Marquette's graduating class in 2015 studied abroad, the largest portion of students being represented in the business school (Office of International Education, 2016). Overhearing concerns of students, such as the cost and the matter of fitting in and finding appropriate classes abroad that would transfer back as major credits, I saw a problem rising. Almost thinking it wasn't possible to study abroad myself, there was a time where I certainly was frustrated because I shared these same concerns. There is a need to address students' perceptions about studying abroad and overcome concerns in order to help students become more aware and appreciative of other cultures throughout the world.

Within the past year, I also began to wonder how an individual student's mindset is adaptive (including his or her willingness to be adaptive) to the various differences between cultures throughout the world. I was interested in discovering students' processes throughout

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

their study abroad journeys. Considering pre-departure feelings and student behavior after arrival back in the states allowed me to think holistically about students' developmental changes. My motivation thus stems from my own reflection on how my entire process of studying abroad had led me to draw conclusions about different cultures, about the world, in relation to my smaller self. This led me construct the following question: How do Marquette students value cultural competence and how does that value (or not) influence students to study abroad?

When placing value on a trait such as being culturally competent, it's important to keep in mind that there will likely be degrees of differences between different students. These differences are simply due to our individual traits and preferences as human beings. Yet, overall, studying abroad fosters a kind of self-directed learning and enhances language skills that can be transferable to different students' paths (Perez-Vidal & Juan-Garau, 2009). Becoming well-rounded individuals stems from the recognition of a culture's compelling ability to affect students' behavior, thought processes, and feelings. Students can begin to analyze experiences and viewpoints that differ from their own (Earnest & Rodenbusch & Wallace-Williams & Keim, 2016).

It is thus important to spread awareness on the limitless benefits of studying abroad in order to create culturally competent, open minded individuals. In other words, individuals who are aware that there is much more out there than may initially meet the eye. It is the responsibility of the individual person to be in the correct mindset of accepting and appreciating the gifts the world has to offer and take action in order to reap these benefits.

Scholarly Literature: Compatible Benefits

There is a great amount of research that currently exists involving the positive effects studying abroad has on college students (Bathke & Kim, 2016; Earnest et. al, 2016; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015; Perez-Vidal & Juan-Garau, 2009; Smith & Mitry, 2008). Yet, the number of students in the United States who participate in study abroad programs is quite low, as it was less than 1% of the population in 2008. This rate is disproportionate to the number of increasing opportunities for American students to study abroad (Smith & Mitry). However, there has been progress made over the years. While roughly 71,154 students studied abroad in 1991-1992, 283,332 students studied abroad in 2011-2012. This increase in studying abroad throughout the academic year in 2012 still accounts for less than 2% of the college population throughout the United States and falls short of the national goal to have 1 million, out of 21 million, college students study abroad (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015).

Academic

The reason for a national goal, and thus the recognition that the rate of students studying abroad must be increased, stems from the numerous benefits that come from studying abroad. One of the more immediate benefits of studying abroad relates to students' academics (Smith & Mitry, 2008; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2005; Earnest et. al, 2016). Overall, students' academic performance increases when they return to their home country and take classes (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2005). However, physical markers, such as grades, are not the only indicators of an increase in academic success and performance. Students' interests to explore interdisciplinary studies also increase after study abroad experiences and many students choose

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

to take classes outside of their major (Smith & Mitry, 2005). The extent to which students engage in educational activities and develop an overall satisfaction with their college experience also increases upon return from time spent abroad (Earnest et. al, 2016).

I found this increased engagement and overall satisfaction to be particularly true when I was nearing the end of my summer program in Ireland. As an English major, I was initially excited about studying Irish Literature *in* Ireland and took this course for an upper division credit. A majority of the students in the program, however, were not English majors and were taking the course in order to fulfill a Language Arts requirement. Near the end of the trip, these students expressed great appreciation for the content of the course. They then discussed their interests in taking similar English classes at Marquette. One student even acknowledged the important connection between literature and the theatre, two areas of art she had never been able to enjoy until seeing a production at the Abbey Theatre. Credit must be given to our incredible professor, Tyler Farrell, for presenting content in an intriguing manner and not only guiding, but encouraging, students to explore Ireland on their own. It is through faculty's dedication to creative integration of student learning that students are able to academically succeed and grow as global citizens.

Globalization

Student expectations from study abroad experiences can be met when they are able to develop a global perspective (Perez-Vidal & Juan Garau, 2009; Earnest et. al, 2016). Students may hold expectations of advancing in a global realm because many study abroad programs present this as their goal for students. Global learning is a result of immersion in a different

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

culture. It is here where students can see other individuals' viewpoints and experiences while crafting viewpoints and experiences of their own (Earnest et. al, 2016). After studying abroad, students' levels of international political concern also increase; students are able to develop compassion for other nations and a sense of urgency to act and discuss cultural issues (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2005).

Reflecting on my time in Ireland, I've come to realize the numerous physical and mental ways in which I feel I was able to advance as a global citizen. Simply being surrounded by local Irishmen, many of whom are artists, has given me a greater appreciation for different art forms. Seeing local artists paint and perform along the streets of Galway has helped me recognize and appreciate different lifestyles. Stopping to observe an artist at work or listen to a band perform are ways in which I was participating in this new kind of community. Through self-reflective journaling and sharing of experiences with friends and family, I was able to question my role in this larger community. I was thus able to introduce the values of one culture into another. I feel as if it's hard to make sense of what being a global citizen truly entails unless students have the opportunity to study abroad and become physically present and thus mentally alert in a new environment.

Future Careers

Before students study abroad, they may realize the potential benefits of studying abroad in relation to a workplace setting; another primary reason that students study abroad is to increase their options for attaining future careers (Luo & Jamieson-Drake 2015). The idea of globalization is extended beyond the individual in a workplace setting. Because of different

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

employees' backgrounds and thus the representation of different cultural values, there is an increasing need to develop cultural competence. Students will have to be able to adapt to culturally unfamiliar situations and react in appropriate ways (Earnest et. al, 2016). Instances where students are forced to be uncomfortable, which will likely occur when studying abroad in a foreign country, can allow students to develop techniques of handling stress in a professional manner.

As a future teacher, I have had sufficient time to reflect upon how my time abroad has better equipped me to understand and account for the diversity in my future classroom. Students are not culturally diverse solely upon differences in geographic location, race, or ethnicity. Students' needs and ability levels are also diverse, which is why differentiation of learning is such an essential skill that I will have to continuously develop. Studying abroad allows students to communicate in different ways, whether it be through a different language or dialect. Other aspects of communication involve the syntax or style in which information is presented. Asking students questions, rewording or rephrasing information in order to increase clarity, and emphasizing key words or phrases are all important considerations to be made when working with and assessing different students. These encounters can be unpredictable, as not all students' questions or behavior can be determined or solved with a scripted out lesson plan. Being adaptable and clearly expressing ideas (say, for instance, if you cannot understand directions in another language while abroad!) are skills that I gained from my time abroad. Simply being in the mindset that these differentiations need to occur is something that will carry over and positively benefit me in regards to interactions with future students.

Mental Health

Students can have a revelation about their own mental process when they learn to understand and examine the mental processes of others, whether it be in regards to the perspective of an individual, a group, or a whole society and culture (Earnest et. al, 2016). When students are in good health, they are more likely to be receptive to the benefits of studying abroad that were previously mentioned. Overall, students are reported to have good health while studying abroad, allowing for an increase in benefits from study abroad experiences. Being in a good state of mind, a state in which students claim to have emotional health, physical health, motivation and energy, satisfaction with life, and satisfaction with academic performance, allows students to foster cultural competence (Bathke & Kim, 2016). When Bathke and Kim administered an online survey to participants of the University of Minnesota's study abroad program from the years 2009 to 2012, they found that students' levels of stress decreased upon their arrival in their home country. While 45.02% of students expressed high levels of stress (where they were stressed out "often" or "almost always") before their time abroad, only 23% of the students surveyed reported these same levels of stress after time abroad. Therefore, study abroad seemed to have a positive effect on students' mental health. Other factors relating to mental health, such as excessive drinking, taking drugs, or having suicidal thoughts were also reported to be low when abroad (Bathke & Kim, 2016).

Reflecting upon my own time abroad, I can recall moments where I was the happiest I had ever been in my life. I think part of this joy stemmed from astonishment; I found it unbelievable that places as beautiful as the Cliffs of Moher and pubs as old as The Brazenhead (which was established in 1198) existed in the world today. Not only did they exist, but I was able to witness their extravagance. The endless possibilities for learning that stemmed from the

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

numerous exploration opportunities Ireland presented allowed me to remain in a positive and curious mindset. There were too many *good* things to think about that outweighed the anxiousness and nervousness that came with living and studying in another country.

It was from here that I could also focus on continuing to develop my own identity. Finding value in other cultures' values, such as Ireland's appreciation of literature and encouragement of the arts in general (as, I learned, artists do not have to pay taxes in Ireland), helped me to determine how these values connect back to my life in America. It is through all of the benefits that come from studying abroad – whether they be academic, pertaining to globalization, related to students' future careers, or connected to an increase in mental health – that the idea of cultural competency can be built in students' minds and continually developed throughout their lives. In order to discover students' process of becoming culturally competent, my next methods section will provide information regarding my mixed-method research design and sets of data collection. My data collection involved two interviews with Marquette faculty, archival research, and my auto-ethnography which frames my research proposal.

Methods

Research Design

Ethnographic in nature, I used a qualitative mixed-method approach when researching and collecting data. The following is a breakdown of my interviews, archival research, and auto-ethnography that comprise my mixed-method approach. I also drew on scholarly literature and a phone conversation with Jessica Lothman, a Study Abroad Coordinator in the OIE.

Data Collection

The following three methods involve interactions with Marquette faculty, such as my two interviews with Professor Tyler Farrell and OIE Director Terrence Miller, and Marquette resources, such as the Archives. I also drew on my own auto-ethnographical experiences; I was able to reflect upon my own experiences studying abroad and make connections to students who also studied abroad (through Marquette Global's blog entries).

1. Interviews:

- a. Tyler Farrell: Knowing from experience that study abroad is a long and detailed process, I thought I could get the richest and most relevant information from an in-person interview as opposed to a survey or online questionnaire. An interview allowed me to record descriptive answers and personal opinions that would have been limited if a survey or questionnaire was given. I was given the flexibility to ask follow-up questions if a particular part of my participant's answer intrigued me. When interviewing, I printed out a copy of my questions with ample blank space between each question (to allow myself room for important notes, such as the specific time for a quote that I thought would be particularly helpful in regards to my research). See "Appendix B: Interview Script for Prof. Farrell" for questions that were asked during this interview. I used both the "Voice Memos" app on my iPhone in addition to an audio recorder rented from Marquette's Raynor library to record the dialogue. I used two devices just in case one malfunctioned. Choosing a comfortable, quiet, environment to conduct the interview was crucial. Meeting in Prof. Farrell's

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

office in Marquette Hall was an appropriate setting because it was quiet enough, and we were close enough to one another, that the audio recorders could successfully pick up our speech. I chose to interview Prof. Farrell, specifically, on September 27, 2016 because of his credibility as a Marquette Professor and his direct involvement with the study abroad program. Since this past summer was his first year teaching abroad, I thought his opinions would be beneficial because they had the potential to relate well to students (who, for some, was also their first time taking an academic class abroad). Prof. Farrell was not only knowledgeable about the study abroad process, he was also willing to meet and was available to meet when I was available. Since he is such a credible source, I was eager to use his name in my research proposal. Due to my role as a researcher, I provided Prof. Farrell with a consent form not only alerting him to the fact that I may use his name, but also of the purpose of my research. See “Appendix A: Consent Form for Interview” for this acknowledgment.

- b. Terence Miller: My interview with Mr. Miller on September 29, 2016 followed the same structure and procedure as the interview I conducted with Prof. Farrell. Only a couple of questions differed between the two interviews; the questions I asked Mr. Miller can be found in Appendix C. The setting in which this interview was conducted was still a professional, isolated, and quiet area, as it was in one of the open conference rooms in the OIE. I chose to interview Mr. Miller because of his role as the Director of the OIE. I could predict that his knowledge about various study abroad programs, and the overall way the OIE functions in relation to Marquette students, could be helpful in gathering some necessary background information. I also

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

thought his insight pertaining to students' attitudes about studying abroad could help me see patterns within my research. I was fortunate that it was convenient for both of us to meet on this given day.

2. Archival Research

Curious about Marquette's study abroad programs in the past, specifically with actions taken by the OIE, I thought Marquette's Archives were the best place to start. This resource allowed me to look through multiple documents at once, all neatly organized by topic and key words. I was interested in looking at the history behind actions taken specifically pertaining to Marquette's study abroad program, and the historical collection that the Archives offered seemed more easily accessible and organized than online databases. Having previously emailed Amy Cary, I began looking through the first box that was pulled out for me. Jotting down notes that included key phrases that I thought would be particularly relevant to my study and taking pictures of full articles so that I had them as a reference to go back to, I collected my information. Sitting at a table in Marquette's Archives room on October 14, 2016, which is located on the third floor of Raynor Library, provided me with the quiet environment that was necessary to read through my given documents. After initially receiving assistance by Amy Cary, as she located specific boxes with my chosen documents, I had an independent opportunity to collect data. In order to respect the nature of these historical documents, in addition to being careful about not breaking copyright laws, I made sure to ask for permission before taking pictures of archival documents.

3. Auto-ethnography

- a. Choosing to research the topic of study abroad stemmed from my own experience of studying abroad in Ireland this past summer. I went into this experience eager to explore a new culture and was filled with an abundance of appreciation, an advanced sense of cultural competence, after my time in Ireland. Journaling while abroad allowed me to capture the moments I never wanted to forget, and my final essay for my Irish literature class allowed me to creatively describe my time in Ireland through a narrative short story. Exploring Marquette Global's Tumblr page, where other students share brief journal entries/blog posts about their experiences at any point in the study abroad process (pre-departure, while abroad, upon return home), allowed me to think more deeply about my own experiences. It is here that I took notes on patterns observed between students (Did students feel a particular way at a particular time abroad? What does the structure of their entries say about their perceptions/mindsets in regards to studying abroad?)

- b. Writing about my own experiences in a Narrative Inquiry helped me to further reflect on what exactly my time abroad meant for my personal development. I began thinking more about all the different cultural aspects I was exposed to and how these different elements helped to shape me into a more well-rounded and curious individual. Although I was physically in both Marquette's Raynor library and my apartment on campus while crafting my Narrative Inquiry, I was mentally back in Ireland.

Data Analysis:**1. Interviews**

- a. Tyler Farrell Once this interview was completed, I began transcribing. I typed what was said verbatim, bolding the questions asked and listening for direct quotes or key words that either related to other research sources or just stuck out as being interesting or *nicely phrased*. Using parenthesis, I added my own personal commentary. I noted further questions I had about what was said and also marked placed that I thought showed great insight into Marquette's study abroad program. Before I began coding my interview, I tried to predict possible coding categories. Two categories that initially came to mind were student perceptions/mindsets and professor perceptions/mindsets. As time went on, and I read and re-read my transcribed interview, I began forming new coding categories. Each new category was identified with a different colored pen. Once I formed broad categories, such as "preparations" and "student motivations," I noticed there was a lot of one colored pen in one section. I then broke these down into subcategories. Shown below are my initial coding categories and the two previously mentioned coding categories that were then further broken down:

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

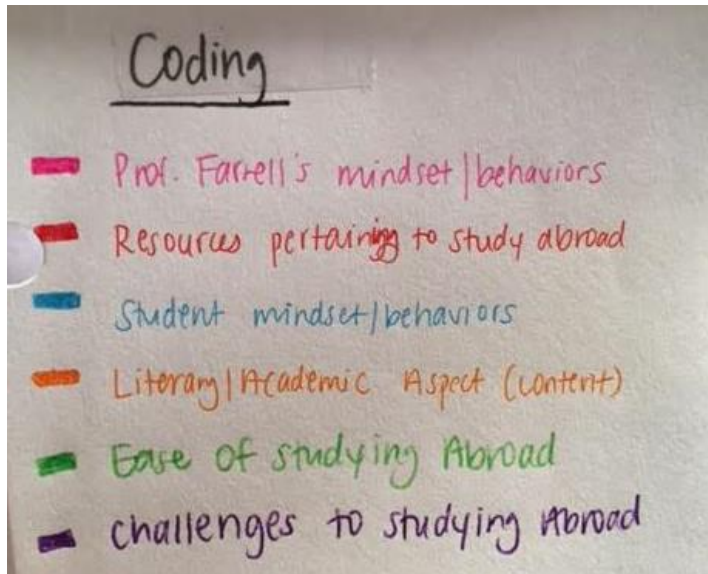


Figure 1. Coding categories for interview with Farrell, 2016.

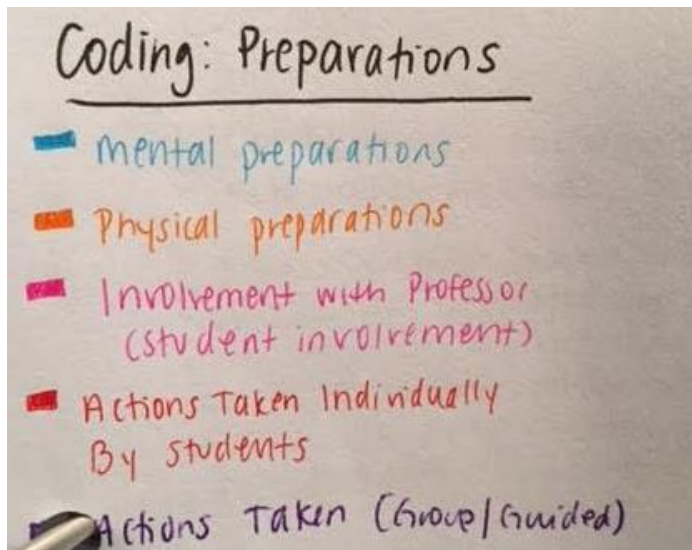


Figure 2. Coding categories for preparations discussed in interview with Farrell, 2016.

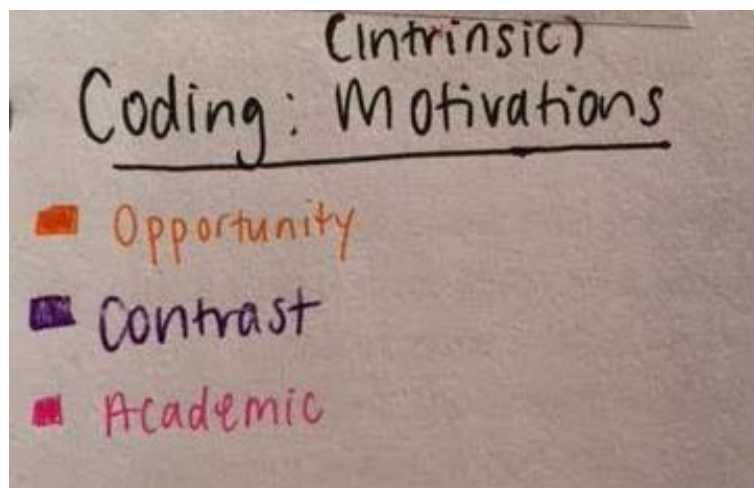


Figure 3. Coding categories for intrinsic motivations discussed in interview with Farrell, 2016.

- b. Terence Miller: I took a slightly different approach with analyzing this interview than I did with Tyler Farrell's. Instead of transcribing (typing out our dialogue word for word), I listened to the interview once through (simply by playing my recording). While I was listening, I jotted down key times where I heard "quotable moments." I was especially listening for Miller's notes on the benefits of study abroad (and how students reap these benefits). During both the interview process itself and during this audio review, I also jotted down notes when I could make connections between the two interviews (i.e. if the two individuals answered the same question similarly). I did not use any formal coding measures. I analyzed this data by referring back to margin notes on my previously printed out interview questions.

2. Archival Research

Once I had a couple of different historical documents that I felt were relevant to my research study, I began looking for patterns and gaps. I began circling key terms in my

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

notes (or terms that I was unfamiliar with), trying to group together places where key themes/categories overlapped, and asked myself the question, “what is missing from this research?” I wanted to really dive into student perceptions pertaining to study abroad, and the documents I found seemed to have this psychological angle.

3. **Auto-ethnography**

After crafting my Narrative Inquiry and looking over my field-notes from Marquette Global’s Tumblr page, I began to think about making connections. In a way, I had already coded my field-notes (through creating a table that analyzed the structure and content of a few selected blog posts). The structure of my Narrative Inquiry, in which I used both the first and third person, allowed me to reflect on the meaning behind my personal story. I thought about the significance of my own experience in relation to a student’s development of cultural competence simply by rereading sections of my Narrative Inquiry and self-reflecting in my mind.

Findings

Prior Knowledge

From my interviews with Prof. Farrell and Mr. Miller, I was able to gain an understanding of students’ perceptions, including misconceptions, prior to their time studying abroad. Some misconceptions were directly linked to students’ concerns about studying abroad, and one of the most common misconceptions related to financial cost. Although it is common for students interested in studying abroad to be worried that the experience may be too expensive, students’ financial aid transfers over with most of Marquette’s semester study abroad programs.

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

Thus, students end up paying either the same tuition that they do during an academic semester at Marquette or a reduced cost for geographic locations that entail a more expensive way of living.

Mr. Miller mentioned scholarships such as the Matteo Ricci Global scholarship and the O'Malley and Steyaert Endowed Travel Abroad Grant that are designed to make study abroad experiences more affordable, and thus more possible for students. Available as a new kind of scholarship for the 2017 fall study abroad term, the Matteo Ricci scholarship allows students the opportunity to develop cultural competencies before they go abroad; one of its aims is to expose students to the mere idea of cultural competence. Through the completion of a demanding academic program that allows students to earn an interdisciplinary educational badge, students can be put in the mindset of becoming a global citizen, a global scholar. Language courses, international relations courses, and global economics courses all fall under this scholarship. While Matteo Ricci awards \$1,500, the O'Malley and Steyaert Grant awards \$1,250 to one student each semester. This grant is geared towards students who are studying another language abroad, pertaining to their major or minor.

Language is another factor that students may think of as a barrier, thus preventing them from studying abroad. Mr. Miller encourages students to delve into their new culture before arriving at their foreign destination. If a student's destination requires familiarity with another language, Mr. Miller encourages students to challenge themselves and do just that. Rather than thinking of it as a *challenge*, students who are developing an increased interest for other cultures may consider it an *opportunity*. By immersing themselves in another language, whether it be through a course at Marquette or taking individual time to research, students once again have the opportunity to begin to build appreciation for another culture and identify with this culture in an intimate way.

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

Simply having the urgency to acquire this degree of comfort and appreciation is an indication of students becoming global citizens. Having experience this past summer teaching abroad, Prof. Farrell was willing to share his perspective in regards to students' emerging cultural competence. Through their recognition that the world is "enlightening in ways [one] may not understand," students displayed open-mindedness. They arrived at the idea that we can constantly be learning from the world we are in. There is so much that we don't know, and may never understand, when we are confined to the bounds of one geographic region. It takes time to consider the fact that this isolation is indeed a limitation.

Collaboration

Becoming global citizens requires support from individuals within Marquette's population. Whether it be advisors in the OIE or professors leading study abroad courses, the preparation process takes a collaborative effort by Marquette faculty and students. Both Miller and Farrell praised the OIE staff for their communication with students and effectiveness in making students feel more comfortable in a process that includes both physical and psychological elements.

The physical elements of studying abroad were addressed by OIE staff in meetings held pre-departure. I can recall sitting in Wehr Chem's lecture hall, surrounded by a least one hundred students who would also be studying abroad in the summer or fall of 2016. This was the setting in which "travel tips" were addressed. How to be safe when traveling. How to be safe when interacting with other individuals in one's given culture. How to contact and utilize Marquette's resources if need-be when abroad. Other, more minor, concerns that students may have were not

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

emphasized as much. I think there was an assumption that students would take it upon themselves to look more into the physical aspects relating to their specific country and particular flight. The specific wardrobe that students were to bring, in accordance with the size and weight of the suitcase that was permitted on their given flight, did not quite get at the heart what was needed for an impactful study abroad experience.

Although smaller details such as these were certainly part of students' processes when preparing to study abroad, the mental processes and questions that students had about the time spent *in* their host country align more closely with their development of cultural competence. The physical aspects (i.e. the setting and transportation while studying abroad) work in conjunction with the psychological aspects (i.e. emotions evoked by students while completing particular actions). For example, when traveling with Marquette students, there were times I was stricken by short streaks of anxiety. What if there weren't enough tickets left on the Dublin Castle tour for our whole group? What if I lose my wallet while hiking through the Wicklow Mountains? More importantly, concerns that arose in regards to respecting the Irish culture as a whole hinted at my development of cultural competency. Am I supposed to tip a waitress the same amount as I would in America (that is, if I am supposed to tip at all)? What is the proper language to use when addressing figures of authority? These higher order concerns were touched upon in more intimate and meaningful meetings with my smaller Ireland group, contrasting with the larger group which encompassed all study abroad students.

Another higher-order concern that students expressed was whether or not they would get something meaningful out of their study abroad experience. Prof. Farrell articulated the idea that students wanted to get something out of the experience that extended beyond the academic credit. In regards to their development as global citizens, students recognized the collaborative

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

effort that was needed between teacher and student when attaining these larger benefits. Prof. Farrell concisely describes this as the notion of “learning together.” The classrooms in which we met on both NUI Galway’s and UCD’s campus became a place to discuss what we learned from Ireland, our more sizable classroom. When we did activities as a group, such as going on a walking *Dubliners* tour or attending a performance at the Abbey Theatre, we had the opportunity to reap similar benefits from the same experience. Prof. Farrell was articulate about us, as a group, experiencing the same things. What was so wonderful about going on some of the same excursions was that it allowed for substantial conversation to take place amongst the students. Students could build upon their own ideas while also challenging the views of their peers, all for the healthy purpose of understanding the intent behind author’s choices. This cycle of expanding students’ perspectives allowed for students to not only comprehend Irish literature and culture, but truly *enjoy* them. It is in this kind of environment that students can operate with “low stress,” which Prof. Farrell proposes as the optimal setting for learning to occur.

Independence

Although emphasizing the benefits of “learning together,” Prof. Farrell also spoke a great deal about the increase in cultural appreciation and overall self-improvement that students have when given the opportunity to create their own kinds of adventures. Mr. Miller agreed with the importance of student independence, claiming that travel is one way for students to answer questions they have about the world. In order to fully engage with another culture, Mr. Miller mentioned that he usually discourages students from using technology for social purposes. This may take students out of their comfort zones, particularly for those who use technology as a means of staying connected to the people and the world that continues to evolve in the moments

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

they, themselves, may want to stay still. When I was exploring what have now come to be the most beautiful places I have ever been, such as the Wicklow Mountains and Coole Park, I wanted time to stand still. I have certainly found Mr. Miller's claim, "the world moves so fast...there are iconic experiences that students want to have" to be true. However, I think there is a difference in appropriateness when taking pictures/using any form of technology for private means vs. public. I took a few thousand pictures while abroad; sometimes a couple hundred of these pictures were from one excursion. Yet, instead of posting these pictures for others to see (on social media sites, through email, in text messages etc.), I kept them private. Only when I returned home would I share the abundances of joy found in these experiences. I didn't want to share images until I had the opportunity to find the appropriate words to match.

While continuing to reflect upon my own time spent in Ireland, it is interesting to recall different students' ideas of exploration, different definitions as to what an "adventure" entails. As noted by both Prof. Farrell and Mr. Miller, students take on a kind of responsibility abroad that differs from any back home. At a time that involves individual research and planning, after being given a baseline of information from collaboration with advisors back home, students truly get out of an experience what they put into it. While some students on the Ireland trip were meticulous in planning adventures big or small (buying tickets in advance, allowing ample time for travel etc.), others were simply more lax and chose not to be as structured. Rather than critiquing one method over the other, I think the importance of examining this difference stems from a focus on students' mindsets. I don't think it is fair to assume that the students who plan every adventure in advance get more out of their experience than those who choose not to do so. Part of being in another country is allowing oneself to be subject to the unanticipated occurrences that, despite a desire for everything to go as planned, are inevitable. Whether one

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

has to wait an extra hour to go home because of an incorrect bus taken or spend double the amount of Euro anticipated for an event, I think it is the responsibility of the student to also be accepting of these changes. Yet, I think there is also something miraculous about taking the initiative to plan excursions abroad. Not only does this demonstrate students' maturity in a cognitively strategic way, it shows that they care about a cultural enough to want to experience it through as many outlets as possible.

The idea that students are still discovering who they are as individuals, which can be evident in the choices that they make, relates to David Bruye's *Self-Encounter Theory for Human Development*. Bruye's theory examines cross-cultural experiences in order determine how individuals develop meaning (1973). By defining the "self" as "nothing physical, not even in the mind...a dynamic conglomerate of...outlooks...an individual's whole means of interpreting existence," Bruye targets meaning as an "essential function" in creating the substance of human beings (1973, p. 1). Meaning relates to each individual being's purpose and challenges one to think beyond what is immediate and at the surface level. Studying abroad allows students to inquire as to what this deeper meaning of life is by evaluating themselves within new contexts. In other words, studying abroad allows students to place themselves within a number of distinct contexts from which they can then assign meaning. Once students realize what kinds of places and what kinds of people they value over others, students are one step closer in discovering their true identity. This identity, being drawn from the recognition and appreciation of other cultures, is a crucial step in the process of becoming a culturally competent individual.

Drawing from my own experience and comments made from Prof. Farrell and Mr. Miller, a student does not always know that they are in the process of gaining such competence. A

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

student is said to function “only in terms of his operational milieu” (Bruye, 1973, p. 4).

Operational milieu, the “collection of items in which an individual actually uses knowingly or unknowingly in the conduct of his life,” thus serves to confirm the notion that students are constantly in the process of learning (whether they are aware of this or not) (Bruye, 1973, p. 3). Because there is a direct correlation between students’ cultural awareness and intellectual growth, it follows that students who take the opportunity to study abroad are able to become more well-rounded individuals than those who choose not to do so. Students who are exposed to a new kind of milieu, a new kind of environment, may also potentially change their outlooks on friendships, other human relationships, or their own personal identity. A collaborative interaction with advisors, as previously discussed as beneficial in the early stages of the study abroad process, also further serves to foster a self-encounter. When advisors are assisting students by providing them with new information and ways of taking perspective, students are operating with items that were not previously in their factual milieu (Bruye, 1973). It is here where students can continually develop along their path to becoming culturally competent.

Proposals for Change

Having considered the numerous benefits that study abroad programs have to offer, in conjunction with the research that supports these benefits as factors in increasing cultural competency, my long term goal is to have every Marquette undergraduate student study abroad. The earlier students can have the opportunity to study abroad in their college career, the better. Because cultural competence is a tool in aiding future development throughout college careers, exposure at a younger age will help students reap the benefits early on and thus can be carried throughout the rest of their college careers. This is why I think that targeting the undergraduate

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

population is a more realistic and impactful goal than Marquette's entire population that also consists of graduate students.

In order to increase Marquette's total number of participants in study abroad programs, I propose that there are more options for students to study abroad. Within the next five years, I think Marquette's study abroad participation can reasonably increase to include about half of the undergraduate population. This is a significant increase from the current 24% of students that study abroad (Office of International Education, 2016). I think that summer programs are one of the best ways to increase student interest in studying abroad while at the same time allowing for students to obtain the same benefits as they would through a semester long program (Smith & Mitry, 2008). By each college offering at least one option for a summer study abroad program, allowing students to earn three to six credit hours, students who may not feel comfortable spending a month abroad can still have the opportunity experience a new way of life. Planning around student internships or work schedules is something that should be taken into account when planning summer programs. Prof. Farrell had students' other commitments in mind when planning his summer course in Ireland; students were abroad for the second half of the summer as opposed to the middle of the summer in which it would be harder to maintain a job back home.

Connecting back to the target undergraduate population, I think an even more narrow audience for Marquette's study abroad program should be freshman. Freshman can be introduced to programs through class visits. Classes such as ENGL 1001 are most likely to reach the greatest number of freshman because such a large amount of incoming freshman are required to take this course. Although program advisors are certainly experts in relation to study abroad programs, I think it would be beneficial if visits occurred by students who have previously

PERCEPTIONS FROM ACROSS THE POND

studied abroad. Speaking from experience as a student and drawing from feedback that Prof. Farrell has gotten, students like to hear from other students. Hearing from students who have just studied abroad can not only be authentic and credible, but reassuring. The greater exposure freshman have to the opportunities that are out in the world, the more likely they are to consider *why* these opportunities exist. Curiosity is a stepping stone in the development of cultural competency.

Concluding Thoughts

Being culturally competent is a skill that is highly valued, particularly for college students in the present day. The personal development that students undergo when studying abroad is a result of direct action and interpretation of cultural experiences. Student behavior and thought processes undergo change throughout the entire study abroad experience, and a key component of building competence is reflecting upon these changes in regards to individual growth. Ultimately, students develop cultural competence through a series of individual choices nurtured by the support of larger group settings and interactions.

In a time marked by recent change in political leadership, the people of our country cannot lose the value of being culturally competent. Educators, whether they be professors, advisors, parents, or fellow students, must continually support the need for a world where we are not only educated on other cultures, but where we are in the mindset of accepting and becoming curious as to the individual (and worldly) benefits that come from immersion within these cultures.

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Appendix A: Consent Form for Interview

MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Student Perceptions about Studying Abroad

Kathleen Wolff

ENGL Dept.

You have been asked to participate in a research study. You must be age 18 or older to participate. The purpose of this study is to determine how student attitudes and behaviors effect their perceptions of studying abroad. The study involves an interview process and will take about 30-45 minutes to complete. You will be asked to answer questions about your own perceptions regarding studying abroad in addition to experiences with students (and their perceptions) about studying abroad. Your name will be collected and an audio recording will be obtained. Because of your credibility to this sector within Marquette, your name and responses may appear in this research study. The risks associated with this project are minimal and there are no direct benefits to you. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. You can skip any questions you do not wish to answer. Your decision to participate will not impact your relationship with Marquette University.

If you have any questions about this study, you can contact Dr. Beth Godbee, Assistant Professor of English, at 414-288-3468 or beth.godbee@marquette.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact Marquette University's Office of Research Compliance at (414) 288-7570.

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix B: Interview Script for Prof. Farrell

1. How long have you been a part of Marquette University (faculty member/other sorts of involvement)?
2. How long have you been a part of the study abroad program? What made you interested in becoming involved?
3. Describe your process when planning to teach abroad. How does this differ from teaching at MU? (What different precautions are taken in regards to structure/content etc.?)
4. What are the most common concerns students have expressed about studying abroad? (Do they tend to be more financial, more geographical, more psychological?)
5. What are some of the most unusual concerns a student has expressed about studying abroad?
6. What are some common misconceptions you think students have about studying abroad? How do you address these? (Can you relate to any misconceptions? Think back to when you were a college student studying abroad? How, if at all, was your mindset changed?)
7. How would you define the success of Marquette's study abroad program? (Can consider student participation, variety of options, preparation that students endure) What can be done to improve the program as a whole?
8. How do you best prepare students for a study abroad experience (beyond the formal meeting/trainings done online)?
9. Why do you think students think it's important to study abroad?
10. Why do you think it's important for students to study abroad? What kind of benefits/insights can/do students gain? Do you think certain subjects/classes are more beneficial than others to take abroad? What are your thoughts about requiring all students (regardless of major) to study abroad?

Appendix C: Interview Script for Terence Miller

1. How long have you been a part of Marquette University (faculty member/other sorts of involvement)?
2. What made you interested in becoming part of Marquette's study abroad program? Have you traveled/studied abroad yourself?
3. What are the different resources that aid students in the study abroad process at Marquette? (Have these resources increased/decreased over time?)
4. What are the most common concerns students have expressed about studying abroad? (Do they tend to be more financial, more geographical, more cultural/psychological?)
5. What are some of the most unusual concerns a student has expressed about studying abroad?
6. What are some common misconceptions you think students have about studying abroad? How do you address these?
7. How would you define the success of Marquette's study abroad program? (Can consider student participation, variety of options, preparation that students endure) What can be done to improve the program as a whole?
8. How do you best prepare students for a study abroad experience (beyond the formal meeting/trainings done online)?
9. How often, that you know of, have students visited the counseling center at some point or another during the study abroad process?
10. Do you think some classes/subjects are more beneficial to take abroad than others? What are your thoughts on requiring all students to study abroad (regardless of their major)? What defines a "successful" study abroad experience?
11. Why do you think students think it's important to study abroad?
12. Why do you think it's important for students to study abroad?