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### A Study of the Out-Of-Class Experiences of Saint Mary's College Students Studying in Maynooth, Ireland

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**Andrews University**

**School of Education**

**A STUDY OF THE OUT-OF-CLASS EXPERIENCES OF  
SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE STUDENTS STUDYING  
IN MAYNOOTH, IRELAND**

**A Dissertation**

**Presented in Partial fulfillment**

**of the Requirements for the Degree**

**Doctor of Education**

**by**

**Carolyn S. Langley**

**May 2000**

UMI Number: 9968520

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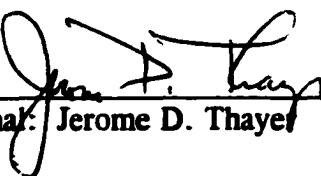
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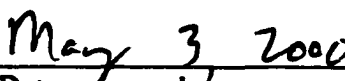
  
Chair: Jimmy Kijai

  
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Karen Graham

  
Member: Elsie P. Jackson

  
Member: Jeffrey R. Breese

  
External: Jerome D. Thayer

  
Date approved

**ABSTRACT**

**A STUDY OF THE OUT-OF-CLASS EXPERIENCES OF  
SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE STUDENTS STUDYING  
IN MAYNOOTH, IRELAND**

by

**Carolyn S. Langley**

**Chair: Jimmy Kijai**

## **ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH**

### **Dissertation**

**Andrews University**

**School of Education**

**Title: A STUDY OF THE OUT-OF-CLASS EXPERIENCES OF SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE STUDENTS STUDYING IN MAYNOOTH, IRELAND**

**Name of researcher: Carolyn S. Langley**

**Name and degree of faculty chair: Jimmy Kijai, Ph.D.**

**Date completed: May 2000**

### **Problem Statement**

**The purpose of this study is to describe the out-of-class experiences of 21 students who studied in the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program in Maynooth, Ireland, during the 1998-1999 academic year. It examines (1) how the program orientation influenced students' desire to become involved in out-of-class activities, (2) how out-of-class experiences fostered students' learning of the Irish culture, and (3) how the experiences influenced students' attitudes toward cultures other than their own.**

## **Methodology**

**This study employed descriptive qualitative research. Focus groups were conducted to gather data used in developing questions for long interviews, and these long interviews were the focus of the study. Twenty-one of the 23 students who studied in Maynooth during the 1998-1999 academic year served as the population for the interviews.**

## **Results**

**Results of this study suggest that students used ethnographic discovery methods as they learned about the Irish culture. As demonstrated through Spradley's means-end domain of semantic relationships, their roles as participant observers, interacting sojourners, and travelers afforded them opportunities to learn about the Irish culture.**

**Contact with former participants in the Ireland Program appeared to be the greatest incentive for students to become involved in out-of-class activities. Students reported that living, studying, and developing relationships with members of the host culture were ways in which they learned about the culture, and that both directed and serendipitous travel provided valuable, but different, ways of learning about Irish culture. Students believed that out-of-class experiences had a part in reducing their tendency to stereotype people, and increased their interest in other cultures. Many expected their behavior to change in accordance with these attitude changes.**

## **Conclusions**

**Results suggest that (1) former Ireland Program students should be an integral part of orientation programs; (2) students should live and study with members of the host culture; (3) both directed and serendipitous travel should be built into a study-abroad program; and (4) re-entry programs should provide opportunities for implementation of behavioral changes.**

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Finally, I offer my greatest thanks to my husband Jerry and to my daughter Jen. They have traveled this journey with me, ever offering their support. How fortunate I am to call them family.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background**

In 1977, Saint Mary's College, a Catholic women's college located in Notre Dame, Indiana, established an International Study Program at what was then St. Patrick's College in Maynooth, Ireland. St. Patrick's is now the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, in Maynooth, Ireland. The program began with 18 students from Saint Mary's College and the University of Notre Dame as its pioneer participants. At the time of the program's inception, Saint Mary's issued a statement of recognition of the educational value of travel and study abroad and of commitment to encouraging interested students to take advantage of such opportunities.

The Ireland Program was designed for college sophomores and offers a two-semester calendar year schedule of study. It is open primarily to students from Saint Mary's College and the University of Notre Dame, but students from other colleges and universities may apply. Applicants must attend orientation sessions, submit references, participate in a personal interview, and have attained at least a cumulative grade point average of B. Two counselors direct the program. One is the Ireland Program counselor at Saint Mary's and the other is on site in Maynooth, Ireland.

Once selected and participating in this study-abroad program, students attend

classes in the regular curriculum at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, with other international and Irish students. All students enroll in an Irish Culture class, which offers an introduction to the history, literature, and culture of Ireland. The Saint Mary's counselor in Ireland teaches this course. In addition, students select courses from philosophy, theology, European history, British and Irish history, American history, sociology, anthropology, mathematics, English drama, poetry and fiction, classical civilizations, music, or economics. Professors employed by the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, teach all of these courses.

As a part of their orientation to Irish culture, students are required to participate in several field trips throughout the year in association with the Irish Culture class. Students also take advantage of Christmas and spring breaks to travel more extensively to the British Isles and countries on the European continent. Weekends are spent exploring Ireland.

Out-of-class experiences is the phrase used in this paper to describe the students' participation in travel, their social interaction with the Irish people, and other extracurricular activities.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to describe the out-of-class experiences of 21 students who studied in the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program in Maynooth, Ireland, during the 1998-1999 academic year. Specifically, the study examines (1) how the program orientation influenced students' desire to become involved in out-of-class activities, (2)

how these experiences fostered students' learning of the Irish culture, and (3) how the experiences influenced students' attitudes toward cultures other than their own.

### **Research Questions**

1. What preparatory interventions (provided through Saint Mary's College Ireland Program orientation sessions) encourage students' participation in out-of-class experiences while studying in Ireland?
2. How do the out-of-class experiences of observation, interaction, and travel foster the students' learning of Irish culture?
3. How do student participants believe that out-of class experiences affect their attitudes toward cultures other than their own?

### **Rationale**

Increasingly, students are choosing to study abroad. They believe that a study-abroad experience will provide personal enrichment, travel opportunity, graduate school acceptance, job procurement, and awareness of global issues and cultural diversity (Desruisseaux, 1998; Laubscher, 1994; Rubin, 1996; Sell, 1983; Shulin, 1995; Wade, 1997). College students today study abroad for degrees, and more frequently than in the past, they are choosing the disciplines of economics, business management, and related fields. Companies in the United States are supporting these choices by recruiting graduates with international experience (Beal, 1998). In a study conducted by Opper (1991), it was found that a study-abroad credential expedited reaching the interview stage in procuring employment, and business majors attached the highest value to study-abroad programs in seeking employment.

As reported in Davis's (1998) Report on International Exchange, Europe is the favorite destination for study abroad. During 1997-1998, the United Kingdom hosted 22.9% of American students studying abroad, followed by France, Italy, and Spain, each with about 9%. Mexico hosted 6.9%, Australia hosted 4%, and Costa Rica, Ireland, and Japan hosted 2% each. The number of United States citizens receiving academic credit for study abroad has increased from 48,483 to 99,448 in the past decade. In 1996, the increase was 5.7% and in 1997, it was 11.4%. Saint Mary's College Ireland Program is a part of this trend.

It has long been accepted that "cross-cultural education involves the student as a whole person as he undertakes his educational sojourn" (Coelho, 1962, p. 55). Carlson, Burn, Useem, and Yachimowicz (1990), Laubscher (1994), and McCabe (1994) agree with Coelho. The students' academic, social, and spiritual lives all contribute to their experience. Although a significant portion of a study-abroad program occurs outside class, little research has been done to explore this aspect of the international experience, particularly in the area of higher education (Laubscher, 1994). In addition, there has been little analysis of the impact of study abroad upon participants' cultural perceptions (Stephenson, 1999). Both these facts are clearly reflected in the abundance of dated references that appear in the following pages and the obvious lack of more recent study in this area. Study-abroad programs could benefit from gaining information about ways in which out-of-class experiences teach students about their host culture and affect their attitudes toward other cultures.

It is generally assumed that a study-abroad experience leads to more positive views of other cultures. Schild (1962) hypothesized that students who study abroad learn

of new norms through observation of and participation with members of their host culture. This learning also leads to greater world-mindedness (Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Coelho, 1962; Kauffman, Martin, & Weaver, 1992; McCabe, 1994; Sharma & Jung, 1986; Smith, 1955) and individuals who are world-minded tend to be more tolerant and less judgmental. However, the study-abroad experience does not always produce more positive views of other cultures. Learning through observation and participation is often by trial and error and may have adverse consequences, thus inhibiting potentially positive interactions (Bochner, 1982; Hull, 1978). In addition, Bochner and Furnham (1986, p. 39) noted:

They (the idealists) take it for granted that cross-cultural contact, particularly among young people, creates mutual understanding. . . . The evidence . . . indicates that the connection between inter-group contact and inter-group attitudes is very complex such that contact may either increase or reduce mutual tolerance and understanding, depending on a very large matrix of interaction variables.

Based on this information, consideration should be given to the likelihood that results of this study could aid in the planning of out-of-class experiences to achieve optimal benefits.

Satisfaction with academic aspects of study abroad is generally higher than it is with the non-academic, social aspects of study-abroad experiences (Hull, 1978; Klineberg & Hull, 1979). This observation also offers reason to study the out-of class experiences of students who study abroad.

Most studies of intercultural experiences have focused on attitudes and adjustments of foreign students in the United States (Abe & Wiseman; 1983; Flack, 1976). The literature goes back as far as 1925, suggesting that international students on United States campuses provided cultural enrichment to American students (Wheeler,

King, & Davidson, 1925) and most programs have sought to achieve similar goals. Leonard (1964) reported that programs were generally designed to develop personal values and to improve intercultural understanding. Although Americans demonstrate a continuous interest in learning of the effects that studying in the United States has on international students, there has been a dearth of literature studying effects of international study on U.S. students studying abroad (Laubscher, 1994; Sharma & Jung, 1986).

It is at this point that the philosophy of the Saint Mary's Ireland Program becomes critical to the rationale for this study. In 1987, Ellen Bussing, then director of the Ireland Program at Saint Mary's College, wrote:

The whole concept of foreign study at Saint Mary's is based on the development of persons. Most people who have contact with a student who spends a semester or a year abroad are struck by the personal growth that takes place during the foreign experience. (personal communication, February 7, 1987)

She went on to write that "returning students contribute to the college community a diversity that enriches the experience of all students" (personal communication, February 7, 1987). Much of the study-abroad experience is based on out-of-class activities.

Each year students are asked to complete an informal questionnaire evaluating their experiences while studying in Maynooth. Participants describe course work in Ireland compared to course work in the United States, and they note specific professors whom they judge to be of merit. Consistently and more frequently, however, they refer to out-of-class experiences as having the greatest influence during their year in Ireland. These experiences appear to help students learn about the Irish culture and to

influence their attitudes toward other cultures.

The following comments appeared as responses to questionnaires distributed to returning Saint Mary's College Ireland Program students: "Visiting my Irish roommate's house for the weekend was awesome. His mother fed us non-stop and we got to participate in all of the family activities" (Notre Dame, junior, 1993). "Evenings in the pubs were a regular affair. Whether I nursed a Guinness or sipped tea, the music and continuous conversation changed my attitude toward life" (Saint Mary's College, sophomore, 1996). "After interacting with the Irish for two terms, I feel so much more at peace about everything. Life doesn't feel so pressured" (Saint Mary's College, sophomore, 1994). "The travelling was the best. We traveled all over Ireland and throughout Europe. I'll never look at the world in the same way or judge people the same" (Saint Mary's College, sophomore, 1997). Although descriptive, these comments, representative of many more, are vague and nonspecific.

I believe that in order to improve available out-of-class activities through the Saint Mary's Ireland Program, information that is more specific must be obtained. What do you mean by awesome? How does life feel less pressured, and what does that tell you about the Irish culture? What does it mean to never look at the world or judge people in the same way?

Sell (1983) observed that pre- and post-measurement will not suffice in analyzing the impact of foreign experiences. She recommended that in future studies researchers include a larger range of contributing factors. This qualitative study looks for contributing factors as well as clearly defined, specific answers to questions, and it provides information that may be beneficial to other study-abroad programs.



## **Conceptual Framework**

A study of ways in which students abroad learn about their host culture through out-of-class experiences can be executed following a number of models. For the purposes of this study, I have selected Spradley's theory proposing that students studying abroad function as ethnographers, gathering empirical evidence about their host culture (Spradley, 1980). More specifically, the study employs Spradley's means-end domain of semantic relationships. This theory was chosen because of its relevance to the experiences of the students who have studied in the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program.

The ethnographic discovery model provides the ethnographer with basic empirical evidence. Burnett (1974) contended that learning another culture, in the way that students who study abroad do, is analogous to ethnographic research. Burnett proposed that through analyzing the process that an ethnographer uses to learn a second culture, one could gain insight into how an adult is acculturated into a new culture. Spradley (1980) concurred, suggesting that each student studying abroad is an ethnographer. The ethnographer acts as both observer and participant. Thus, the student has the opportunity to acquire empirical evidence that teaches him about the host culture.

Spradley (1979) described enculturation as the natural process of learning a culture. The process begins with learning about the culture and concludes with internalizing a belief. A student studying abroad is generally at the stage of learning about a culture as he or she enters the host country. Study-abroad programs often foster further learning about a culture and move on to encourage an understanding of that culture, the end product of effective enculturation. This study examines students'

experiences at the level of gaining knowledge and moving toward the level of understanding.

According to Spradley, there are semantic relationships that occur in all human cultures that are useful in analyzing cultural domains. The two semantic relationships that Spradley recommends for beginning cultural domain analysis are strict inclusion (X is a kind of Y; a spaniel is a kind of dog) and means-end (Spradley, 1979). The means-end relationship is characterized by the formula: X is a way to do Y; travel is a way to learn about a culture.

This study employed the means-end domain of semantic relationships as a way to explore the out-of-class experiences of students who studied in the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program. Spradley states that out of class, the student, functioning as an ethnographer, learns of culture through different means. He specifically describes the student as the participant observer involved in ethnographic fieldwork (Spradley, 1980). For example, the student attends the theatre as a participant observer. She learns of the culture by participating in and observing the activity (theatre attendance). Going to the theatre (X) becomes a way to learn about the culture (Y). Not only does the student learn about culture as a participant observer, but she also may learn about culture as an interacting sojourner and a traveler (Laubscher, 1994).

Laubscher (1994) employed Spradley's taxonomy to study the out-of-class experiences of 30 Pennsylvania State University students while studying abroad. Students reported how observation and direct interaction with their host culture enhanced their learning experience. They spoke of the importance of relationships in learning, and the importance of travel as a learning tool. The study recommended that

international programs build in experiential activities, develop appropriate pre-exchange orientation programs, prepare students for reflective observation, and force critical thinking.

A review of the Social Science Citation Index listed only Laubscher's work as citing Spradley in reference to the area of study abroad. Others who have cited Spradley's work have studied areas as diverse as classroom-based ethnography (Schmid, 1992), ethnographic questioning as an invitation for healing (Banister, 1996), issues of battered women (Humphreys, 1995), qualitative analysis of conflict times in organizational groups (Jehn, 1997), and social class differences in response to national curriculum mathematics testing (Cooper & Dunne, 1998). Peer evaluation in kindergarten (Hatch, 1985), the decision to lose weight (Brink & Ferguson, 1998), nonverbal communication (Winkin, 1993), and qualitative analysis investigating educational issues (Stainback & Stainback, 1989) have also been examined using citations from Spradley.

### **Definition of Terms**

Terms used in this study are defined as follows.

**Associative strength**: Strength of the association in memory between an attitude object and its evaluation (Baron & Byrne, 1994).

**Attitude accessibility**: Ease with which specific attitudes can be recalled from memory and brought into consciousness, where they can influence behavior (Fazio, 1989).

**Balance theory**: People prefer to hold consistent beliefs with those they like and

may change attitudes to achieve this (Heider, 1983).

**Classical conditioning**: Learning based on association (Pavlov, 1927).

**Cognitive dissonance**: Two or more cognitive elements are in psychologically inconsistent relations (Festinger, 1957).

**Culture**: Acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behavior; behavior patterns associated with particular groups of people and customs (Spradley, 1979).

**Cross-cultural training**: Formal efforts to prepare professionals to work in cultures other than their own with individuals from different backgrounds (Ptak, Cooper, & Brislin, 1995).

**Descriptive validity**: Factual accuracy of account; foundation upon which qualitative research is built; reportage (Geertz, 1973; Maxwell, 1992; Runciman, 1983).

**Directed travel**: Objective, focused travel (Laubscher, 1994).

**Domain**: Symbolic category that includes other categories (Spradley, 1979).

**Ethnographer**: One who observes behavior, inquires about meaning, discovers meaning (Spradley, 1980).

**Focus group**: Group interviews; organized group discussion about specific topics (Beck, Trombetta, & Share, 1986; Byers & Wilcox, 1988; Krueger, 1986; Morgan, 1988).

**Interpretive validity**: What objects, behaviors, and events mean to people; central to interpretive research (Bohman, 1991; Headland, Pike, & Harris, 1990).

**Observational learning**: Learning by watching, either directly or indirectly

(Bandura, 1977).

Operant conditioning: Learning based on performing actions that yield positive results (Skinner, 1938).

Participant observation: Ethnographic procedure; involves observation of activities and participation in them; a way of learning about another culture, a category in the taxonomy of out-of class learning activities (Laubscher, 1994; Spradley, 1980).

Phatic communication: Communication that is social, designed to open the channels of communication (DeVito, 1998).

Semantic relationship: Linking of two terms (Spradley, 1979).

Serendipitous travel: Travel without specific objective (Laubscher, 1994).

Sojourn effects: Results of travel (Laubscher, 1994).

Sojourner interaction: Personal interaction as a way of learning about another culture (Laubscher, 1994).

Stereotypes: Beliefs about the characteristics of a group of people; rigid and set types of image (Coelho, 1962; Triandis & Vassilou, 1967).

World-mindedness: Tendency toward being democratic, tolerant, social-minded, and liberal; less authoritarian (Carlson & Widaman; 1988; Lentz, 1950; McCabe, 1994; Smith, 1955).

### **Limitations of Study**

The interview process brings limitations to the study. The interviewer may impose values. Participants in the interview sessions may not represent the culture being studied. Results of the interview are highly dependent on the skills of the researcher.

Internal generalizability can be a problem in the interview process. The researcher is only in contact with the interviewee for a short time and must draw inferences that extend to the actions and attitudes of the interviewee in other parts of his or her life. This can lead to false inferences (Dexter, 1970). In this study, external generalizability was a concern because subjects are homogeneous in their demographic and psychographic profiles. This issue is further addressed in a discussion of methodology in Chapter 4.

### **Delimitations of Study**

Subjects in this study were restricted to the Saint Mary's College and University of Notre Dame students who studied in the Saint Mary's Ireland Program at the Northern University of Ireland, Maynooth, Ireland, during the 1998-1999 academic year.

### **Outline of Dissertation**

Chapter 1 has dealt with the background, the purpose, rationale, and conceptual framework for this study, questions to be answered, definitions of terms, and limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter 2 is a review of related literature.

Chapter 3 is a description of the orientation to the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology of the research, including a description of the research design, population, and data collection and analysis.

Chapter 5 reports the findings (results) of the focus group discussions and the interviews, according to categories of orientation, observation, interaction, travel, and

sojourn effects on attitudes toward other cultures.

Chapter 6 provides a summary of the problem, purpose, and methodology of the study, discusses conclusions in relation to the literature review, and offers recommendations.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

The following literature review covers the relevant research on ways in which students learn about other cultures while studying abroad and the effects that study abroad may have on attitudes toward cultures other than one's own. Information is organized according to topics. First, the three roles that students assume when studying culture abroad are reviewed. They include participant observer, interacting sojourner, and traveler. Because change of attitudes toward other cultures is a frequent outcome of the study-abroad experience, change of attitude is addressed within each of the areas. The fourth section reviews the effects that sojourn has on attitudes. Finally, this literature review examines the process of social learning specifically related to attitude change and the potential for subsequent changes in behavior.

#### **Participant Observation**

Participant observation is a means of learning about another culture and is thus one of the categories that emerges in a taxonomy of out-of-class learning experiences. Spradley (1980) stated that the student studying abroad is an ethnographer, both an observer and a participant. Participant observation can take place through contacts, such



as intercultural living conditions. It may also involve such experiences as spontaneous and organized extracurricular activities (Laubscher, 1994).

In 1970, Basu and Ames found that contact before interaction with members of another culture was not statistically related to formation of positive attitudes. However, after-arrival contact was related to formation of positive attitudes. Data for their study were gathered from 562 Indian students enrolled in colleges in the Los Angeles area. Questionnaires were employed and interviews were conducted. Indian students' contact with Americans after their arrival related positively to the formation of positive attitudes. It was also associated with other factors such as the formation of new reference groups, supportive social relations, and a reduction of unpleasant experiences.

Churchill (1958) questioned 24 participants from Antioch College's European programs when they returned to the United States. She identified four factors that influenced degree of involvement in a host culture: personality of the participant, motives for going abroad, the role of traveler, student, or worker that the participant assumed, and finally the living situation while abroad.

Living arrangements that provide inclusion of the host culture provide opportunity for participant observation. Carlson and colleagues (1990) addressed this issue when they reported on the Study Abroad Evaluation Project that was launched in 1982. This comprehensive research project proposed to document and give guidance to the role of study abroad. The study acknowledged the importance of integrating Americans into a host culture through living arrangements and reported that the more contact American students had with members of their host country, the more they learned and the greater

their satisfaction. Five sojourn variables were entered into regression analysis. The variables were academic growth, language growth, academic style, travel, and where the student lived while abroad (Carlson et al., 1990). The variable "where the student lived while abroad" accounted for 7% of variance, and was the only statistically significant variable. Living in dormitories contributed significantly to the sojourner's integration into the culture.

Salter and Teger (1975) suggested that two variables--(1) types of personal contacts experienced and (2) enjoyment of the overall program--produce attitude change in students who study abroad. They posited a theory of generalization of effect, contending that both variables are associated with attitude change. A positive overall or halo effect, however, will also induce positive attitude change.

Hofman and Zak (1969) studied the relationship between closeness of contact with host nationals and favorable attitude change in 90 Canadian and U.S. Jewish students (ages 14-18) who spent a summer at a camp in Kfar Hayarok, Israel. The Americans joined their Israeli counterparts in afternoon and evening activities and in doing farm chores. High and low contact groups were identified. Attitude changes were compared on nine subscales. Attitude toward Jewishness was subdivided into interest, closeness, interdependence, solidarity, and centrality. Attitude toward Israel included help, interdependence, immigration, and Hebrew issues. The high contact group moved significantly toward attitudes that are more favorable on all nine issues. The low contact group became less favorable toward three issues in the attitude toward Jewishness scale (interest, closeness, and centrality) and exhibited no change in the others.

In 1981, Brislin found that contact is more likely to have positive effects if there are many opportunities for contact. Selltiz and Cook (1962) observed that sojourners living in small communities had greater opportunity for intergroup action. The smaller community tended to provide a slower pace of life. Students were more noticed and thus included. They were more likely to become involved in activities such as campus clubs.

Stephan and Stephan (1992) examined the contacts of 86 White American college students who were participating in a semester-abroad program. Students visited Morocco for a period of 4 days. Between 1 and 2 days after their Moroccan visit, respondents completed a questionnaire. Contact with Moroccans was associated with decreased anxiety when it took place in non-threatening contexts and provided subjects with insight into the Moroccan situations in which the respondents were in control or at ease. Beneficial contact also appeared to be at a level of moderate intimacy and involved Moroccans of equal status. Researchers concluded that intercultural programs would do well to promote contact in non-threatening situations that provide insights into other cultures.

In another study, Chang (1973) distributed a questionnaire using purposive sampling to 250 Chinese students in the United States. He reported that Chinese attitudes toward people in the United States were positively affected by contact, but negatively affected by authoritarianism.

### **Sojourner Interaction**

**Personal interaction with members of the host culture is the second category of the three ways in which students abroad learn about cultural differences. As interacting**

sojourners, students experience casual and intimate personal relationships. Carlson and his colleagues (1990) found that “the most important medium for personal experience in the host country was conversation with host nationals” (p. 11). Studying abroad has the potential for reducing stereotypes about individuals in the host country. This reduction of stereotyping may result in part from the student developing interpersonal relationships with members of the host country (Perlmutter, 1960).

Kelman (1962, 1965, 1970, 1974, 1975) analyzed the effects of activities on attitude change. He posited four variables that could affect the development of favorable attitudes toward a host country and its people. They were: the treatment the visitor receives from the host, genuine contact with nationals, involvement in various aspects of life, and the extent to which experience is positive and rewarding. He concluded: “The exchange experience is most likely to produce favorable attitudes if it provides new information about the host country in the context of a positive interaction with some of its people” (1975, p. 213).

Many researchers consider positive social interaction with host nationals as a necessary condition for sojourner adjustment (Arensberg & Niehoff, 1971; Brein & David, 1971; Hull, 1978; Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Oberg, 1960; Selltiz, Christ, Havee, & Cook, 1963; Sewell & Davidsen, 1961). In acknowledging the importance of social interaction, researchers report that restricting social interaction with host nationals to superficial encounters is counterproductive in that it can inhibit learning language, customs, and values of the new culture (Arensberg & Niehoff, 1971; Church, 1982; Garraty & Adams, 1959; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1966; Kang, 1971).

Selltiz and Cook (1962) examined students' views of their host countries when

they examined social interaction of students who studied in the United States. They employed before and after interviews; the first administered during the first few weeks of students' sojourn and the second toward the end of the first academic year. Results indicated that close friendships with members of a host country are associated with greater liking for the life in the host country, especially in the area of friendship and family patterns.

Many researchers support the association hypothesis, which states that more social interaction with host nationals is associated with more favorable attitudes toward the hosts (Basu & Ames, 1970; Chang, 1973; Hassan, 1962; Heath, 1970; Hofman & Zak, 1969; Ibrahim, 1971). Hull (1978) and Klineberg and Hull (1979) reported support for the association hypothesis and for the "modified culture contact" hypothesis that relates increased social interaction to better personal adjustment and sojourn satisfaction.

Greater world-mindedness appears to be an outcome of interaction with members of other cultures. Gleason (1970) found that students who had experienced three or more moves overseas gave the most positive world-minded responses when compared to students who reported one or more moves. He observed that students who interact with international students might show a more positive attitude toward other cultures.

Sharma and Jung (1986) administered a questionnaire to students from six major universities within a 500-mile radius of Carbondale, Illinois. Students had to have been on campus for more than five semesters. Results indicated that a higher interaction level produced a more positive attitude to the postulated outcomes of intercultural interaction. These included (1) development of a cosmopolitan world outlook, (2) acceptance of cultural pluralism, and (3) world-mindedness. They concluded that

interaction between student cultures does facilitate an international outlook.

### **Travel**

Students studying abroad also learn about their host culture through the experience of travel. In a study of American students in Europe, Carlson et al. (1990) noted that one of the more valuable activities that students engage in while studying abroad is travel. Carlson and colleagues (1990) stressed the importance of facilitating and encouraging periods of free travel as an important contribution to international education. Travel may be described as directed or serendipitous (Laubscher, 1994). Directed travel is objective and focused, whereas serendipitous travel has no specific purpose.

Churchill (1958) in the Antioch College study (referenced under the section “Participant Observation “ in this literature review) identified the role of traveler as a factor that influences the degree of involvement in a host culture. In a study that addressed student travel and personal development, Gmelch (1997), however, stated that although directors of study-abroad programs know the importance of travel, a search of the literature for affirmation of this leads to few sources. Gmelch examined the behavior and daily routines of college students traveling throughout Europe. He used journals, travel logs, and researchers' observations. He concluded that much of the benefit of student travel comes from the need to make decisions and deal with demands of daily life in unfamiliar settings.

Marion (1980) studied attitude changes in 90 juniors who participated in the 1972-1973 University of Colorado study-abroad programs in Europe. Marion analyzed

these data using analysis of covariance and partial correlation to study the relationship between students' characteristics, their activities abroad, and attitude change. Those who traveled to more countries became significantly less dogmatic, less conservative, and more favorable toward the host countries. Individuals with the most host friends became less conservative, more favorable toward the host country, and less favorable toward the United States.

Hansel (1988) also attempted to understand the educational impact of foreign study. She reviewed research on experiential learning to find answers. Like experiential learning, student travel is motivated by the need to know. It offers intrinsic rewards and is generally not something done to complete a requirement. In both cross-cultural travel and experiential learning, students apply the information they learn in daily life. Students use senses to gain knowledge rather than relying solely on language. Learning in both settings is holistic.

### **Sojourn Effects on Attitudes Toward Other Cultures**

It has long been established that international education leads to attitude changes, such as the reduction of cultural stereotyping and ethnocentrism (Adams, 1948). Numerous researchers have written that study-abroad programs lead to an increased level of international understanding and concern (Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Coelho, 1962; Deutch, 1970; Drews & Meyer, 1996; Kauffman et al., 1992; McCabe, 1994; Stephenson, 1999). At its 1986 annual meeting, the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs established international understanding as a goal of foreign study (Carlson & Widaman, 1988).

Coelho (1962) noted that international understanding is a recurring phrase in statements of purpose for foreign study, but it is rarely clearly defined. It refers to an increase in students' understanding of international relations, cultivation of world-mindedness, disposition in favor of world peace, and improvement of relations between people as a consequence of increased contact between them (Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Coelho, 1962; McCabe, 1994). Kelman (1962) observed that through firsthand contact with people of a host country, visitors acquire new information that can destroy negative stereotypes.

Abrams (1960) wrote of the importance of international understanding when he examined objectives of cross-cultural education. He summarized the following sets of value-concerns: (1) the intellectual and professional development of the student in his or her field of study; (2) the general education of the student; and (3) the furthering of international understanding. The third of these goals has gained increasing prominence.

Pfnister (1972) studied international understanding when he examined attitude changes of 120 Goshen College students who participated in a 14-week study-service team. Students studied in Latin America, West Germany, and South Korea. An opinion and attitude inventory was administered and interviews were conducted before, during, and after the students' 14 weeks abroad. The greatest change occurred in "awareness of different philosophies, culture, and ways of life" (p. 22). The second greatest change occurred in the "tolerance and understanding of other peoples and their views" (p. 23).

Carlson and Widaman (1988) investigated changes in attitudes and perceptions toward international understanding by students who had studied for a year at a



European university. They used a quasi-experimental design and sent a questionnaire to 450 students who studied abroad and 800 students who remained on the home campus. Results of the study indicated increased levels of international political concern, cross-cultural interest, and cultural cosmopolitanism for the study-abroad group. The researchers concluded: "Study abroad can be an important contributor to international awareness and potentially contribute to attitudes and behaviors that help foster international understanding" (p. 15).

Kagitcibasi (1978) studied sojourn effects (the outcomes of a travel or study-abroad experience) on Turkish students studying in the United States. The students spent 1 year in the United States as part of an American Field Service exchange. Questionnaires about their experience were used before and immediately after the experience and then 2 years later. Outcomes were compared with those from students of similar demographics living in Turkey at the same time. Results indicated that those who studied abroad became more world-minded in thinking, and more accepting and tolerant of people from other cultures.

Abrams (1979) surveyed 330 former Antioch students who had studied abroad during the 1960s: 78% reported they were significantly involved in another culture, and almost 92% believed intercultural experiences challenged their perceptions of themselves as Americans. Former program participants were more involved in international activities and paid more attention to world affairs than did individuals who had not studied abroad.

Klineberg (1981) observed that individuals are not likely to become successful mediators of their culture and other cultures unless they develop positive attitudes

toward another culture. According to Tims and Miller (1986), the development of positive attitudes toward other countries is directly related to shared personal interests, such as those that students develop through study abroad.

Drews and Meyer (1996) examined the effects of a foreign study program on conceptualizations of national groups. A free association task, a semantic differential task, and a combination of nationalities task were given to 36 Juanita College students who studied abroad and 35 Juanita College students who had not studied abroad. Results indicated those who studied abroad were more likely to conceptualize other national groups in terms of individual personal characteristics rather than physiography or politics. The data also suggested that the tendency to personalize extended to cultures beyond the host country.

Finally, attitude changes may be more likely to occur when the study abroad experience is enjoyable (Salter & Teger, 1975). Attempting to examine attitude change, Vornberg and Grant (1976) questioned 44 secondary students studying in Brazil. Four attitudes were measured at the beginning and end of the school year. Students who expressed greater enjoyment of their experience developed more positive attitudes toward the host culture. The authors noted that "enjoyment of the overseas experience is related to attitude change toward both the host nationals and toward integration" (p. 607).

### **Social Learning Theories: Attitudes and Behavior**

Previous sections of this literature review indicated that attitude changes are often outcomes of the study-abroad experience. Therefore, it is important to review

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individual is rewarded for what others consider the right response. Following rewards for this correct response, the individual continues to state the “right” views.

Continuing with the example used to explain classical conditioning, when operant conditioning is being employed the child responds negatively to members of a minority and is rewarded by praise, assumes this is the right response, and continues to produce such comments.

Modeling (observational learning) refers to learning by observation. According to the concept of observational learning, people acquire attitudes by watching others. Individuals develop views by observing words or behaviors of others in the absence of direct reward. The observation may be direct or indirect (Bandura, 1977). For example, the child observes the parents’ negative response to members of a minority group (direct) or the child observes a video of an individual’s negative response to members of a minority group (indirect) and models that behavior.

Generally, the more times we are exposed to a stimulus, the more favorable our reaction to it becomes. Zajonc (1968) first noted this “mere-exposure effect” when he repeatedly presented various stimuli to subjects and measured their liking for the presented materials. The more often the materials were viewed, the more favorably they were evaluated. Additional studies have been conducted affirming and extending Zajonc’s results (Mita, Dermer, & Knight, 1977; Wilson, 1979). Other researchers (Grush, 1980; Moreland & Zajonc, 1982) have related the mere-exposure effect to real-life situations. Grush (1980) studied politics and determined that candidates who have the greatest media exposure generally emerge victorious. Moreland and Zajonc (1982) tested the effect of repeated exposure on liking. Subjects were asked to make several

ratings including how much they liked individuals they had seen in photographs.

Results indicated that the more the stranger in the photograph had been seen, the better he was liked.

Attitudes do not always lead to behavior, but are related to behavior. Both attitudes and behavior are affected by the social world in which individuals live. The first study to examine the relationship between behavior and expressed attitudes was conducted by LaPiere (1934). LaPiere visited hotels and restaurants with a Chinese couple as they traveled through the United States. They were denied service only once. Following their travels, LaPiere mailed questionnaires to the proprietors of hotels and restaurants that he and the couple had visited. Over 90% of the respondents indicated they would not accommodate Chinese people. Results clearly exposed a discrepancy between expressed attitude and behavior.

Sometimes, however, attitudes do lead to behavior consistent with them. The literature suggests there are a number of characteristics of attitudes that make them more likely to produce behavior change. Attitudes that are strong, specific, and personally relevant are most related to behavior (Krosnick, 1989).

Attitudes achieved through direct experience are stronger than those acquired through indirect experience and thus better predictors of behavior change (Snyder & Kendzierski, 1982). Individuals who form attitudes through direct experiences with an object respond more quickly when asked to express their reaction to that object than those who had indirect experience. A quick response is usually interpreted as a sign of attitude strength (Fazio, Chen, McDonel, & Sherman, 1982). Attitudes coming from direct experiences are also held more confidently and are more resistant to change than

those formed through indirect exposure (Wright, 1966; Wu & Shaffer, 1987).

Specific attitudes predict overt actions better than general or global attitudes (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975; Kantola, Syme, & Campbell, 1982). Newcomb, Rabow, and Hernandez (1992) asked students from the United States, Great Britain, and Sweden to express general and specific attitudes about nuclear war and to report their activist behaviors (participating in protest rallies) in relation to these attitudes. Specific attitudes were better predictors of activist behaviors than were general attitudes. Attitudes have affective and cognitive components. When the components are inconsistent, the one that is more closely related to the specific form of behavior is the best predictor of behavior (Millar & Tesser, 1989).

The personal relevance of, or vested interest in, the attitude is a good predictor of subsequent behavior change. Sivacek and Crano (1982) exemplified this when they contacted students and solicited their help in campaigning against a law that would raise the legal drinking age from 18 to 20 years of age. Most students opposed the change, but those who agreed to campaign for the change were primarily the younger students affected by such a change. Changes in attitude do not necessarily produce shifts in behavior, yet there is evidence of a moderate relationship between attitude and behavior if the attitude is of social significance and the context is out of the laboratory (Eagley & Himmelfarb, 1978). Foreign study meets these criteria and could therefore be expected to produce behavior change.

Self-awareness also increases attitude strength and is therefore a good predictor of behavior change. Hutton and Baumeister (1992) reported heightened self-awareness increased consistency between attitudes and overt behavior. The reasons they gave for

this were that self-awareness grants easier access to attitudes, thus bringing the attitudes to mind and affording opportunity to use them; and that self-awareness brings attitudes more into focus, enabling them to guide actions.

The importance of self-awareness as a link between attitude and behavior is further explicated in Fazio's Attitude Accessibility Model (1989). According to this model, accessibility to attitudes provides an important role in the transition from attitude to behavior.

The model explains the process in this way: Attitudes are activated or retrieved from memory. Once activated, the attitudes influence the perception of the attitude object and the situation in which the object is encountered. The perceptions, in turn, influence subsequent behavior toward the attitude object. Awareness of attitudes allows easier access to attitudes and is a critical link between attitude and behavior.

Two motivation theories also relate to attitude change and the relationship between attitude and behavior. The first of these is the cognitive dissonance theory. Cognitive dissonance results when there is a discrepancy among two or more of a person's beliefs or a person's beliefs and overt behavior. The dissonance is an unpleasant state and people seek to reduce it (Festinger, 1957). Several possibilities are available for reduction of dissonance. Individuals can change attitudes to be consistent with behaviors. They can change their cognition about their behavior or they can acquire new information that is consistent with their attitudes or beliefs. Finally, minimizing the importance of the inconsistency (Baron & Byrne, 1994) may reduce cognitive dissonance.

Dickerson, Thibodeau, Aronson, and Miller (1992) conducted a study that

illustrated the benefits of dissonance induction in changing social attitudes and behavior. Researchers approached female swimmers on a college campus. One group was asked to sign a flyer supporting water conservation. Another group was asked to answer questions about their showering habits. A third group was asked to do both of the above, and a control group was not asked to perform either task. The first three groups had a shorter showering time than did the control group. The group that was asked to perform both tasks took shorter showers than the other groups.

The second motivation theory that may connect attitude change to behavior is the Balance Theory developed by Heider (1958). This theory proposes that people prefer to hold consistent beliefs and try to avoid incompatible beliefs with their cohorts. They tend to like people with similar attitudes, and they want people they like to have attitudes and beliefs similar to their own. Those who want stable, balanced relationships may change attitudes so that they can agree with each other and thus avoid unpleasant situations. This theory, as well as the cognitive dissonance theory, helps explain changes in attitude and subsequent behavior.

### **Summary**

The literature review supports the concepts of learning a culture through being a participant observer, an interacting sojourner, and a traveler. The literature demonstrates sojourn effects in changing the attitudes that students who study abroad have toward cultures other than their own. Finally, the literature review discusses social learning theories related to attitude and behavior change.



## CHAPTER 3

### ORIENTATION

#### Introduction

Before discussing the methodology of this study, it is important to identify orientation as an integral part of study-abroad programs and to describe the orientation process in which all students who study on the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program participate.

A number of researchers report the value of formal orientation programs for study-abroad programs (Klineberg, 1981; Torre, 1963). Jacobson (1963), in his definition of the field of sojourn research, suggests that an important component of pre-departure preparation is an attempt to educate the potential traveler about the extent to which he should learn from his travel. Seltiz and colleagues (1963) found that participation in a 6-week orientation had a marked effect on the amount of social interaction of Asians in the United States.

Much of the literature on orientation programs examines the benefits of cross-cultural training programs and the outcomes of experiential versus lecture methods (Brislin, Landis, & Brandt, 1983; Gannon & Poon, 1997; Ptak, et al., 1995; Pruegger & Rogers, 1994). The purpose of this study is not to address orientation as a cross-cultural training program, but to report ways in which students perceive the orientation

program as encouragement to participate in out-of-class activities while studying abroad. This is an appropriate area of focus in that orientation programs generally relate to the overall social-interactional experience of the student (Deutch, 1970). Examining the effects of the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program orientation on involvement in out-of-class activities requires a description of that program.

Orientation to a study-abroad program is generally accepted as a continuing process, rather than a one-time event (Fantini, 1985). This is true at Saint Mary's College. Saint Mary's College provides an extensive orientation program for students planning to study on the Ireland Program. Orientation begins during the week of freshman orientation on the Saint Mary's campus and concludes in Ireland over a year later.

### **Orientation on Campus**

In a 45-minute informational session during freshmen orientation week, the counselor of the Ireland Program at Saint Mary's and students who studied in Ireland the previous year inform first-year students and their parents about the opportunity to study at the National University of Ireland in Maynooth. Information about curriculum, housing, requirements for admission to the Program, and fees is shared. At the same time, a schedule of information meetings to be held in the fall semester is distributed.

There are four information meetings during the autumn term, scheduled during the first week of each month. All meetings include presentations by both the counselor of the program and a panel of students who studied in Ireland during the immediate past year. The focus of the September meeting is general. Students speak of their

experiences while studying abroad for a year. The October meeting explains the Irish curriculum and offers suggestions for planning course work before, during, and after the Ireland experience. Applications to the program are distributed at this and each subsequent meeting. The application includes an application form, a personal essay addressing motivation to study in Ireland, a physician's statement, and three recommendation forms (one from the Dean of Student Affairs, one personal, and one from a faculty member). Extracurricular activities at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, are discussed at the November meeting. Students are told how to learn of opportunities, how to register, and what they might expect in different clubs and sports. In December, those who studied in Maynooth tell of travel experiences throughout Ireland and Europe.

Applications for the Ireland Program are due December 1. Transcripts are reviewed in January. Personal interviews, conducted jointly by the counselor of the program, the director of the first-year students, and a student who studied in the Ireland Program the previous year, are held in February, and acceptances are announced March 1.

The four-session spring semester orientation begins after students receive acceptance to the program. During the first meeting, passport photographs are taken and passport applications distributed. Mailing addresses, telephone numbers, and E-mail addresses of all applicants are exchanged. The Director of Residence Life explains to students how, while they are in Maynooth, they are to arrange for housing for their junior-year housing at Saint Mary's. Students read Irish newspapers and follow up by talking about exchange rates, political issues, theatre in Ireland, weather

conditions, real estate, and employment opportunities.

Each applicant is assigned a contact student currently studying in the Saint Mary's Ireland Program in Maynooth. The student in Ireland will begin E-mail communication with the newly accepted student who will study in the program the following year. Not only does the contact student provide information to the prospective student, but also leaves supplies (such as bedding) for the student in the apartments in Maynooth.

At the second spring orientation meeting, students receive their 27-page Ireland Program handbook, containing information necessary for their successful experience in Maynooth. The handbook includes such items as an introduction to the program, information about the National University of Ireland, housing arrangements and regulations, health care, and banking. There are suggestions for packing and travel. An academic calendar is included.

At this second meeting a number of curricular issues are addressed. Students receive a schedule of classes offered in Maynooth and sign up for an appointment with the counselor of the Ireland Program at Saint Mary's to schedule classes for their year of study abroad. They are given an academic advising form and instructed to meet with an academic advisor in the department of their major at Saint Mary's. This form indicates courses to be taken upon the student's return to Saint Mary's. The academic advisor is to complete the form after conferring with the student.

A professor in the English department who works with the Saint Mary's College Writing Program takes a portion of time during the second orientation meeting. He discusses with the students the criteria for successful writing in classes in Ireland.

Along with suggestions, he provides them with print copy examples of acceptable papers and reminders of well-organized and substantive writing.

The third spring orientation meeting focuses on cross-cultural issues. Materials are distributed and students participate in activities designed to address the experience of being a minority in another culture and adjusting to that culture. They spend time socializing with each other and are given forms to state preferences for apartment mates.

Before the fourth and final spring orientation session, each student meets individually with the counselor of the Ireland Program. At that meeting, the completed academic advising form and preference for apartment mates is submitted. In collaboration with the counselor, the class schedule for Maynooth is prepared. During this meeting students receive an explanation of the Irish grading system, as well as the conversion of grades from the Irish system to the Saint Mary's College grading scale.

The travel agent arranging group rates for students attends the final spring orientation meeting of the year. He distributes materials and explains travel arrangements from the United States to Ireland. Students who studied in Maynooth the previous year attend this meeting to offer packing tips to the group readying to study abroad. A summer reading list is provided and students are told they will be receiving further information throughout the summer.

### **Orientation During the Summer**

During the summer, the orientation process continues via post and E-mail. Students receive a welcome from the counselor for the Ireland Program in Maynooth.

They receive a letter from the Allied Irish Bank in Maynooth containing information about their already-established bank account at the Allied Irish Bank. The counselor of the program at Saint Mary's informs them of final housing arrangements and sends them housing contracts to sign. In addition, the counselor sends frequent items of interest regarding Ireland and upcoming travel.

### **Orientation in Ireland**

Orientation continues and culminates in Ireland. Toward the end of September, the counselor of the Ireland Program at Saint Mary's accompanies the group to Ireland and co-directs a 10-day orientation with the counselor of the Saint Mary's Ireland Program at Maynooth. The counselor of the Ireland Program in Maynooth meets the group at the Dublin airport and takes them to the apartments in which they will reside. After students receive their keys, they are free to rest, unpack, and explore the village. The following day students are encouraged to meet with apartment mates to establish house rules. They then all gather in the late afternoon for a tour of the campus and a formal dinner, provided by the program, at the Setana House, a gracious Georgian building dating from 1737.

Registration for classes takes place the next day. The counselor of the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program accompanies students throughout this process. Having chosen classes before their arrival, they are frequently asked to make adjustments in that schedule, based on new course options. After registering for classes, students are encouraged to visit the local Allied Irish Bank where accounts have been set up for each of them. Registration for classes continues on the next day. Library tours are available

and classes begin. The first Irish Culture class, taught by the Saint Mary's College counselor of the Ireland Program in Maynooth, meets. The Ireland Program counselor from Saint Mary's has scheduled office hours on this and subsequent days of her stay to meet with students as needs arise.

On the students' 6th day in Maynooth, they meet with the two counselors of the Ireland Program to attend a play at the Abbey theatre in Dublin. The next day, the group joins in a walking tour of Viking and Medieval Dublin. On the last day of orientation, students and the two counselors of the Ireland Program travel to County Wicklow to visit Glendalough. Glendalough has some of the oldest Christian buildings in Europe.

On the 10th day, the counselor from Saint Mary's returns to the States. From this point on, the Saint Mary's College Ireland counselor in Maynooth assumes primary responsibility for the students. She teaches the Irish Culture class, directs the four scheduled weekend trips, and is available to students during daily office hours.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to describe the out-of-class experiences of 21 students who studied in the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program in Maynooth, Ireland, during the 1998-1999 academic year. Specifically, the study examines (1) how the program orientation influenced students' desire to become involved in out-of-class activities, (2) how these experiences fostered students' learning of the Irish culture, and (3) how the experiences influenced students' attitudes toward cultures other than their own.

#### **Research Design**

This study employed descriptive qualitative research using focus groups, an interview style designed for small groups (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996), and a long interview, an instrument that captures how the respondent experiences the world (McCracken, 1988). The focus groups were used to collect data in developing the questions for the long interview. The long interviews are the focus of this study.

#### **Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is well suited to this topic. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe the purpose of qualitative study as accumulating sufficient knowledge to lead to understanding. This study employs a research design in which data collection and



analysis were simultaneous and continuous activities. In such a design, not all the specifics of the study can be outlined in advance. Berg (1989) states that qualitative research is concerned with “meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things” (p. 2). Qualitative methods assume no conclusions prior to study.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) identify five features of qualitative research:

1. The natural setting is the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument.
2. Qualitative research is descriptive and in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers.
3. Processes, as well as outcomes, are considered.
4. Data tend to be analyzed inductively rather than deductively.
5. Meanings, or participant perspectives, are of essential concern.

This study attends to each of these features.

### Rigor in Qualitative Research

Throughout history, people have gone about the pursuit of knowledge in various ways, using a variety of methods to acquire knowledge. Graziano and Rawlins (1993) list tenacity, intuition, authority, rationalism, empiricism, and science as the methods historically used in the pursuit of knowledge. “In the order listed, these approaches range from low to high demands on the adequacy of the information each is willing to accept and on the nature of the processing of that information” (p. 43). The most demanding in terms of adequacy of information and the nature of the processing of the information is science. Nevertheless, within science, “already at the high demand end

of the continuum" (p. 43), some methods are more demanding than others, but all are useful in the research repertoire. Graziano and Rawlins classify various methodologies according to levels of constraint, adding the dimensions of precision, structure, and control. Levels of constraint, in their view, range in order from low to high as follows:

1. Naturalistic observation
2. Case-study method
3. Correlational research
- 4 Differential research
5. Experimental research.

All are proper scientific methods and all can be effective when properly used. The use is determined by the nature of the question being asked and the precision of the existing knowledge about it; when it is a low-constraint question, then low constraint methods are appropriate. . . . Problems arise when researchers inappropriately mix constraint levels, such as when they try to interpret low-constraint data in highly precise, predictive, and/or generalized ways. (p. 45)

This is a low-constraint field study. The technique is feasible; under these conditions, there is no concern for developing inferences and concepts that can be generalized to another population, as would be the case with high-constraint research. The concept of representativeness (with its relationship to generalizability) is inappropriate, since the researcher has no control over the population sampled. The entire population of the 1997-1998 cohort is the group involved in the field study. Generalization would be risky since the population sample is not--nor could it have been--randomly selected (Burns & Grove, 1997).

In addition to scrupulous attention to validity and reliability, appropriate criteria

for evaluating the scientific rigor of qualitative research include: credibility, auditability, fittingness, and confirmability (LaBiondo-Wood & Haber, 1988).

**Credibility** refers to the truth of the findings as judged by participants and knowledgeable others; **auditability** is judged by the adequacy of the information provided the reader by the researcher, from raw data to analysis and interpretation of the findings. **Fittingness** refers to the everyday life of the participants: Is it described in enough detail so that others in the discipline can evaluate it for themselves? Lastly, **confirmability** reflects the implementation of the standards of credibility, auditability, and fittingness.

### Validity in Qualitative Research

Validity has been a key issue in debates about the legitimacy of qualitative research. Proponents of qualitative research deny the relevance of a quantitative paradigm for what they do (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In addition, they argue that qualitative researchers have their own model that best suits their research needs (Kirk & Miller, 1989). Wolcott (1990) stated that understanding is a more fundamental quality to qualitative research than is validity. In qualitative research, validity is a matter of whether the researcher sees and hears what she thinks she sees and hears (Kirk & Miller, 1989). Despite the differences in defining validity in quantitative and qualitative research, validity still must be addressed (Kirk & Miller, 1989; Maxwell, 1992; Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest, 1966).

In this study descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical validity (Maxwell, 1992) are addressed. Descriptive validity refers to the factual accuracy of the account (Maxwell, 1992), and is similar to the criterion of credibility described by LaBiondo-

Wood and Haber (1998). "Description is the foundation upon which qualitative research is built" (Wolcott, 1990, p. 27). Interpretive validity refers to the aspect of understanding data from the perspective of participants in the study (Bohman, 1991). It is a matter of inference from the words and actions of participants studied (Maxwell, 1992), and can be likened to fittingness and auditability. Theoretical validity addresses theoretical constructions that the researcher brings to the study (Maxwell, 1992), another way of looking at confirmability.

The enculturation model suggested by Spradley (1979) was used as the conceptual framework to study the out-of-class experiences of the students in the Ireland Program sponsored by Saint Mary's College. In both the focus groups and long interviews, I made conscious efforts to maintain an awareness of Spradley's conceptualization of the means of learning a culture through observation, interaction, and travel. The probes and follow-up questions that I asked during focus groups, as well as the long interviews, were designed not only to understand the out-of-class experiences from the students' perspectives, but also to gather possible discrepant information and alternative explanations for the experiences.

### **Development of the Interview Instrument**

#### **Focus Groups**

The focus group is compatible with the qualitative research paradigm and offers opportunity for direct contact with subjects (Vaughn et al., 1996). Focus groups are often used as the first step in research study and best used when conducting exploratory research (Brodigan, 1992; Hisrich & Peters, 1982; Vaughn et al., 1996). Merton (1987), recognized as the father of the focus group interview, explained that the focus group is

designed to serve two roles: (1) to provide further checks for investigating concrete experience and (2) to obtain responses to recurrent experience. Both purposes are relevant to this study. This study used focus groups as a precursor to further investigation. Specifically, information gained from the focus groups was used to formulate questions for the follow-up long interviews.

According to Bortree (1986), Bunchner (1982), and Goodman (1984), at least two focus groups allow a researcher to confirm group responses. Wells (1974) and Yoell (1974) recommend that groups have optimum numbers of 8 to 10 members, whereas Folch-Lyon and Trost (1981) recommend 6 to 12 people to a group. Based on these recommendations, this study used two focus groups.

Invitations were sent to each of the 17 students who studied in Ireland in the Saint Mary's College Program in Maynooth during the 1997-98 academic year. The invitation (see Appendix A) described the purpose of the study. It stated the date, time, and place of the meetings of the two focus groups and included a consent form. A reward of pizza and soft drinks was offered following the meeting of each focus group.

Fifteen of the 17 participants accepted invitations and signed consent forms. One student was unable to participate because she was studying on a semester-long internship out of state at the time. Another declined, stating that her schedule would not allow her to attend. Of the 15 students who accepted the invitation to participate, 6 attended a focus group on February 8, 1999, and 9 attended a focus group on February 10, 1999.

Time allotted for each focus group discussion was the recommended 1 1/2 to 2 hours (Vaughn et al., 1996). A social lounge easily accessible to all and located on the

**Saint Mary's campus was used for discussion. The setting was a comfortable yet professional and welcoming retreat from the workplace (Beck, et al., 1986).**

**A focus group protocol was followed throughout the two-hour sessions (Appendix B). Conversation began with the leader offering an introduction to the topic and stating the purpose of the focus group. Then definitions of terminology were presented. Terms included participant observer, interacting sojourner, traveler, serendipitous travel, and directed travel. These definitions were offered orally and also were presented in print to each member of the focus groups. Questioning and discussion began. Discussion was recorded on audiotapes.**

### **Data Analysis**

**Upon completion of the focus groups, audiotapes were transcribed verbatim. This assured that verbal interactions were accurately recorded. Analysis of information acquired from the focus groups was conducted by the margin coding method recommended by Bertrand, Brown, and Ward (1992). Margin coding requires a quick survey of main ideas. Themes are identified, and numbers and letters are used to identify these themes. Appropriate codes were logged next to comments. Extensive data analysis was not needed to meet the goals of these focus groups, as their purpose was solely to generate information to formulate questions for the interviews with the students studying in the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program during the 1998-1999 academic year.**

**There are approximately 4 hours of the taped focus group discussions. I was deliberate in observing and listening to the students. I tried to understand consciously**

the meaning of both verbal and nonverbal communications. I did this to understand systematically the out-of-class experiences from the students' perspectives. Data are available on request

According to Brenner (1985) the questionnaire is indispensable to the long interview. The questionnaire for this study (Appendix C) was based on information gained from the focus groups and from the literature review. It consisted of informal/conversational questions, opening non-directive questions (Spradley, 1970; Werner & Schoepfle, 1987), floating prompts (Churchill, 1973; Dohrenwend & Richardson, 1956), and planned prompts that included category, contrast, and recalling of incidents.

### **The Population**

The population for the interviews comprised the 23 Saint Mary's College and University of Notre Dame students who studied in the Saint Mary's Ireland Program during the 1998-1999 academic year. One of the students was traveling at the time of the interviews, and one taped interview was garbled beyond understanding. Therefore, 21 interviews were transcribed. Of the 21 students whose interviews were transcribed, all were White, 19 were female, and 2 were male. Twenty were college sophomores, and 1 was a college junior at the time of study abroad.

### **Data-Collection Procedure**

All 23 students studying in the 1998-99 Ireland Program received written invitations to participate in this study. The invitation explained the purpose of the study and a consent form was included (Appendix D). Twenty-two of the 23

accepted invitations. One student was unable to participate because she was traveling at the time of the interviews. The interviews were conducted on April 16, 17, and 18, 1999, in Maynooth, Ireland. One of the taped interviews was garbled; the final number of participants included in the study is 21.

Most of the data reported in sojourner research have been collected while the traveler is in the country of sojourn or shortly after arrival home (Jacobson, 1963). These interviews were conducted in the location of sojourn (Maynooth, Ireland) during the 6th month of a 7-month stay. Interviews took place in a comfortable lounge in Stoyte House, an 18<sup>th</sup>-century Georgian building on the campus that provides accommodation for visiting professors. The house was previously unvisited by interview respondents.

In exploratory research, interviews of 2 to 3 hours are common (McCracken, 1988). These interviews were approximately 1 1/2 hours in length. The interviews were recorded on audiotapes and transcribed verbatim. I listened for key terms, topic avoidance, and incomprehension (Briggs, 1986; Douglas, 1976; Salamone, 1977).

### **Data Analysis**

On completion of the interviews, audiotapes were transcribed verbatim. Deductive analysis was performed by observing, identifying themes, and stating interview theses (McCracken, 1988). I first identified categories that evolved from the literature review. These were used, along with information from focus groups, as a basis for the questionnaire used in the interviews. The categories included orientation, observation, interaction, travel, and attitudes toward cultures other than one's own. These categories were examined in terms of their relation to out-of-class activities.



There are approximately 31 hours of taped interviews. I was deliberate in observing and listening to the students. I tried to understand consciously the meaning of both verbal and nonverbal communications. This was done to understand, in a systematic way, the out-of-class experiences from the students' perspectives. The data are available on request.

Table 1 presents each category, its definition, experiences that relate to that category, and the outcomes of the experiences. Within each of these categories, I margin-coded for reported observed themes and then counted the number of students who referred to these recurrent themes. Finally, I developed theses from the information gathered.

Table 1: Summary of Experiences and Outcomes

<b>Category Definition</b>	<b>Experience</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Orientation-- St Mary's formal preparation for study abroad.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Communication with former Ireland Programmers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• verbal</li> <li>• nonverbal</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Communication with contact students</li> <li>3. Reading of material</li> </ol>	Desire to become involved in host culture outside of class
<b>Observation-- Means by which students learn about culture through observing</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participation in extracurricular activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clubs</li> <li>• sports</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Exposure to media</li> <li>3. Exposure to social norms</li> <li>4. Living with Irish</li> </ol>	<p>View of Irish as friendly, relaxed, hospitable, humorous</p> <p>View of Irish Society as liberal</p> <p>View of Irish Society as liberal</p> <p>Belief that intercultural living is beneficial to learning about the culture</p>
<b>Interaction-- Means by which students learn about culture through relationships</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Development of friendships</li> <li>2. Interaction with families</li> <li>3. Experiences with alcohol</li> </ol>	<p>View of Irish friend as loyal, valuing conversation, offering hospitality</p> <p>View of Irish families as close, hospitable</p> <p>Conflicting responses; healthy use or excessive use of alcohol</p>
<b>Travel-- Means by which students learn about culture through travel</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Four weekend trips throughout Ireland led by Irish counselor of the program (Directed--objective and focused)</li> <li>2. Independent travel by students (Serendipitous--travel without specific objectives)</li> </ol>	<p>Appreciation for academic value; organization; preparation to be a competent, independent traveler</p> <p>Appreciation for observations of culture, experiential learning, increase in self-confidence as a traveler</p> <p>Increased respect for other cultures</p>
<b>Attitudes toward cultures other than one's own--  Subsequent changes in attitudes resulting from out-of-class study- abroad experiences</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Functioning as observer, interactor, and traveler</li> </ol>	<p>Less judgmental, more open-minded attitudes</p> <p>Understanding of how it feels to be a minority</p> <p>Increased criticism and appreciation of America</p> <p>Anticipated behavior change in accordance with attitude change</p>

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS

#### **Focus Groups**

The purpose of the focus groups was to generate information that would help to design questions for the interviews with the students who studied in the Ireland Program in 1998-1999. Questions posed to students addressed three general areas that evolved from the literature review. They were (1) the ways in which orientation to the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program encouraged involvement in out-of-class activities, (2) the ways in which students learned of Irish culture as participant observers, interacting sojourners, and travelers, and (3) the effect of study abroad on attitudes toward other cultures.

Results of the focus group sessions are recorded in this section. According to Morgan (1988), "there are no hard and fast rules when it comes to reporting results of focus groups" (p. 69). Becker (1990) noted that most of the choices of how to present or write results of the focus group are made during the course of research. Guidelines for writing results of the focus group discussion come from the guidelines for conducting qualitative research. In this study, the discussion of the focus group follows a logical order of topics.

#### **Focus Group Participants**

**Focus groups were conducted with students who studied in the Ireland Program**

during the year 1997-1998. Seventeen students were enrolled in the program and all were invited to participate in this study. Of the 15 students who participated, 1 was a junior during her year of study abroad and the remaining 14 were sophomores. Six were students at the University of Notre Dame and 9 were Saint Mary's College students. All of the students were Catholic and White. Two were male. Applications to study in the Ireland Program that were completed in December 1996 provided information about the students' travel experiences outside of the United States prior to studying in Ireland and also their reasons for wanting to study abroad. All but 1 of the students had traveled outside of the United States before enrolling in the Saint Mary's Ireland Program.

Six students attended the first focus group meeting on February 8, 1999. Those six students (fictitious names assigned) were Megan, Brittany, Lisa, Karen, Nina, and Sean.

Megan was a University of Notre Dame sophomore, originally from the Midwest, at the time of her study abroad. She declared a finance major. Megan had traveled throughout Europe with her family, and during the application process she stated three primary reasons for wanting to study in Maynooth. She expressed curiosity about other cultures and the desire to immerse herself in a different culture for a full academic year. She also wrote, "I want to learn who I am."

Brittany was from the Midwest and was a college sophomore during her study abroad. She was enrolled at the University of Notre Dame as a film studies major. On her application to study abroad, Brittany wrote of hearing tales of Ireland from her family. She said that as a child she imagined being saved from banshees by friendly

leprechauns. As a more mature person, she said she wanted to experience another culture. Before studying in Ireland, Brittany had traveled to Mexico.

Lisa was a University of Notre Dame sophomore at the time of her study in Ireland. She was from the Midwest, had traveled to Spain, and was an English Literature major. In her application essay, Lisa wrote: "Sinead O'Connor tearing up a picture of the Pope in the middle of a potato field surrounded by Celtic crosses summed up the complexity of Ireland." She believed that the spirit of Ireland had appeal for her and that the people give the country its spirit. Lisa went on to say that she hoped to be surrounded by people who could give new dimensions to her spirit.

Karen was from the West and was a Saint Mary's College sophomore during her year of study in Maynooth. Karen was the only focus group participant who had not traveled outside of the United States, and she wanted "to see a world that is not America." She wanted "to know that there is life after Bill Clinton." Karen was a humanistic studies major.

Nina was a sophomore at the University of Notre Dame during her year of study abroad. She was from the Midwest and had traveled throughout Europe and Mexico during family vacations. Before her acceptance into the Ireland Program, she wrote that she chose to study in Ireland to enjoy the culture. Nina was a political science and English major.

Sean was from the Midwest, was a sophomore at the University of Notre Dame while in Maynooth, and was an English Literature major. He had traveled throughout Europe, Ireland, and Canada. Because he wanted to be a writer, Sean believed that this experience would give him new experiences as resources for his writing. On his

application to the program, he wrote: "Almost all of us want to enjoy this life as long as we have it, but the Irish seem to know how to do it better than anyone." He wanted to learn from them.

Nine students attended the focus group meeting on February 10, 1999. Those students (with fictitious names) were: Susan, Shanae, Maureen, Barbara, Gordon, Mary, Judith, Martha, and Beth.

Susan was from the South. She was a Saint Mary's sophomore during her year of study abroad. Susan had traveled to France and upon her return believed that she could be a part of another culture. Her family had hosted Irish students when Susan was in high school and she noted that "they were unique in the sense that they were able to take a piece of my heart when they left." Susan was a communication major.

Shanae was from the Midwest, was a Saint Mary's sophomore when she was a student in the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program, and had traveled with family throughout Europe before this experience. Shanae was a philosophy major. On her application she said, "I want to know, not just believe, that the world is round. I could do this elsewhere, but Ireland called to me."

Maureen was a Saint Mary's student from the Midwest and she was a sophomore at the time of her study in Maynooth. Maureen had traveled throughout Europe before going to Maynooth. She expressed feeling a need to study abroad to further her cultural awareness. Maureen was a theater major.

Barbara was from the Midwest, a Saint Mary's College student, and a sophomore at the time of study in Maynooth. On her application, she stated that she wanted to learn about and be a part of the Irish culture. As an intended English

Literature major, she wanted to study literature in Ireland. Beth had traveled to Poland before her year abroad as a student in Ireland.

Gordon was a sophomore at the University of Notre Dame when he studied in Maynooth. He was from the Midwest and declared art as his major. Gordon had traveled to Europe with his family prior to applying to the Ireland Program. His reasons for wanting to study abroad included learning about himself and appreciating differences between people of completely different backgrounds.

Mary was from the Midwest and was a Saint Mary's sophomore during the year she was in Ireland. She had Irish heritage and believed that this experience would help her learn of herself and others. She wanted to immerse herself in the Irish culture by living and studying with Irish students. Before the Ireland Program, Mary had visited London. She was a humanistic studies major.

Judith was from the Midwest. She was a college sophomore enrolled at Saint Mary's at the time of her study abroad. On family vacations, Judith had traveled to Canada, Europe, and the Bahamas. Judith was a social work major, but had interest in a religious studies minor before she went to Maynooth. On her application, she expressed hope that Ireland's religious heritage would contribute to her minor.

Martha was the only student of the 1997-1998 Ireland Program who was not a sophomore at the time of her study in Ireland. Martha went to Ireland as a junior. Martha was from the Midwest, but had traveled to England and Ireland before applying to the program. She grew up in an Irish culture, hearing stories and keeping Irish customs. Martha had participated in Irish dancing since she was a child. She hoped that this experience would help her to become "truly a part of Ireland."

Beth was from the East Coast. She was an art major and claimed to be proud of her Irish heritage. Beth was a sophomore when in Ireland and this was her first journey outside of the United States. She hoped that the experience would help her decide on a profession following college.

### Orientation

In reflecting on the effects of Ireland Program orientation as it related to encouragement of involvement in out-of-class activities, students spoke repeatedly of the positive influence that the words of previous Ireland Programmers had on them. They reported that hearing other students talk of their Maynooth experiences (either in formal meetings or informal discussion following meetings) had the greatest influence on their wanting to participate in such activities.

Students commented that the enthusiasm with which Programmers shared information was as persuasive as what they had said. Megan said,

I think about the time they came in to talk to us about Ireland. It wasn't necessarily about what they were talking about but how they were talking. You could see such a relaxed, almost an aura surrounding the people who had been there. You never saw somebody have a pessimistic attitude to what they experienced, at least I didn't.

Susan commented that "it was the way they presented it, and I don't think there was absolutely anything you could do but listen to the students who had been there." Gordon agreed, saying:

You learned things that you'd never know, like you establish your own sport team if they didn't have one and like you didn't have to drink if you went to the pubs—all these things you wouldn't have heard if the students hadn't come and talked to us.



Visual aids presented by the director of the program and by former students were also lauded as being an incentive to becoming involved in out-of-class activities. Barbara said, "I think like showing pictures and really emphasizing the friends you meet and saying these are still my friends made me want to go." Megan agreed, saying, "I think the picture thing is what is saying the most. The visual thing is so impossible to do on your own when you have no idea of where you are going." Lisa made the observation that "watching movies like Michael Collins should be a requirement, because it helps you learn about this new environment."

Each student studying in this program is assigned a contact student who studied in Maynooth the previous year. The communication that occurs between contact students and prospective students was also noted as being beneficial to the fostering of outside-of-class involvement. Shanae observed: "Having connections with people who are there right now is even better than having students who have been there talk to us. The ones there are going through it now." Martha said that she thought, "the contact student picks out his or her perspectives or study with that individual and reinforces their personal experience and so they get to know each other on a personal level. It's great."

### Participant Observation

When asked about the ways in which culture is learned when one is a participant observer, students first listed the ways in which they most often found themselves to be participant-observers. They mentioned participation in organized extracurricular activities and in informal social activities. The extracurricular activities included campus clubs, such as the Drama Society and the rugby team. Informal social situations included conversations in the pubs and teashops. They also included visiting

families of Irish classmates. Students reported the following observations of Irish culture through these experiences. Consistently they noted camaraderie and a cooperative spirit, rather than a competitive mode. Sean and Maureen both used the word camaraderie. Sean said:

When it came to extracurricular activities, I know something that I really valued was teamwork and camaraderie. I know I've been on teams in high school and forever, but I learned for the first time what exactly a team should be. No matter what happened that day, no matter how badly we did, they came together at the same park and just picked right up where they left the night before.

Then Maureen commented, "It's camaraderie over competition." Mary spoke of the negative influence of competition: "Here you're always pressured to meet this person and that person or do that and there's always competition. This person may be your friend but you have the level of competition like that pit in your stomach." And Judith said, "The threat of competition just wasn't there and competition can be a threat to forming a relationship."

Students found conversation at all levels to be satisfying. They noted that although some interactions remained at the phatic level of communication, most involved more intimacy. Gordon stated, "Casual relationships are so much more intimate. Even acquaintances." In accordance with this observation, Beth remarked, "Openness. There are no barriers. In the United States you always have to worry about what you're saying."

Students described their living situation as an opportunity for participant observation. Megan said, "We had a definite advantage in our living situation. We were right in there with a lot of students, especially like for \_\_\_\_\_ and me; we lived in the same apartment with Irish people." Sean commented, "I was in all classes with Irish

people so we were completely immersed with the people.” Nina noted that “Maynooth is a tiny, tiny place. You walk down the street and see faces that you see in classes, and it’s like ‘Hi’ and you embrace it and every moment seems more special.”

Each person commented that life in general appeared to be more relaxed and at a slower pace in Irish culture than in the American culture. It quickly became apparent that at this point students overlapped discussion of their roles as participant observers with their roles as interacting sojourners. This is not surprising in that both involve communication with others. Their specific comments therefore are reported as they expressed them, but because they relate more to information gained through relationships, they are reported in the next category of interacting sojourner.

#### Sojourner Interaction

Students were asked to address how, as interacting sojourners, they learned of the culture. They described interacting sojourner times as social moments with fellow students in class, in pubs, and with their families. The theme of relaxed pace and slower pace of life was recurrent. Judith observed this slower pace when she said, “Ireland has changed me. I don’t rush anymore. I’d rather be a shopkeeper in a village in Ireland than have the stress and rush of being the CEO of a major U.S. corporation.” Brittany agreed, “I definitely agree that I have learned to go with the flow and take life day by day.” Mary noted that this cultural difference makes re-entry into the American culture difficult, when she said,

That’s what makes it the hardest I think, like coming back and trying to readjust and it’s noticeable, even if you get to class a minute late. It’s “Oh, glad you can make it” and it’s noticed by other people because then you feel like a slacker. You feel this is where you’re supposed to be and you’re the biggest slacker, what a waster. That’s how the other Americans that haven’t lived in Ireland look at

you. They see you being lazy and you are going to get trampled on because, “We’re all going. See you later.”

Students also reported a lack of a judgmental attitude on the part of listeners in responding to speakers. Lisa commented on this. “It’s no big deal to sit down and start chatting. Like in America you hear the term baggage, like he has baggage, you know like he has a history, like that girl, she has a past. You would never hear things like that here.” Maureen also noted this lack of a judgmental attitude.

The level of lack of judging helps with intimate relationships as well. Some of the best friends I have ever had in my life are there. I consider them my best friends because they treated me with unconditional love and they didn’t know me very well, yet, like, I could say anything and it would be fine. It is part of the whole culture.

Nina thought that this lack of judgment allowed for more independent growth. “You’re allowed to grow independently when you study abroad and yet not have those fears that you would have at home such as judgment or how this is going to relate to the rest of your life.”

Finally they spoke of a feeling of safety in being with others. Upon further questioning, they related much of this safety to the lack of judgmental attitude on the part of the Irish. Shanae said, “It’s a feeling of safety, like with everyone.” Karen noted, “It’s a very bizarre safety, like not knowing anything. I think it’s because you feel entirely accepted by these people.”

### Travel

Travel was examined as a means of learning a culture. This group of students experienced directed travel through weekend and day trips with their director in Ireland. They experienced serendipitous travel as they journeyed on their own.

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When I traveled with the group I felt like a tourist, but when I traveled on my own I was a traveler. It may sound like a minor distinction, but it isn't and I don't think I can explain it to anyone who hasn't done it. There's a very big difference between a tourist and a traveler.

And Maureen followed with agreement, "Yes, a traveler is an explorer."

### Sojourn Effects on Attitudes Toward Other Cultures

Finally, students were asked to consider how they might now view other cultures after this study-abroad experience. Many responded that they had not stereotyped, nor did they have preconceived ideas of others prior to this experience, so not much had changed. One example of this is Gordon's comment: "I really didn't stereotype people or cultures before so I don't think that there has been any change in that area." Some students commented that they now understood better how it felt to be a minority. Both Sean's and Mary's comments exemplify this. Sean stated:

Now I've been the person who is the minority. I find myself more sensitive to how it feels to be in that position. Like in one of my classes there is only one student of color. I wonder if she feels how I did in some situations last year. She probably feels even more different, because of the color issue in our country.

Mary observed that "it can be really uncomfortable to be a minority. Sometimes you feel inferior, like you don't know anything."

Questions posed in the focus groups were targeted at the ways in which students learned of Irish culture and the influence this experience had on their attitudes toward other cultures. Throughout focus group discussion, however, it became apparent that students spoke more of the influence that their experiences as participant observers, interacting sojourners, and travelers had on their personal growth than on their learning of the Irish culture. These diverse comments from Megan, Nina, Susan, Maureen, Martha and Nina, listed in the order that they appear, all reveal influence on personal

growth. "You learn a lot about yourself, almost more than you learn about the culture you're in. I think in a lot of ways it changes your perspective on everything." "I have a whole new perspective on the long term of my life and what's important, like my family and friends and health. They are so much more important and I used to stress about little things." "I now know that it's the relationships and the simple pleasures in life that make us the happiest on the way." "There's a complete universal look; then there's a complete introspective analysis that you didn't have before." "My perspective of how independent I can be at this age has completely changed." "Gaining independence was my biggest thing."

#### Summary of Focus Groups

Reviewing these answers helped me to understand the importance of clarification and reiteration when conducting the upcoming personal interviews. To maintain the foci of (1) learning of the Irish culture and (2) attitudes toward different cultures, it is imperative that questions be stated specifically and that students be reminded, if necessary, of the direction of the questions. This was a helpful outcome of the focus groups in preparation for the interview process.

Upon reviewing the results of the focus group discussions, the following themes emerge. Students consistently state that words and enthusiasm of previous Programmers had the greatest influence in persuading them to participate in out-of-class activities while studying in Maynooth. They also spoke of the benefit of visual aids in encouraging their participation and the value of contact students in prompting them to become involved in the host culture.

When questioned about their knowledge of Irish culture gained through their roles as participant observers, students spoke of participation in extracurricular activities, of observation of family, and of contact through living conditions. By these means they observed the cultural value of cooperation over competition, the personal level of communication at all levels of relationships, and the laid back and relaxed attitude of Irish culture. They noted that their living conditions, which provided optimum contact with Irish students, was a benefit to learning the culture.

As interacting sojourners with the Irish people, students likewise described a relaxed pace of life and a lack of a judgmental attitude. This attitude gave the American students a sense of safety.

Travel was discussed in terms of both directed and serendipitous travel. Students reported directed travel to be a more efficient use of time. Serendipitous travel provided a greater opportunity to learn about self, according to their observations. They appreciated both directed and serendipitous travel and remarked that both gave them an appreciation for the universality, as well as the differences, of cultures in our world.

As director of the focus groups, I attempted discussion about the effects of the sojourn experience on attitudes toward other cultures. Members of both focus groups reported that they had not stereotyped people previously and therefore there was no change in their attitudes as a result of this experience. They did speak, however, of the changes they most noted following study abroad. These were all related to personal growth. Such qualities as independence and maturity were cited.



Results reported thus far, along with information gained through a literature review, formed the structure for a questionnaire to be used in interviews with students studying in Maynooth during the 1998-1999 academic year.

### **Interviews**

The purpose of the interviews was to generate information about the out-of-class experiences of this group of students. Questions and the categories of participant observer, interacting sojourner, and traveler were formulated based on the literature review and information gained in focus groups. These questions addressed (1) orientation activities that encouraged out-of-class participation, (2) observations about the Irish culture coming from the role of participant observer, (3) observations about the Irish culture coming from the role of interacting sojourner, (4) observations about the Irish culture coming from the role of traveler, and (5) perceptions of other cultures resulting from out-of-class experiences.

Results of the interview sessions are reported in this section. McCracken (1988) noted that the interviewer has done most of the work of writing up the interview by the final state of the actual interview process. This has been done by identifying, organizing, and interrelating themes.

### **Interview Participants**

Twenty-three students were enrolled in the 1998-1999 Ireland Program and all were invited to participate in this study. One student was traveling at the time of the interviews, and, therefore, interviews were conducted with 22 students. Since one of the taped interviews was too garbled to understand, 21 interviews are reported.

Of the 21 students reported, 1 was a junior during her year of study abroad and the remaining 20 were sophomores. Three were students at the University of Notre Dame and 18 were Saint Mary's College students. Nineteen of the students were Catholic. Two were male. All were White. Applications to study in the Ireland Program completed in December 1997 provided information about the students' travel experiences outside of the United States prior to this study and also their reasons for wanting to study abroad. Students are described in the order in which their interviews were conducted in Maynooth, Ireland, on April 16, 17, and 18, 1999. Fictitious names were assigned.

Teresa was a student at the University of Notre Dame. She was a sophomore during her year of study in Maynooth, was from the Midwest, and was an American studies major. Teresa chose to study in Maynooth because she wanted the experience of a yearlong program that offered study with Irish students in a village with access to a large city. She had not traveled out of the United States.

Michelle was of Irish descent. She has a number of close relatives in Ireland and had done Irish dancing for years. Michelle was from the Midwest and was a Saint Mary's sophomore during her year in Maynooth. She was an education major and believed that study abroad would expand her experiences for teaching.

Katherine was from the East Coast. She was a Saint Mary's College math major and was a sophomore at the time of her study abroad. Katherine was of Irish descent, but had not traveled outside of the United States. She grew up in a small town and wanted to broaden her knowledge of other cultures.

Janelle was a sophomore when living in Ireland. She was from the Midwest and was a Saint Mary's College social work major. Janelle had traveled throughout Europe

and the Caribbean. She chose Ireland for study abroad because she wanted to experience the Irish educational system.

Morgan was the only junior of this group of Ireland Programmers. She was a Saint Mary's student from the Midwest and had declared a double major of art and communication. Ireland is the land of her heritage. She had not traveled outside of the United States prior to this experience.

Carol was from the Midwest and was a Saint Mary's College student. Carol was a sophomore when studying abroad. She had not traveled internationally and wanted to gain the experience that comes from travel abroad. Carol's cousin had studied in the Saint Mary's Ireland Program. Carol was a communication major.

Marilyn was a Saint Mary's College student from the Midwest and was a sophomore during her year in Maynooth, majoring in political science. On her application to the program, Marilyn stated that she had done a report on Ireland in her ninth-grade geography class and it stimulated her desire to study in Ireland. She also wanted to learn more about herself and relate to people in another culture.

Marsha is from the South. She was a psychology major at Saint Mary's College and was a sophomore when she lived in Maynooth. Marsha traveled with her high-school art class to Paris and London and this stimulated her interest in studying abroad. She had also visited Canada and Mexico with her family.

Joyce was a first-generation college student from the Midwest. She reported that her parents encouraged her to have experiences, such as studying abroad, that were unavailable to them. She was a Saint Mary's College student and a religious studies major. Joyce was a sophomore during her year of study abroad. She had not traveled

outside the United States before going to Ireland. The flight to Ireland was her first experience on a plane.

Max was a University of Notre Dame sophomore when he studied in Maynooth. He was from the East. Max was a government major and applied to the Ireland Program primarily because he wanted to learn of the “political climate in Ireland.” In high school, he was a delegate from his state to the People-to-People Program. In that role, Max lived in Spain for 3 weeks.

Caryn was a Saint Mary’s College student who was a sophomore when studying in Maynooth. She was from the Midwest and had not traveled outside of the United States before her year of study in Ireland. On her application Caryn stated that she wanted to learn about the customs and culture of Ireland. She was a business major.

Collette was an art major at Saint Mary’s College. She was from the East and was inspired to study abroad when she took a high-school class trip to Ireland. Collette was a sophomore when she lived in Maynooth.

Ardis was also a sophomore during her year of study abroad. She was a Saint Mary’s humanistic studies major. Ardis was from the Midwest and wanted to go to Ireland to broaden her exposure to diversity. She had not traveled outside of the United States.

Margo was from the Midwest. She applied to study in Ireland because she wanted to see other cultures. Margo had traveled to Canada before this experience. She was a Saint Mary’s College sophomore when in Ireland. Margo was an anthropology major.

Kelly was a communication major. She had traveled to England and France with her family and these travels encouraged her to study abroad. She was a Saint Mary's sophomore, originally from the Midwest, and was a communication major.

Emily was a Saint Mary's College student who had declared a psychology major. She was from the Midwest and was a sophomore at the time of study in Maynooth. While in high school, Emily was a foreign exchange student in Australia. That experience encouraged her to study abroad in college. On her application, she stated that she believed Ireland to be a poor country and she wanted to give up American excesses.

Joy was enrolled as a sophomore at Saint Mary's when she studied in Ireland. She was from the South. Joy had traveled to Canada and wanted to study in Ireland because, according to her application, "it looks like a beautiful green place that I want to experience." Joy was a business and economics major.

Margaret was from the Midwest and was a Saint Mary's College student. She chose to study in Ireland because it is the birthplace of her ancestors. Margaret had gone on three missionary trips to Guatemala. She studied in Ireland as a sophomore and upon return to Saint Mary's declared a sociology major.

Shari was a communication major at Saint Mary's College. She had an Irish heritage and planned to be an international political journalist. In applying to study in Maynooth, she cited this experience as potentially offering her an opportunity to learn more about the world. Shari had not previously traveled outside of the United States. Shari was a sophomore during her year abroad.

Cathleen was also a sophomore during her year in Maynooth. She was a Saint Mary's student from the Midwest. Cathleen had not traveled abroad and chose to go to Maynooth for the opportunity to travel. She was a communication major.

Donald was from the South and was a sophomore at the University of Notre Dame when he lived in Maynooth. Donald had been a foreign exchange student in France during high school and had traveled throughout Europe. Donald titled his application essay "In Search of My Own Irish Music." He wrote of the fact that others in his family had Irish stories and that he wanted to have his own stories and experience the music of Ireland. Donald played the guitar in a high-school band and was a pre-medicine major in college.

### Orientation

The first area addressed in the interview was that of Ireland Program orientation and its influence on participation in out-of-class activities. Of the 21 students successfully recorded, all 21 spoke of the value provided by returning Ireland Programmers speaking to the orientation meetings. The following are examples from Morgan and Carol, who saw more value in programmer contact as compared to contact with the director of the program. Morgan said,

I remember the counselor talking about things like the different value systems, the way the Irish value things and the way we do. And it was interesting but it was hard to connect with a lot of that, but when the students came in and talked to us and we could ask all our questions it just seemed a lot more real, and I wanted to get involved. The counselors were, like, it's going to be a big thing and you're going to learn a lot.

Carol concurred, saying, "The students were easier to relate to; they were able to tell us the experiences they had."

Of the 21 students who mentioned the strong influence that returning students had on their desire to participate in out-of-class activities, three spoke specifically about what the Programmers said. These are the words of Shari:

Hearing all of the girls on the panel talk about how much fun they had, all the people they met, how they got to go home with the people they met, how they got to experience so many things. It just makes you want to get involved and join everything.

Katherine commented, "The students that had been here talked about travel and learning so much instead of classes. There was more of a culture experience than necessarily academics."

Marilyn said:

The girls' descriptions. What they said about the different activities and the people and the opportunities to get involved on campus and the stories they told about traveling. The fact that they talked about getting involved with the actual Irish students. I remember how they talked about how she did plays and they would talk about how somebody joined soccer, and they'd be smoking on the sidelines. To me, that was just the funniest thing I'd ever heard in my life.

Of the 21 students interviewed who mentioned the influence that former Ireland Programmers had on their desire to become involved in out-of-class activities, 9 spoke of the great impact of non-verbal over verbal communication. These are some examples of their comments. Caryn said, "Everybody was so excited and talking so much. They were very personable." Margaret commented:

Sometimes you didn't even know what they were talking about, but just how happy they got and how excited they got when they talked about it. It made you excited too, even if you didn't know what they were talking about.

Margo observed the students' faces. "The looks on their faces, the girls who were talking, it was just, there's something about this place; I have to go there, and I have to get involved in it."

Of the 21 students who spoke of the great effect that students who studied on the Program had on their intent to become involved outside of class, three mentioned the value of contact students. As noted previously, each Ireland Programmer is assigned a student who studied in Ireland the previous year and these students are referred to as "contact students." Marilyn described the value that she found in contact students.

The contact students were really great. I had a couple writing to me answering my questions, sending postcards after the year was over, just a lot of contact there. You come here and there's a package for you, and it's wonderful because you are so confused when you get here. But it shows that the girls who came here the year before really care about what your experience will be like. And they kind of pave the way and tell their friends to look out for so and so, and it's like you get taken into a little family when you get here.

Students also spoke of other factors that influenced their desire to become involved in activities while in Maynooth. Three mentioned the desire for personal growth. Collette remarked:

I knew I wanted to go. So what most influenced me about what they said was that the outside class experience had a lot to do with it, and how you grow so much as a person, you come back so different. It changed your life.

Carol said, "Everyone was saying how you'll learn so much about their culture and about how different our culture is at home, and about yourself." Donald said that the reading list had influenced his desire to become involved.

You can be over there the whole time and not really experience getting to know it. But when you read the books and you know what's happening and what people are talking about, you really have the opportunity to learn.

Ardis attributed her desire to be involved in out-of-class activities to the fact that she would be living in an English-speaking country. "They spoke English and I could actually understand what the people were saying."



Without exception, the students spoke positively about the Ireland Orientation Program as a motivator to becoming involved in out-of-class activities in the Irish culture when studying abroad. They reported contact with Ireland Programmers to be the single most influential factor in causing them to want to participate in out-of-class activities.

### Participant Observation

Students were asked what they learned about the Irish culture in their roles as participant observers. They were directed to use their involvement in extracurricular activities in Maynooth as a frame of reference.

All participants were eager to talk of their involvement in clubs. Five were involved in multiple organizations. Of the 21 reported interviews, eight people were members of the Drama Society. This is the largest number joining any one group. Three were members of Friends (similar to Big Brothers and Big Sisters in the United States), and three were in the Swim Club. Two students participated in karate and two participated in basketball. One student each participated in the following activities: Socialist Club, Irish Dance Club, Irish Traditional Music Society, Amnesty International, Right to Life, Outdoor Pursuits, boxing, volleyball, and soccer.

Teresa and Margo observed that, unlike the collegiate setting in the United States, in Ireland the students initiate clubs. Teresa said

It's a lot of just the students putting it on; it doesn't seem like the University is involved a lot. So that tells you something, I guess, that it's more students' input and students taking the initiative.

Margo commented, "If you go it's really real. It's a bunch of students. It's not packaged."

Not only did students report that clubs are student initiated, Collette commented on their lack of organization.

An overall thing about groups and activities is that they're not altogether organized. It's just so different from home, because at home you have set times and it starts this day, and it goes from here and everything is organized. Where here it's not; you just have to just watch out for when it happens.

Three students used the frequent absence of a coach as an example of the lack of organization and formality in the club setting and in the culture. Max spoke of basketball: "We practiced once or twice a week, and the coach was there only one out of two practices, but just being with the guys and girls was good." Collette talked about volleyball. "The coach never really showed up all the time to games, and it's just a lot different. It's really laid back, and I like that; it makes it more fun." Cathleen mentioned swimming.

Well, the swim team is not really a team. There's not a coach, we just go to the practice, and it's just like, well, should we do this tonight? You sit around for awhile and then go home, or you get in the water, or 'Oh, let's just go to the pub.' It's just funny how they are all real laid back.

The terms "laid back" and "relaxed" were used repeatedly in discussing clubs on campus. Of the 21 recorded interviews, 13 revealed the use of these terms as descriptors of the club experience. Students reported that this laid-back atmosphere seemed to be reflective of the culture. Janelle first said:

I think their main thing is that people are just much more relaxed and laid back. It's not like 'ok, you have to meet at a certain time and it has to be this long'; it's just keep your eyes open for a sign that says the meeting will be whenever.

Donald also observed the relaxed culture:

I think you just learn how laid back it is. I was talking to someone and she said just jokingly, 'you guys gotta work at being what vacations are supposed to be in the States.' That's just the thing. They know how to rest. They know how to work, but they also know how to rest.

Five of the interviewees commented on the friendliness and hospitality of the Irish as demonstrated in extracurricular activities. Joyce offered this observation:

The hospitality in the clubs was outstanding and the willingness of everybody to be involved was something that I had never encountered. So that was a big indication of the culture, possibly evidence of these people. It just seems that here they embrace the foreigner.

Colleen said, "They are welcoming and you want to get involved in it."

First Margo, and then Joy, noted a sense of humor in students through their participation in Irish clubs and they thought that this may be common in the Irish culture.

Margo observed:

They have a knowledge of the great Irish sense of irony and humor which I had explained to me a million times when I first got here, because, well, I'm American and Americans don't understand that.

Joy said:

The way people joke around; sense of humor is a big difference. I think I'm one to take things very literally, just because of my American background, and my family has always been maybe a little serious about things when it comes to that. So Irish people would joke around with me. Sometimes at first I would be like 'whoa, what did I do wrong?' And I would take it way too seriously. Eventually, you figure out that they're just messing around. They do that a lot, and that's a part of their culture.

As participant observers, students observed that the Irish culture is more liberal than is the American culture. They made these observations through exposure to the media, through extracurricular activities, and by observing social norms. Margaret commented specifically on the media, "There are commercials here that we couldn't possibly show in America. Maybe it's the whole European thing, but it's a lot less conservative than America." Ardis commented on the media as well.

Just stupid things like watching television, you can tell they're a lot more, like we're much more up-tight and concerned about political correctness and

offending anything. Some of their commercials; 'we're just like that would never ever, ever get on any time during the day on a television here.' And they don't have problems with them. They don't mind children or whatever seeing them. A lot of them have sexual innuendoes. Some of them are violent.

Teresa made an observation about extracurricular activities:

And it's also more liberal, I think. Their extracurricular activities here, maybe it's the culture, maybe it's because I'm at a private college, but there's a lot more political topics, like social issues and the Irish like the North and there's always topics on that and speeches on that and abortion is a big thing here.

Margaret offered her observations of social norms:

It's like the night-after pill that they just put on the market. You can just buy it at a drug store here. The values; not to say they don't have values, they have a lot of important values. I think more values than in America. I just didn't expect to see that at all. I didn't think it was all like people going to mass all the time, super religious. But I thought that there would be a little more than that.

Cathleen said:

The relationships between the sexes are a little bit different. They are way more casual, more sexually liberal. The sexuality surprises me. Like the way girls dress here, these pants I'm wearing are very baggy and that's just, a lot of them wear real tight pants, not like disgusting, but their jeans are way tighter than I would ever like to wear mine. Some people would say they dress provocative.

Although not asked specifically about the ways in which living conditions provide contact with members of the host culture, eight students commented on the benefits of living with Irish students. These statements, from Teresa, Janelle, and Max, are representative of others. Teresa said:

I found that having an Irish roommate helps because right there that's a social contact without having to go outside your apartment. And I know that has helped us learn a lot more just even talking to her.

Janelle added:

I think it's a really good idea to have an international roommate. We got to know our roommate pretty well and we went to dinner at her house and got to see her on her own turf. And we got to meet a lot of her friends because they were in and out of the house.

From a male perspective, Max commented:

It's an advantage living with Irish students. I went on a trip with two of my Irish roommates and we went to Glasgow to see a soccer match, and that's an experience I wouldn't have had if I wasn't living with them. The lone Yank and 37 Irish guys and we're on a bus to Belfast and we took a ferry out at two in the morning, and you're traveling all day and the game's in the afternoon. That experience you wouldn't be able to have unless you go with somebody in the culture.

### Sojourner Interaction

Students were asked what they learned about the Irish culture in their roles as interacting sojourners. They commented on families, professors, and drinking as it is in the Irish culture. It was friendship, though, that received their primary focus. They spoke specifically of what they had learned of the Irish culture through relationships with the Irish. Marilyn spoke of the importance of friendship:

Friendship is way more important than time. Whatever appointment you have, you just kind of assume that they'll understand when you say, 'Oh I ran into a friend; we just had a conversation for a half hour.' When they hear that it's like 'Oh, ok everything is forgiven, you can reschedule.'

Max said,

They know what's important and what's not. They have priorities. They definitely do about friendship. They'll do anything for their friends. They take care of their own. If your friend is in trouble you take care of it and that is a very big part of this culture.

Margo stated,

I think friendship is one thing that I noticed. People love to gossip; it's great fun, it's like, 'Woo, what's the scandal'. Everybody loved that, but still, when you're very good friends with somebody, and they confide in you, even if it's something small, you wouldn't turn around and tell even another close friend.

Emily used the word loyal.

They're loyal, very loyal. They are going to stick by you. You find that in the States, too, but I don't even know how to explain how it's different. It's more prevalent here.

Friendship is viewed differently according to Joy:

The cultures take friendships very differently. \_\_\_\_\_ values her friends and she will only be your friend if she intends to keep you for life. Americans have acquaintances. We may not really intend on staying in touch with that friend forever, and yet we still hang out with them and have a good time.

Students spoke of the value of conversation in friendship. Joyce said that she noticed

The willingness to just talk. There were no time constraints it seemed like. So that really struck me. And there were people I talked to in the pub. After these meetings we would go to the pub and sit for hours. I had never encountered that in the States.

Katherine noted, "You just meet people and sit around and talk with them, without doing any specific thing. So we just got to know a lot of people and the different backgrounds they come from."

In considering what they had learned about Irish culture from interaction with families, students spoke of hospitality, friendliness, and the closeness of families. Joyce said, "Again the hospitality struck me and the willingness to just talk."

Shanae compared her family life to that of her boyfriend in Ireland.

Yeah, I'm like 'I'm 12 hours away.' My family has adjusted, but like last week his mom was mad because he didn't call her during the week. And I'm like 'he's there every weekend.' It's amazing how close they are like that, and how his two older sisters, one goes to UCD, one goes to some architectural school, but they both live at home while they go to school. It's just such a close family.

Ardis said, "I would say the biggest thing I've learned is the closeness of the family."

Interaction with professors was mentioned by a few of the students. Some found

interaction with professors frustrating and attributed some of the frustration to difference in culture. Marsha made this observation:

The professors have actually been kind of frustrating, because they are so laid back and they don't even have office hours. They say 'come whenever and knock on my door and see if I'm there' and that's so frustrating.

Janelle said:

Some professors, I found, depending on the department, they kind of bother me, because they act kind of haughty, like 'these are our hours' but they're not always there when they say they're going to be there, and they are kind of unapproachable. Some of the professors are kind of like 'well I'm so busy, I don't have time for you,' which makes it kind of difficult because you need their help.

The four students who were enrolled in a Scripture class spoke of their professor differently. They found this professor, who is also a priest, to be very approachable. Emily said, "Even socially you interact with your professors more. We talk with our Scripture professor a lot and we went on a trip with him and that seems like a big part of interaction, talking to him." Teresa commented:

Another thing that's really interesting is the way they treat their professors and their clergymen. Our Scripture professor is a priest. He'll go down to the pub and hang out with people, and I can't handle that, it's really weird. And they're like, 'Well why don't you do this at home?' I'm like 'No, you don't take your priest out for a drink, and you don't sit around.' And they talk to them just like they are a normal person, and they swear with him and everything. He knows that I'm shocked by that and he's like 'are you shocked by the way they're treating me?' I'm like "Yes, you don't say that to somebody", and they are like 'No, it's good to act just normal around them and not treat them differently.' And so that's a big thing too, is how they treat their professors.

Morgan also spoke of her Scripture professor.

My Scripture professor is amazing. He's taken the four of us Americans in his class and he's assigned us papers, and he has meetings with us all the time and he's so wonderful, and he's been so helpful; and if we have any problems with anything we can always go to him.

In addition to sharing their observations of friendships in Ireland and professors at the university, the students also commented on the use of alcohol in Ireland. Drinking of alcohol in this culture appeared to be an area of interest and an observable cultural difference for the students studying in the Saint Mary's College Program. Eight of them commented on their impressions of alcohol as a part of the Irish culture. All eight contradicted the stereotype of Irish drunkenness, yet supported the stereotype of frequent use of alcohol. Shari compared the use of alcohol in Ireland and the United States.

Also, it's weird to look at drinking, because in America people go out and drink to forget their worries, to completely get drunk. Everybody thinks 'oh the Irish they all drink and get drunk.' No, I went out with them, and they go and have a pint. It's just for conversation, for fun. It's not for the same reasons. Alcohol is looked at completely different here. I don't know; it's just like you had a small gathering of friends. It's just how they go out with their family or have dinner; they go out to the pub. It's just a part of their culture. It's interesting how they are perceived and how they are definitely not like that.

Teresa found benefit in seeing the way that the Irish drink as compared to what she has seen at school in the United States.

It helped us to see how drinking isn't a bad thing and can be a social thing and it can be responsible, and maybe everybody didn't learn that on the Program, but I know it helped me a lot. At school it's such, it's just binge drinking. That's all you learn from drinking at school, but here it's more you learn how to go out and socially do it. And you don't have to drink all the time, and you can just do it in a social setting and it's not, ya' know, it seems like, all the people do go out here but it's not such an issue.

Caryn believed that she learned about the culture through the students' drinking

habits:

I learned a lot about the culture through their drinking habits. One of the clubs, the Drama Society, in the first meeting we went to, and right afterwards, they opened up a bunch of beer and alcohol, and I was just like 'Whoa'. They like to celebrate a lot and they are happy.

Max said, "I would say that I don't know one alcoholic here. I know that's really



weird, but I don't personally know one. I couldn't say that at home." Donald agreed that Americans have a greater problem with alcohol.

Americans are a lot more drunk than the Irish. Don't get me wrong, the Irish do get drunk, but a lot of times the Americans are a lot more drunk than the Irish. It's not a big deal to go to the bar. You see little kids running around, fourteen year olds working in the bar. You think 'man, that's unbelievable.' That evil title isn't thrown around to alcohol, which makes it more attractive to abuse in the states.

### Travel

Students were asked what they learned about the Irish culture in their role as travelers. They experienced both directed travel, through the guided trips provided by the Ireland Program, and serendipitous travel, through their independent travel. It appeared to be a natural discussion for students to compare the two in terms of benefits in learning the Irish culture. It should be noted that they referred to directed travel as "Peg trips," identified by the name of the director of these trips, the Ireland Program counselor in Maynooth.

The first of these quarterly weekend trips, officially known as Irish Culture trips, takes students to Newgrange, Drogheda, and Tara. Newgrange consists of pre-Celtic culture tombs, older than the pyramids and Stonehenge. Drogheda, in the Boyne Valley, is a port center. Drogheda's St. Peter's Church houses the head of the martyred saint, Oliver Plunkett. The Hill of Tara is central to Ireland's myths and kings.

Students also venture to Kilkenny for a weekend to tour Kilkenny Castle and Jerpoint Abbey, former home to the Earls of Ormonde. Kilkenny Castle's rooms enable students to imagine vividly what the castle looked like in its original splendor. Jerpoint Abbey is a Cisterian ruin full of knights' tombs and intricate etchings. While in the

vicinity, students visit Cahir Castle and the Rock of Cashel and learn about the history of these locations.

A weekend trip to Sligo involves visiting Lough Gill and the island made famous by Yeats's "Lake Isle of Innisfree." A major part of the trip involves learning about Yeats and his writing.

Perhaps the most popular trip of the year is the weekend trip to the Aran Islands. Students board a ferry in Doolin and stay on the smallest of the islands, Innisheer. They take an afternoon guided tour of the island to learn about its history and have an afternoon to tour the island on their own. The group splits into smaller groups to stay with families on the island. Everyone joins in the evenings for a bit of "craic" (fun) in the local pubs.

Students referred to these "Peg trips" as opportunities they are fortunate to have. Ten spoke specifically of the academic value of these trips. Here are some of their comments. Joyce said:

With the Peg trips they obviously have the educational purpose, the direction. The information packets she gave us were very directive. These trips actually form somewhat of a direction for the spontaneous trips. They were so educational because of the remnant of what Peg taught us.

Peg trips appear to be learning oriented, as noted by Shari,

With Peg trips, we learn as much as you can. When you go somewhere she makes sure you know everything from every cemetery to everything. Every single thing that you could know about this city or this country.

Ardis noted that "Peg trips are definitely more learning oriented. We do learn a lot. We learn about history and culture." Margo said, "I think you learn more from those trips than anything else. When I was taking my parents around Dublin and we went to some places we went with Peg. I'm being the little tour guide and saying all this stuff

that I learned from Peg. It's more academic than cultural. She knows a lot and practically any question you ask, she'll have the answer to."

Margaret expressed appreciation for the value of having someone from the native culture share information. "I love the Peg trips. I think it's great because you'd never have that information unless you went out and got it yourself. It's different when someone who is from the culture shares it with you."

Five students spoke specifically about the fact that they saw things they would not have seen without Peg's direction. Cathleen said, "With Peg trips it's more organized. It's a good organized because you cover ground." Emily's comment was representative of others when she said:

If we didn't have these trips, I wouldn't have seen half the things that I have. She hits those little off-beaten tracks of things that you never would have thought to go to. And some of these are the most incredible things.

Emily also reported a different positive outcome from the directed travel. "I wasn't necessarily a competent traveler before that, but she's just kind of showed us, 'You can do this, get on a bus, go'. And I have no problem traveling now at all."

Students spoke positively of the benefits of serendipitous travel. Eighteen of the subjects explained that they learned of the Irish culture through experience rather than lecture, when they traveled alone. Here are examples of the word "experience" being used. Shari said "The Peg trips are just learning all the information you can about something. The other one is learning through experiences." Janelle said. When you are on your own you just experience more of the culture and the people because you are more dependent on them. The second type of trip is a lot better to experience culture." Teresa and Megan discussed the independence of traveling on your own. Teresa commented

that “on our own we get to interact with the people more and see how friendly and open they are and like talk to you all the time.” Megan agreed, saying, “You just jump in and, pretty much, you have to learn the culture by yourself.” Marsha also agreed, saying:

I think that being on your own teaches you more about the culture because every activity you do is totally you. And when you make the effort and spend the money, you really are trying to get the most out of it.

Morgan and Carol mentioned observing the culture. Morgan stated, “You miss getting a lot of the historical information, but at the same time you get to observe a lot of the culture on your own.” Carol concurred, “You learn about the culture by their movements, their motions.” Marilyn made an observation about learning about Irish culture through travel. “This is going to sound weird, but I think I learned the most about the Irish culture through traveling and meeting people who are from Ireland in the different hostels.” Joyce noted, “When it comes to the cultural aspect of traveling, when you’re on your own you learn that a lot of the culture of Ireland is in the pubs.”

Although Joyce said that she preferred the directed travel, Marilyn and Collette said that they preferred the serendipitous travel; all 21 said that both were essential to the program. Margo said, “You need both,” and Emily stated that, “I wouldn’t say that one is better than the other. Definitely, I would just say they are different.” Margaret expressed the same sentiment. “They’re both important to this year. I wouldn’t say that one is better than the other, but I think both are necessary for you to learn about a culture.” Donald agreed, “They complement each other.”

### Sojourn Effects on Attitudes Toward Other Cultures

Students were asked how they view other cultures after this experience of studying abroad. They most often reported that they stereotype less and judge people

less than they did before. Of the 21 students, 12 mentioned this change in attitude. Here are some of their comments. Teresa spoke of judging and respect: "It makes you have more respect for others and kind of hold yourself back before judging them because you didn't realize there were so many different aspects of the culture." Carol said:

When we look upon minorities at home and you see how people have judged them, and then we've been judged all year; it makes you think "what was I doing when I was judging people at home?" I think that if you see people doing it to you, that you're definitely more conscious of it.

Katherine saw herself as more open-minded, following study abroad in Ireland.

I guess we've become a lot more open-minded. I think we can see things in a totally different way than people can, not having had this experience. When somebody says something in public, that's visiting you, ya know, you can't believe that someone said that. They are so critical, they want to come over here, but when they get here they are so judgmental and they don't really take the experience for what it is.

Janelle agreed. "I think it's helped me to see the other people for more than just we know a French person to be or a Spanish person to be." Margaret also addressed this topic.

I'm more open-minded now. Sometimes you're not aware of the differences in America. I like to just think that everybody's American, but coming here. I realized that, no, we all come from different backgrounds and different lives, and that's a part of who we are. It's part of our identity. And that makes us who we are. I think I've become more aware of that.

Ten of those who spoke of having a less judgmental attitude said that they expected to change their behavior when they got home. Joyce gave an example of this. "The exchange students at Saint Mary's from South America or wherever they may hail, I just want to get to know them because they have something to offer." Shari said:

It makes you more conscious. Especially how you treat people, not just how you talk to them, but, inadvertently at home, you may not even notice that you do it. But I think that if you see people doing it to you, that you definitely are more conscious of it.

Five of these students reported that they had had experiences with diversity, yet still they noted changes in their attitude and behavior following their experience in the Ireland Program. Marilyn cited a specific example:

I consider myself one of the lucky ones. I did a lot of work with the Red Cross peer leadership development program, which is basically a camp for the inner-city kids in Minneapolis. We're trying to teach these 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> graders about leadership, coming from an entirely different perspective because we're from suburbia; they're from the inner city. That really helped coming over because I kind of had some experience dealing with the different cultures. Now I think if I were to go back I'd do even better because it makes you more understanding to be a minority in a different culture. When you've done it yourself, you realize certain things are very important. Everybody's got their comfort zone, and you want to draw people out of it, but you need to leave them with a little bit of the familiar. So I would think that the way I would relate to them would change a little bit.

Margo also offered an example.

I think interaction will be different; there will be more understanding. Before I had a certain grasp of it. I worked in a shelter this summer where there was a high Hispanic population, so I understood to what I thought was a pretty advanced point. Now I understand that there is a lot more. There's this American attitude that everybody should understand us and should understand the language and the culture. It's not that people are deprived; they just don't know because they haven't been exposed to it. I can understand now and be more sympathetic about that. Before this year I had no patience whatsoever. I was one of the most impatient persons in the world. When a person wouldn't understand I'd be like 'Come on. Let's go.'

Kelly and Joy commented that they now knew how it felt to be a minority. Kelly said, "I can understand how minorities feel. Being the minority here, and now I understand what it's like. I probably will be able to relate to that better in the future." Joy said, "I think I treated people pretty equally when I was home, but I know what it's like to be on the other side. Maybe I will treat people with more understanding at home."

Three students said that there would be no change in their attitudes toward different cultures as a result of this experience. They gave what they thought were

reasons for lack of change. Collette explained that she had lived in Germany for 3 years; Michelle said that “just because of my dad I’m open to mostly anything.” David stated that he was always open-minded about things and had taken an interest in different cultures.

Others said that wanting to learn of other cultures was an outcome of this experience. Ardis expressed a desire to learn about different cultures. “I’ve come across a lot of different cultures. I’m interested in knowing about them.” Cathleen was specific in how she would like to do this:

I’ll be more open to learning about different cultures. Before it’s just, we’re Americans and where I grew up it’s mostly all White people. I remember in high school, we had a culture show, and it always was like, ok, we have to get through this thing. And now, after this year, I would love to go back and actually watch it. We’re not all the same obviously. I’ve always known that, but to be actually exposed to it you really do realize it.

Five students said that they now had different views of America. These views reflected both appreciation and criticism of the United States. Teresa found that this experience of studying abroad caused her to appreciate some aspects of the American culture and at the same time acknowledge how Americans waste.

Coming over here you realize how much you value about your own culture, but you notice all of the negative things, too. At first you find it frustrating that everything’s not open 24 hours, but then it’s nice because they actually value those people that are working. You also realize how much we waste in our own culture. Everything is in these giant quantities and over here it’s more restricted and you just have little things and little quantities. . . . It’s weird because over here everybody seems to be White and Catholic and the same and so that’s weird to be in a culture where there isn’t much diversity. I like our diversity.

Comments from Joy and Shari suggest that they had a more ethnocentric view of America before this experience. Joy said:

I have a totally different outlook on America and our country since I’ve been here. And it’s truly eye opening, because I didn’t realize hardly anything about

what America was all about until I came here. Not that it's all bad, but some of it has made me think twice.

Shari spoke similarly when she said:

You think everything centers around America. And, hello, oh no we're over on the side. If anything, it's made me more patriotic to be here, but it's made me open my eyes and realize that America's not all that's there. There's so many other things out there.

Donald and Ardis offered examples of more negative responses to

America. Most of these comments were from their Irish friends and were heard in social situations.

Donald commented:

There is an anti-American feeling; it's not looked as something that is all good anymore. When they say stuff, and it's made me realize stuff about the US that you're just like 'I can't say anything back to you, you're right. I'm ashamed of that, I'm sorry.'

Ardis commented that "everything in America is a lot bigger, and we feel the need for excess everything. We can just live on a lot smaller."

### Summary of Interviews

In summary, students reported that contact with previous programmers had the greatest influence on persuading them to become involved in activities outside of class when studying abroad. Students became involved in extracurricular activities, developed relationships with Irish people, and learned of the culture through observation, interaction, and travel. Most students reported that their attitudes toward other cultures have become less judgmental and that they stereotype people of other cultures less. Some reported a more critical and, at the same time, more appreciative view of their own



culture. Others expressed an increased desire to learn of other cultures. In chapter 6, these results are elaborated upon and analyzed in relation to the literature review.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is divided into three major sections. The first section summarizes the problem, the purpose of the study, and the methodology. The second section discusses conclusions reached as a result of the study in relation to the literature review. The final section provides recommendations for practice and further research.

#### **Summary**

##### **Problem and Purpose**

Although a significant portion of a study-abroad program occurs outside of class, little has been done to explore this aspect of the international experience. Research in the area of international study has focused primarily on foreign students studying in the United States, and most of that research addresses adjustment to a host culture and attitude change. Study-abroad programs could benefit by gaining information about ways in which out-of-class experiences teach students about their host culture and affect their attitudes toward other cultures.

This study was based on Spradley's theory that students studying abroad function as ethnographers, gathering empirical evidence about their host culture. It employed Spradley's means-end domain of semantic relationships, which arose from his theory stating that there are semantic relationships that occur in all human cultures and they are

useful in analyzing cultural domains. One of these relationships is means-end, characterized by the formula X is a way to do Y. Students who study abroad exemplify Spradley's means-end domain as they learn about their host culture. More specifically, they observe, interact, and travel as ways to learn the culture.

The purpose of this study is to describe the out-of-class experiences of 21 students who studied in the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program in Maynooth, Ireland, during the 1998-1999 academic year. Specifically, the study examines (1) how the program orientation influenced students' desire to become involved in out-of-class activities, (2) how these experiences fostered students' learning of the Irish culture, and (3) how the experiences influenced students' attitudes toward cultures other than their own. Results can then be used to make better informed policy decisions about how to maximize benefits of undergraduate study-abroad programs.

### Methodology

This study employed descriptive qualitative research using focus groups and long interviews. Students who studied in the Ireland Program during the 1997-1998 academic year participated in focus groups discussing their out-of-class experiences. Results of their discussions acted as a resource for designing a data-collection questionnaire for the interview process, conducted with students studying in Maynooth during the 1998-1999 academic year.

The population for the focus groups in this study was comprised of the 17 Saint Mary's College and University of Notre Dame students who studied in the Saint Mary's Ireland Program during the 1997-1998 academic year. An invitation was sent to all 1997-1998 program participants. Fifteen students accepted invitations and signed

consent forms. Six attended a focus group on February 8, 1999, and 9 attended a focus group on February 10, 1999. Both groups met on the Saint Mary's campus. A focus group protocol was followed throughout the 2-hour sessions. Discussion was recorded on audiotapes and transcribed verbatim. Written transcriptions were margin coded according to theme. Information was then used to construct the interview questionnaire used in this study.

The population for the interviews was comprised of 21 of the 23 students who studied in the Saint Mary's Ireland Program during the 1998-1999 academic year. All participants in the Ireland Program were invited to participate. Twenty-two accepted invitations and signed consent forms. One taped interview was garbled and therefore was not included in the study. Interviews were conducted in Maynooth, Ireland, on April 16, 17, and 18, 1999. The interviews were approximately 1 1/2 hours in length. A questionnaire was used to guide the interview sessions. The interviews were audio-taped, recorded, and transcribed verbatim. Analysis was performed by observing, identifying themes, and stating interview theses.

### **Discussion and Conclusions in Relation to the Literature Review**

Results of the interviews provide interesting information for discussion. As ethnographers, students gathered empirical evidence. They talked about the impact of orientation on their desire to become involved in the Irish culture, their experiences of learning about the Irish culture as participant observers, interacting sojourners, and travelers, and the impact that these out-of-class experiences had on their attitudes toward other cultures. The following is a summary of these results. Each research question is considered in relation to comments offered by students.

*1. What preparatory interventions provided through Saint Mary's College Ireland Program orientation sessions encourage students' participation in out-of-class experiences while studying in Ireland?*

Students found contact with previous Ireland Programmers to be the greatest influence in persuading them to become involved in out-of-class activities while studying abroad. They noted that the formal presentations offered by previous participants in the program and personal interaction with them were the primary factors in influencing prospective students to become immersed in the Irish culture. It is not surprising that this face-to-face contact was influential. Brislin (1981), Griffin (1991), and McLuhan (1964), all wrote of the benefits of face-to-face communication.

Students noted that when listening to previous programmers speak of the Ireland Program, both their verbal and nonverbal messages were powerful persuaders. The students' comments regarding the great impact of nonverbal messages are of particular interest. They frequently described the enthusiasm with which the programmers spoke and how it caused them to believe that this was the best year of their lives. As they spoke of other students' enthusiasm and their paralanguage, one is reminded of the impact of nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication may affirm, contradict, or replace verbal communication. Whether in affirmation or contradiction, however, the nonverbal message is more to be trusted (Verderber, 1995).

Students also credited recommended reading lists, the desire for personal growth, and the fact that Ireland is an English-speaking country as reasons that they became involved in out-of-class activities. These reasons were mentioned less frequently than personal interaction, again affirming the importance of interpersonal contact.

*2. How do the out-of-class experiences of observation, interaction, and travel foster the Saint Mary's College Program students' learning of the Irish culture?*

Students functioned as participant observers and through observation (X) learned about the culture (Y). Becoming a member of a club or sport afforded opportunity for participant observation. As participant observers, the students were involved in a number of extracurricular activities. The largest single number of students joined the Drama Society on campus. Students who studied in Maynooth previously had promoted the Drama Society to these students, advising them that it is a good organization with which to be associated. This further suggests the strong influence of contact with previous students who studied on the Ireland Program. Other politically activist, social, and athletic groups were represented. Selltitz and Cook (1962) noted that sojourners living in small communities had greater opportunity for group participation. This appears to be the case in Maynooth, where students live in a small apartment complex within a small Irish village and became actively involved in campus life.

Through their experiences in these extracurricular activities, students observed the Irish culture. They noted that unlike most university clubs in the United States, in Ireland the students initiate and direct the clubs. The clubs are less organized than in the United States. There is a laid-back, relaxed attitude, which they said appears to be reflective of the culture. They observed a welcoming friendliness and a pervasive sense of humor. Students interpreted these qualities of a laid-back attitude, friendliness, and sense of humor as positive qualities that contributed to their positive experience. Tims and Miller (1986) and Vornberg and Grant (1976) noted that enjoyment of the study-

abroad experience contributes to integration and positive attitude toward the host culture. Such appears to be the case with this population.

In their roles of participant observers, students also commented on the benefits of contact with Irish students, particularly through the close proximity of their living conditions. This is not surprising, as researchers have written of the benefit of contact with members of the host culture in reducing stereotypes and fostering a favorable attitude toward the host culture (Chang, 1973; Hofman & Zak, 1969; Kelman, 1962; McCabe, 1994). Interventions are occasionally offered to sojourners with the aim of enhancing the effects of the intercultural experience through structured intergroup encounters (Amir & Ben-Ari, 1985). Such is the case in the Ireland Program when students are housed with Irish and other international students. Carlson et al. (1990) wrote of the benefits of certain living conditions in study-abroad programs, and Laubscher (1994) noted the opportunity for participant observation as an outcome of intercultural living conditions. Intercultural living tends to produce symmetrical rather than complementary relationships. This, then, provides non-threatening situations which, Stephan and Stephan (1992) observed, allow for insight into other cultures. These conditions appeared to be present in Ireland and conducive to providing a learning experience for students enrolled in the Ireland Program.

Students had the opportunity to observe what they referred to as the liberal nature of the Irish culture. They did this through observation of media and social norms and participation in extracurricular activities. Their perceptions of culture based on media observation pose the question of whether the media reflect society, as in a mirror metaphor, or whether they shape society. If, in fact, the mirror metaphor exists even in

part, then students are gaining a view of the Irish culture through this venue. Certainly, their personal encounters through social observation and interaction tended to confirm their perceptions of a culture more liberal than that in the United States.

As interacting sojourners, the students reported that through relationships (X) they learned about the culture (Y). They spoke primarily of the intensity and priority of friendships in the Irish culture. Students noted loyalty, hospitality, and the value of family. They reported having close friendships with Irish students. Carlson et al. (1990), Hull (1978), and Selltiz and Cook (1962) observed that close friendships brought about greater liking for the host country's lifestyle, particularly in the areas of friendship and family.

Research supports the positive outcomes that students cite as a result of interpersonal interaction. Basu and Ames (1970), Salter and Teger (1975), and Sharma and Jung (1986) reported that with increased interaction came more favorable attitudes toward hosts. Students commented on the intimacy of relationships in Ireland. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1966) observed that when studying abroad, superficial relations with host nationals are actually counterproductive. One could suggest, then, that in a country where most relationships appear to be at a personal level, positive attitudes toward that country would be fostered.

Students in the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program experienced frequent interaction with the people and culture of Ireland and described their experiences and the people with whom they interacted in positive terms. Frequency of exposure has an effect on attitudes. Zajonc (1968) first noted the mere-exposure effect indicating that more exposures to materials increased the liking of the materials. Subsequent studies affirmed



and extended his results. Mita, et al., (1977), Wilson (1979), and others related the mere-exposure effect to real-life situations (Grush, 1980; Moreland & Zajonc, 1982).

The most contradictory observations made by the students were those regarding the use of alcohol. Not only did students contradict each other, individuals contradicted their own statements as they spoke of drinking in the Irish culture. A summary of their comments would suggest that alcohol use is frequent, supporting the stereotype of the Irish culture. Because it is such a part of the culture, however, students said that it does not have the appeal of the forbidden as it does in America. The same students later referred to the use of alcohol as a problem in the Irish culture.

Students may have been responding with mixed observations to drinking in their Irish culture because of their attempt to achieve agreement with their new Irish friends, who did not see alcohol as a problem in their culture. According to the Theory of Balance (Heider, 1983), people want to hold similar beliefs with those they like. Therefore, some may have changed attitudes so they could agree with their friends. Operant conditioning (Skinner, 1938) could have had its role in the responses to alcohol use as well. Students may have encountered rewards from their Irish friends when they spoke positively of the place of alcohol in the Irish culture. Desire to reduce cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) might also have been an influence. Some students went to Ireland with a preconceived notion about alcohol use in that country. Upon living in the culture and enjoying the freedom and opportunity for frequent drinking of alcohol, they may have changed their attitudes better to accommodate their chosen behavior.

Travel (X) was also a way to learn about the culture (Y). Travel is described as directed or serendipitous. Students said that both directed and serendipitous travel were

essential to the program. Directed travel was judged to have more academic value, to be a more efficient use of time, and to afford opportunity to see more. Students reported that serendipitous travel allowed them to learn more of the culture through travel experience and that it fostered a sense of self-sufficiency. They often spoke of the value of learning through experience when traveling serendipitously. This observation affirms Hansel's (1988) observation that, in traveling, the sojourner uses senses to gain knowledge and Gmelch's (1997) observation that benefits of traveling alone include making decisions and dealing with daily life issues in unfamiliar settings. Students' comments support results from the Study Abroad Evaluation Project (Carlson et al., 1990), which specifically encouraged travel, both organized and free (serendipitous), as a valuable part of international education for the student studying abroad.

*3. How do student participants in the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program believe that out-of-class experiences affect their attitudes toward cultures other than their own?*

When asked how out-of-class experiences while studying abroad affected their attitudes toward other cultures, the students most often responded that they are now less judgmental and stereotype people from other cultures less often than they did previously. The literature review strongly supports such an outcome. Adams (1948), Drews and Meyer (1996), Kagitcibasi (1978), and Pfnister (1972) all report reduction in stereotyping.

Students' attitude changes may also be attributable to the influence of the dynamic of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Living and traveling in Ireland and liking the Irish people may have produced cognitive dissonance for those who had heard

negative information about people of other cultures. To reduce that dissonance, students may have changed their attitudes.

Increased level of international understanding, often considered an outcome of the sojourn experience (Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Coelho, 1962; Deutch, 1970; Kauffman et al., 1992; McCabe, 1994; Pfnister, 1972), may lead to interest in further learning. Students in the Saint Mary's Ireland Program reported that, as an outcome of this study-abroad experience, they wanted to learn more about other cultures. Greater world-mindedness (which students describe having acquired) may also encourage interest in learning about cultures other than one's own, as reported by Sharma and Jung (1986).

Although not asked specifically about their views of the American culture, a number of students stated that as a result of studying abroad, they have both a greater appreciation and a more critical view of the American culture. In 1960, Abrams found that studying abroad challenged students' perceptions of themselves as Americans. Students in the Ireland Program talked specifically of having greater appreciation of conveniences available in America, yet they criticized materialism and excess in the United States. Sharma and Jung (1986) observed that greater world-mindedness was often a result of interaction with members of a host culture. With world-mindedness often comes a more objective view of one's own culture. The findings of this study are consistent with their results.

Students cited examples of what they believe will be resultant behavior changes as well. They suggested, for example, that they would reach out to foreign students on their home campuses. Affirming this observation, Eagley and Himmelfarb (1978) found that behavior change followed attitude change if the attitude was of social significance

and the context was out of the laboratory. The carry-over behavior that these students predicted is consistent with those two criteria.

There are other indicators suggesting that students' change of attitudes, as a result of their out-of-class experiences, may lead to behavior change. Attitudes held by these students appear to be strong, and attitudes that are strong are more likely to lead to behavior changes (Krosnick, 1989). The following paragraphs discuss the indicators of strong attitudes that lead to this conclusion.

Attitudes achieved through direct experience are better predictors of behavior change (Snyder & Kendzierski, 1982), they are held more confidently, and are more resistant to change than those acquired through indirect experience (Wu & Shaffer, 1987). Students studying in this program interacted directly with individuals and organizations in the Irish culture.

The students also spoke with specificity about their newly claimed attitudes. They offered specific examples of how they are now less judgmental and described how they believe their behavior has changed and will continue to change. Specific attitudes predict actions better than do general attitudes (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975; Newcomb, et al., 1992; Kantola, et al., 1982).

Personal relevance of the attitude is also a good predictor of behavior change (Baron & Byrne, 1994; Sivacek & Crano, 1982). Students studying in the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program described their attitudes toward other cultures in relation to their personal experiences, both past and present, and their plans for the future.

Self-awareness increases consistency between attitude and behavior (Hutton & Baumeister, 1992). Individuals who are more aware of self have greater accessibility to

attitudes, and attitude accessibility is critical in the move from attitude to behavior (Fazio, 1989). Although not formally assessed in this study, students reported an increase in their self-awareness as a result of their studying and living abroad. They mentioned such things as knowing their priorities, gaining self-esteem, and having greater empathy for others. This self-awareness is a good predictor that their attitudes will become realized in their behavior.

Because the focus groups were conducted as a means to gather data that would help to construct an interview questionnaire, results of the focus groups are not analyzed in this section. I make one exception here. In an interesting contradiction to results of individual interviews, during which most students reported change in attitude and predicted change in behavior as a result of studying abroad, all members of the focus groups denied any changes in attitude toward other cultures as an outcome of the study-abroad experience. They consistently said that they did not stereotype or act in a prejudicial way prior to studying in Ireland, and they felt the same way now. One could attribute their responses to the Hawthorne effect. In other words, the responses may be due to the peer pressure of feeling the need to say the socially acceptable thing when observed by others. As early as the mid-60s, Triandis and Vassilou (1967) noted that at universities in the northern part of the United States it was no longer appropriate to be prejudiced toward other groups. There is another possible explanation for the focus groups' denial of any attitude or behavior change as a result of the study abroad experience. Perhaps the changes were so ingrained 10 months after their return that they had forgotten they ever behaved differently, or held different attitudes.

Results of this study suggest that students who studied abroad in the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program utilized ethnographic discovery methods as they learned about the Irish culture. As demonstrated through Spradley's means-end domain of semantic relationships, their roles as participant observers, interacting sojourners, and travelers afforded them opportunities to learn about the Irish culture.

Contact with former participants in the Ireland Program appeared to be the greatest incentive for students to become involved in out-of-class activities. Students reported that living, studying, and developing relationships with members of the host culture were ways in which they learned about the culture. They also stated that both directed and serendipitous travel provided valuable, but different, ways of learning about Irish culture.

The students collected information and noted differences between their home culture and the Irish culture. They reflected on, and in some cases changed, their attitudes toward people of other cultures. Students believed that out-of-class experiences had a part in reducing their tendency to stereotype people, and increased their interest in other cultures. Many expected their behavior to change in accordance with their attitude changes.

It is interesting to note that, without exception, students' descriptions of out-of-class experiences were positive. I have considered the possibility that I, as the interviewer, may have influenced participants to offer only positive comments, but have discounted the likelihood of this. My questions were posed with neutral language and I was conscious of my nonverbal demeanor as I interacted with the students. Furthermore, I was neither in a position of authority nor in any way a threat to their standing in the

Ireland Program or at Saint Mary's at the time that I directed the focus groups and conducted the interviews. I believe that their comfort in speaking with me was apparent when they commented on the relatively unimportant role of the counselor of the program in encouraging participation in out-of-class activities.

Students' glowingly positive reports of their experiences may be accounted for in a number of ways. Although this is indeed an intercultural experience, participants in the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program experienced a culture that is in many ways similar to their own. The language was not a major barrier. Students were White and primarily Catholic and encountered the same demographics in Ireland. These similarities may make the study-abroad experience less stressful and more enjoyable. One wonders if responses would be quite so overwhelmingly positive if the students had encountered the same out-of-class experiences in a culture more diverse from their own. The consistently positive comments might also be due to the mere freedom of a year away from home, the excitement of travel, the exhilaration of growing independence and self-confidence, the warmth of the Irish people, the quality of the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program, or a combination of all of these.

### **Recommendations**

Directors of study-abroad programs would be advised to use former participants in their programs as ambassadors. Both the verbal and nonverbal aspects of their messages appear to be effective in encouraging involvement in a host culture. Where this is currently done, it should be expanded through more presentations and personal contact, and where it is non-existent, it should be instituted.

For students studying abroad to have a fully enriching cultural experience, they should live and study with students of the host culture. By interacting with members of the host culture in these environs, they may benefit by learning the culture and establishing less judgmental attitudes toward other cultures.

Study-abroad programs should include opportunities for both directed and serendipitous travel. Each offers the means to learning a culture, the former in a more structured and academically oriented way and the latter through experience and independence. It may be assumed that, if given free time and encouragement, students will gladly initiate serendipitous travel. Providing effective directed travel requires the hiring of someone who is a professional, knowledgeable about, and, ideally, native to the host country.

A re-entry program, as a part of the study-abroad experience, should provide students with the opportunity to follow up on behavior changes that these students predicted would occur upon their return. In this study, students stated that when back in America they hoped to treat people of minority with more understanding, that they wanted to learn more about different cultures, and that they expected to reach out to foreign students on their home campuses. Re-entry programs would be advised to provide reminders of these goals in a structured setting and to provide opportunities to act on these goals. The facilitator of the group might, for example, schedule opportunities for returning students to meet with foreign students on their home campuses.

Lack of recent sources indicates a dearth of current research in this area, and the potential for research in the field is great. Using this research design, one might study a semester, rather than a yearlong study-abroad program, examining the effect of length of



sojourn. Gender and racial differences could be studied by selecting programs of greater diversity. This study revealed contradictory information regarding the use of alcohol in the Irish culture. Such information lends itself to further study of both the perceptions and the reality of alcohol use in the Irish culture and the effects of these observations on students who study in Ireland.

## APPENDIX A

### INVITATION: FOCUS GROUPS

January 25, 1999

Dear Ireland Programmer,

I would like to invite you to take part in a study that I am conducting. This study is being conducted in an effort to better understand out-of-class experiences of students studying in the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program in Maynooth, Ireland. Part of the study will include two focus group discussions with those of you who studied in Maynooth during the 1997-998 academic year.

The groups will meet for approximately two hours, beginning at 7:00 p.m. on February 8 and February 10 in Room 105 Madeleva Hall, Saint Mary's College. Following the discussions, I'll have pizza and soda for you.

What is said during the interview will be kept confidential. No names will be used in reporting the results.

I believe that you will be a valuable contributor and very much want to include you in this study. To participate, just sign the consent form below and bring it with you the night of your discussion.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Carolyn S. Langle

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#### INFORMED CONSENT

Please check one of the following:

Yes, I am willing to participate in the study described above.

No, I am not able to participate in this study.

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

## APPENDIX B

### FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

#### Introduction

#### Definitions of terminology

#### Questions:

1. How do you feel about the introduction to out-of-class activities that is provided in the Saint Mary's College Program orientation sessions?

**Probe: What encouraged you to participate in out-of-class activities?**

**Probe: What could have been done to encourage participation?**

2. Tell me about your out-of-class experiences in your role as participant observer.

**Probe: Which experiences do you value?**

**Probe: Why do you value these experiences?**

3. Tell me about your out-of-class experiences in your role as interacting sojourner.

**Probe: Which experiences do you value?**

**Probe: Why do you value these experiences?**

4. Tell me about your out-of-class experiences in your role as traveler.

**Probe: Which experiences do you value?**

**Probe: Why do you value these experiences?**

5. How did your out-of-class experiences affect you?

**Probe: How do you approach life differently since having these experiences?**

**Probe: How could the out-of-class experiences be improved to better impact your life?**

#### Closing Statement

APPENDIX C

INVITATION: INTERVIEWS

April 1, 1999

Dear Ireland Programmer,

I would like to invite you to take part in a study that I am conducting. This study is being conducted in an effort to better understand out-of-class experiences of students studying in the Saint Mary's College Ireland Program in Maynooth, Ireland. Part of the study will include interviews with those of you who are studying in Maynooth during the 1998-99 academic year.

Your interview will be approximately one hour in length and will be held on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ in the Dublin room of the Stoyte House on the National University of Ireland campus in Maynooth.

What is said during the interview will be kept confidential. No names will be used in reporting the results.

I believe that you will be a valuable contributor and very much want to include you in this study. To participate, just sign the consent form below and bring it with you to the interview.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Carolyn S. Langley

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**INFORMED CONSENT**

Please check one of the following:

Yes, I am willing to participate in the study described above.

No, I am not able to participate in this study.

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

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **What preparatory interventions provided through orientation sessions are most encouraging of participation in out-of-class experiences while studying in Ireland?**
2. **Tell me about your out-of-class experiences in your role as participant observer. What extracurricular experiences helped you to learn about the Irish culture? What did these experiences teach you?**
3. **Tell me about your out-of-class experiences in your role as interacting sojourner. Where did you have opportunity for interpersonal interaction? With whom? What did these experiences teach you about the Irish culture?**
4. **Tell me about your out-of-class experiences in your role as traveler. Which experiences helped you to learn about the Irish culture? What did you learn? Compare serendipitous and directed travel.**
5. **Tell me about how your out-of-class experiences have affected your view of cultures other than your own. How did you perceive cultures other than your own before your sojourn in Ireland? How do you now perceive cultures other than your own?**

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## VITA

Carolyn S. Langley  
1745 Wilber  
South Bend, In 46628

### EDUCATION

2000	Andrews University Berrien Springs, MI	ED.D. Educational Psychology
1978	Indiana University South Bend, IN	M.S. Special Education
1969	Edinboro University Edinboro, PA	B.S. Elementary Education Speech Pathology

### WORK EXPERIENCE

1998-present	Ireland Program Saint Mary's College Notre Dame, IN	Counselor
1987-present	Communication, Dance, Theatre Department Saint Mary's College Notre Dame, IN	Faculty
1977-1988	Communication and Theatre Department Indiana University South Bend, IN	Adjunct Faculty
1979-1981	Mishawaka School Corporation Mishawaka, IN	Speech Language Pathologist
1970-1974	Hearing and Speech Center South Bend, IN	Speech Language Pathologist
1969	Harrison School South Bend, IN	First-grade Teacher