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Cultural Sensitivity Education Offered by Western Washington University for Global Southern Study Abroad Programs

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Introduction: Global Action Plan

In March of 2015, Western Washington University published an Action Plan for Global Education at Western. The document provides four main reasons for becoming more globally engaged, including: 1) remaining relevant in an interconnected world, 2) providing students “the knowledge, attitudes, and skills” needed to thrive in this interconnected world, 3) solving problems around the globe, and finally 4) providing funds to the university and “enhance[ing] the university’s visibility and its rating”. As a call to action, the statement is made that “making the case for the internationalization of the university is simple.” But is it really that simple? Through the presentation of my research, I hope to invoke faculty, staff, and students of the university to think critically about how complex the implications of the internationalization of Western really are. An international educator, Jonas Stier, cautions against making the “normative assumption that ‘internationalization is good per se’” (Stier, 2004). Failing to question the inherent goodness of internationalization can be damaging, especially for the people who are not a part of the privileged, internationalizing group. Out of the four reasons supporting increased global education at Western, all of them focus on the benefits that students, faculty, and staff of Western gain, except for the proposition that internationalization solves problems around the globe. However, there is substantial research indicating that when students go abroad, they often times create problems rather than solve them in the communities they enter.

In order to analyze the problems that can arise when WWU students go abroad, we must take a step back to a more global and historical perspective. WWU is just one of thousands of institutions sending young adults abroad, and the vast majority of these organizations have a few commonalities: they are made up of a primarily white population, and they have been the beneficiaries of centuries of colonization, slavery, and expropriation. Thus, these organizations and the people within them have white privilege. While this privilege gives people the economic means and the available time to spend abroad, most people and organizations fail to realize this power and privilege they carry with them. Thus, when young adults spend time in a country that has been victim to the impacts of racism for multiple centuries, they unintentionally perpetuate these impacts and reinforce racial stereotypes. Minimizing this racist impact does not happen on its own. If individuals are unaware of their own privilege, it is safe to assume they will not be capable of avoiding racist impacts they have never even thought about. For this reason, institutions that are sending individuals out in the world need to take responsibility for the racial implications of their actions by finding ways to minimize the damage (I am not convinced it is possible to eliminate the damage completely, so it is not a realistic goal). One of the ways institutions can do this is through providing skills, knowledge, and resources to the people who will be going abroad. Western is one institution that has the responsibility to do so.

Outline of research conduction and presentation

Because of the dire consequences that can result from sending students abroad without critical thought and planning, it is important to consider where Western is currently at in terms of its ability to adequately prepare students. From here out, I will refer to the skills, knowledge, and resources that are intended to reduce the impacts of privilege and racism as “cultural sensitivity education”. The term cultural sensitivity has many different meanings and

connotations, but I will be referencing to it in this context. My motivation for interviewing various staff and faculty at Western who are associated with international programs was to identify the types of pre-departure cultural sensitivity education that are currently offered, as well as to identify areas that could be improved. Before presenting my findings from these interviews, I will first provide a brief overview of the history of racism and modern day racism. Second, I will provide background regarding the ways that racism is perpetuated and exacerbated by people who study abroad. This will both emphasize the importance of a pre-departure cultural sensitivity education and help identify common pitfalls that need to be avoided. Third, in order to have a way to evaluate the pre-departure education offered to Western students, I will present various models, methods, and strategies that have been found by scholars to increase cultural sensitivity. Finally, I will discuss the types of cultural sensitivity education currently offered at Western.

History and current state of racism

As mentioned previously, the connection between studying abroad and racism is quite direct: those who have economically benefited from racism are the ones doing the studying abroad, and those who have economically suffered are the host countries. Although there are no perfect terms to distinguish between the beneficiaries and the victims of racism, I will hereby use the terms global northern and global southern countries. In my research, I am only focusing on the relationship between students from the global northern countries who are studying in global southern countries. The power and privilege dynamics are very different between an American going to Kenya than between an American going to Ireland, for example.

Charles Mills' *The Racial Contract* starkly makes a case for racism being the most important piece for understanding the current state of humanity. Mills also points out that most

white people fail to recognize the impacts and existence of racism, saying that “statements of frankness are rare or nonexistent in mainstream white opinion today, which generally seeks to rewrite the past so as to deny or minimize the obvious fact of white global domination” (Mills, 1997). As a result of denying and ignoring the history of racism, we are less able to see the way that racism is still at work today and is maintaining economic, physical health, and mental health disparities between white people and people of color around the globe. It is important to educate people about racism so they realize it is still very present throughout the world, and that their actions are maintaining racial disparities. While it is not in the scope of this paper to provide an in-depth history of racism, I will provide a brief overview to aid in the understanding of why racism still shapes the way humanity functions today.

Centuries of colonialism, genocide, slavery, and resource exploitation oppressed people of color around the globe, while white people gained from these racist endeavors. For about four hundred years, European countries colonized nearly the entire globe. It would be easier to list the countries that were not colonized than those that were. During the colonialization process, indigenous people were granted little or no rights, and they were relocated, killed, assimilated to European culture, and subjugated to the rule of the invading country. Their labor and the resources from their land were used for the economic gain of the conquering country, which gave European countries even more money and power to invade even more countries. At the same time, people were being sold as slaves to the colonizers, who profited even more off the exploitation of the slaves’ labor. Because of centuries of economic exploitation, and because the government, religion, languages, and culture of indigenous people were taken away or diminished by the colonizers, even when formerly colonized countries have been granted their

independence, it has been nearly impossible for them to maintain economic and political stability.

It is not solely the damage done during the colonial period in history that maintains the gap between global northern and global southern countries. There are modern forms of racism that are used by global northern countries to intentionally maintain their power. Arturo Escobar defines the period following the second world war, between 1945 and 1955, as the time where this modern form of racism took shape (Escobar, 1984). During this time, major global shifts were occurring at rapid speed, and so global northern countries wanted to ensure that the poorer countries “entered into their new strategy” (Escobar, 1984). At this time, the term development was formed, which essentially was a part of the strategy of global northern countries to maintain their domination of global southern countries. Maintaining control over the “population, processes of capital accumulation, agriculture and trade, natural resources, administration, and cultural values” are all a part of this development strategy (Escobar, 1984). Even discourse about the term development helps to maintain power over global southern countries, as it defines and creates “abnormalities” in these countries, which opens the door for global northern countries to intervene and reform these problems. Labor and resource exploitation, environmental policies, trade agreements, agricultural policies, and intervention in wars and politics, among other present-day realities, exemplify the mechanisms of modern-day racism.

How students perpetuate racism while abroad

If not done carefully, the sending of youth to global southern countries follows this racist history of exploitation: the youth gain a new perspective and skills, and are able to feel good about themselves for helping poor people or being open-minded, while people of color gain nothing or are harmed. A paper discussing the ethics of Canadian youth-sending institutions

explained that “if youth-sending organizations do not address issues of power and privilege such as classism, racism, and sexism, then volunteers [or students] who come with good intentions of charity are simply repeating cycles of imperialism and colonialism on local communities” (Ngo, 2014). I personally witnessed and admittedly participated in this racist cycle being perpetuated on local communities while I was volunteering in Nicaragua for three months this past summer. Literature provides many other examples of these types of interactions, as well as the mechanisms through which they occur.

Without self-awareness of one’s power and privilege, it is easy to unintentionally exert it on local communities who do not have racial power and privilege. One way this power difference is commonly manifested is when white people assume that they can help local people, even without much knowledge of the language, history, and culture of the local community. Especially in the realm of international volunteering, this commonly occurs because when organizations recruit participants for their international programs, they paint the people they are recruiting as experts who are able to help people in “poor” countries. Often times, students fundraise for their study abroad experience, and thus can feel a sense of entitlement that they have worked for or deserve the opportunity to go abroad (Ngo, 2014). Additionally, people from global northern countries often times assume that their economic well-being is due to the superiority of their government and political systems, and that if “poor” countries would become more similar to countries such as the US and European countries, then their economic situation would improve. White privilege also has taught white people that their opinions, ideas, and ways of thinking are valuable and should be expressed, while it has taught people of color the opposite. The result is that white people are more likely to express ideas and opinions and push them upon people of color, while people of color are less likely to feel empowered to counter

these opinions with their own. These are a few of the many reasons why students from global northern countries feel that they are in the position to help people from global southern countries.

A second problem arising from the racial power and privilege divide is that stereotypes about people of the host country may be reinforced rather than broken down, and misunderstandings between students and local people may occur (Kirillova et al, 2015). Without careful planning and intentionality, international development education programs can easily “become small theatres that recreate historic cultural misunderstandings and simplistic stereotypes” (Grusky, 2000 qt. in Ngo). This reinforcement of stereotypes influences the way that volunteers interact with local people, and can have a negative impact. While I was in Nicaragua, I found that many of the volunteers I worked with viewed Nicaraguans as lazy. I would daily here complaints about how Nicas (a word that I most often heard in connection to a negative character traits of Nicaraguans) don’t show up to work on time, perform poor quality work, and try to avoid working at all costs. It was a viral attitude, and once one volunteer started complaining, more would join in. Even I myself felt frustrated at times, such as when the employees at a smoothie shop ignored me or when a paint shop owner strolled in two hours late to open up without any apologies. The volunteers and I had grown up with the Western values of timeliness, efficiency, and professionalism, and in general these are not highly valued in Latin American culture. So, instead of appreciating the other values that most Nicaraguans have, we often fell into the trap of stereotyping them as lazy. This places our values as better than theirs. I regularly heard people talk about how they wanted to teach the Nicas how to work, reinforcing the belief that Westerners have the right and ability to change the way non-Western societies function. This stereotype also maintains racism in that it allows white people to think they are better than the non-white Nicaraguans, and to think that the reason so many Nicaraguans are

poor is that they are lazy. This completely dismisses the fact that the country had been at war on and off since the 1920's, and that much of the damage was done by the United States. By ignoring this history, all of the blame is placed on the Nicaraguans themselves, making them appear as lesser people. This is just one example demonstrating how a reinforcement of stereotypes has racist impacts.

A third, related problem has to do with communication barriers. An example of this problem is illustrated through a response from a student who interned in Bangladesh, who explained she “no longer felt comfortable with international community development, as she believed effective community development depended on a sense of familiarity with the people, their language and their surroundings” (Ngo, personal communication, 2007). It does not make sense to expect that meaningful relationships can be built between host communities and visiting students when the two groups are unable to communicate with each other. On top of the basic problem of not being able to speak a common language, there are often cultural differences in modes of communication, such as facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice. This further breaks down any potential for relationship-building, and opens up opportunities for misunderstandings between locals and visitors. If no relationships are built and misunderstandings occur, it is easy for visitors to make judgements and maintain stereotypes.

A fourth problem that can arise from the presence of students in host communities is the initiation of undesirable changes through many different avenues (Kirillova et al, 2015). One way is simply by bringing in the lifestyle and modernization of the students, such as technology and clothing styles. While many community members may want to maintain their traditional lifestyle and customs, young people of the host community may become enamored by the technology and clothing of the foreign students, especially because Western culture is portrayed

in the media as the ideal. Students could also initiate structural changes in the community by influencing the way that organizations are run. Because of white power and privilege, many students assume they are experts and know how to fix organizations they believe are running improperly. An example is a student who made a complaint about a local teacher whom she believed was physically abusive. Her complaint resulted in two teachers being fired, which has a huge impact on the lives of these teachers (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). If a part of the students' international experience involves working with an organization, students will often take positions of leadership, or be granted these positions, because of power and privilege dynamics. This puts foreigners who know little about the needs and history of the local community in positions with the most influence on how the organization is run. It takes power away from local people, and reinforces the colonizer/colonized trope.

A fifth issue that is also at play is the question of who benefits from an international experience. The more obvious and more commonly discussed situation where this problem arises is in a volunteer or service-learning experience. If volunteers are only present for a short period of time and are focused on accomplishing a tangible goal before they leave, this can force host communities to depend on volunteer services rather than empowering them to maintain sustainable solutions on their own (Ngo, 2014). In this case, volunteers benefit, as they are able to return home feeling good about themselves and telling their friends and family about their experience, while host communities remain stuck in a cycle of poverty and dependence. These unequal benefits can also occur in an academic context. If a student goes abroad to complete an internship that would not be allowed in his/her home country due to lack of experience, this is a form of exploitation. For example, students often complete medical and health related internships abroad in global southern countries, performing medical work on local people,

without adequate training and expertise. Research abroad can be another form of exploitation, especially if the results of the research are brought back to the student's home country and the economic and academic benefits of the findings are not shared with the host country. In all of these contexts, it is the students and the students' home communities who are the beneficiaries rather than the hosts.

General recommendations for cultural sensitivity education

There are various ways that institutions educate individuals in order to minimize the impacts of global racism. Sometimes, no cultural sensitivity education is provided at all, which leaves it up to chance whether or not students have had prior education or life experiences that provided them essential skills, knowledge, and resources. If students have had some sort of cultural sensitivity education in other aspects of their life- their parents, a specific class, a job, books or movies- then they are able to incorporate this knowledge and experience into their experiences abroad. However, in general, all of these other sources of experience are shaped by

white privilege and do not critically analyze racism, and thus can't be relied upon as a consistent source of education. Thus, it is not responsible for a University that values anti-racist practices to rely on outside sources of cultural sensitivity education to prepare students to go abroad. Besides this hands-off approach in cultural sensitivity education, there are several methods that have been researched and are often used by institutions such as universities. Two of them are multicultural education and anti-racist education.

As a basic distinction between these two approaches, multicultural education focuses on appreciation of cultural differences, while anti-racist education focuses on the global impacts institutional racism. A Canadian study provides a comparison of the two methods, saying that “multicultural education approaches represent racism issues in a way that are *non-threatening* to dominant Canadian groups (McCaskell, 2005), and focus on *appreciating differences*” whereas anti-racist education focuses on “*critical analysis*” of “*institutional systems*” (Ngo, 2014). Because it is more comfortable and requires less critical thinking of instructors and students, pre-departure education tends to be more centered on multicultural practices. While this type of education is helpful in that it increases students' awareness and knowledge of other cultures, it does not necessarily lead to minimizing stereotypes and negative impacts of racism. In a review of the different approaches to global education that have been used by the US, UK, and Japan from the 19th century to current practices, the authors concluded that all three countries began to face practical difficulties in teaching multicultural education by the end of the 1980s. It was found that prejudice, stereotypes, and racism were actually increased through the practices of multicultural education because it does not address institutionalized discrimination (Fujikane, 2013). At the same time, Canadian activists began to advocate for an anti-racist education that “analyzed the institutional powers and their effects on race, class, and gender” rather than a

multicultural education (Ngo, 2014). Another researcher discusses that while cross-cultural understanding is important, it is problematic if it is the “central preoccupation” in that it “displaces pressing questions of power, history, and racism, obscuring how whiteness operates as a system of domination” (Charania, 2011 qt. in Tiessen & Kumar).

A conclusion to draw from this research is that knowledge and appreciation of other cultures is important, but should always be situated in the context of the impacts that racism has on the current state of the world. Rather than focusing on differences between “us” and “them”, which is what multicultural education can unintentionally do, educators should center discussions on racism, power, and privilege. An important aspect to include in an anti-racist education is an explanation of the institutional roots of racism; this opposes the common belief that racism is perpetuated only by certain ill-willed individuals (Ngo, 2014). In this process, instructors should provide ways for students to understand their own racial privilege and their complicity in institutional racism¹. Throughout this process, connections should be made to both the ways that racism is at work in students’ daily lives at home as well as internationally (Tiessen & Kumar, 2014). Within this anti-racist framework, there are several recommendations that are made by researchers about effective cultural sensitivity education. I have found these recommendations to fit three general categories: structure, teaching strategies, and topics.

Structure: The structure of the pre-departure cultural sensitivity education should include not only a course prior to the international experience, but also the recruitment and admissions processes. Both of these processes have a huge role in shaping students’ expectations and motivations for their study abroad experience, and so the way students are recruited and admitted into programs should be intentional and align with the goals of minimizing impacts of racism

1. A resource that could be helpful for both educators and students is DiAngelo’s book, *What Does It Mean To Be White? Developing White Racial Literacy*, which discusses how to educate white people about racism.

through cultural sensitivity education. Key parts of the recruitment process are promotional material and websites. According to a study of Canadian study abroad programs, most students research the organization they will be studying with through the organization's website and by word of mouth (Ngo, 2014). This is the beginning of a student's decision to study abroad, and thus initiating a reflection on impact at this step is critical. In addition to incorporating material that promotes this type of reflection, websites and other promotional materials should be cautious of their word choices. For example, many study abroad promotions recreate colonial tropes when they have taglines telling students they will "discover the world" when they go abroad. Though these types of phrases may be successful advertisement tactics, they set up the study abroad experience with a disregard for racial implications.

The next step for students is the admissions process, which has the potential for one-on-one interactions between students and staff that could set up the study abroad experience in an anti-racist framework. Admissions processes should be designed to get students to think critically about the impact they might have on the host community and to determine the student's motivations for wanting to study abroad (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). Before students commit their time and money to go abroad, they should also be willing to commit the time and energy required to become culturally competent. The admissions process could make students aware of the significance of this commitment and help students reflect on whether they are willing to put in the effort necessary. A combination of one-on-one meetings and the online application process could be utilized to do this.

Once a student has made the commitment to study abroad, the pre-departure education should begin well in advance of the departure date. Students are often so excited about the trip itself and about planning the details of the trip that they tend to be distracted when the trip is

near. Beginning the training early also allows time to introduce all important concepts, to have meaningful discussions, and for students to reflect on their own time. The more time that can be allotted to this type of course the better, as cultural sensitivity and racism are large subjects that could take more than a lifetime to study. While it would be ideal if students took a 4-5 credit course the quarter prior to departure, it is more reasonable to expect a 1 credit course. This allows for ten weeks of preparation, and students would at least have the ability of doing more in-depth research and preparation on their own time if they were provided resources and a basic framework for thinking about issues associated with studying abroad.

Several experts emphasize a post-trip course as equally important to a pre-departure course. This is beyond the scope of my research, but should be taken into consideration.

Teaching strategies: Experiential learning is important, and could include activities such as “icebreakers, videos, simulations, and role-playing” (Thebodo & Marx, 2005 qt. in Henry, 2014). Another type of experiential learning advocated by Tiessen & Kumar is using case-studies, which could either be in the format of online modules or in-class handouts. Examples of situations that previous students have encountered while studying abroad could be utilized for case-study or role play scenarios, where students must think about what action he/she would take in a given situation.

Providing online resources so that it is convenient for students to access them after the class ends is another strategy (Thebodo & Marx 2005, qt. in Henry, 2014). The online resources should either be material that was already utilized as a part of the course, or should be supplemental material. It should not be expected that online resources will be sufficient to educate students about cultural sensitivity on their own. Without a context as to why these

resources are important or relevant, it is very unlikely that students will use them. Students are busy with work, academics, and their personal life. Any extra material to read through or watch that is not required, or is not provided a clear and compelling motivation to be read, is not likely to be utilized.

During the class time, a mixture of the experiential learning combined with discussions, lectures, student research and presentations, literature assignments, videos, and writing reflections are all useful strategies that came up multiple times in literature I reviewed.

Topics:

Power and privilege, social identities, racism are topics that should be referenced to throughout the course, as the other topics I will discuss are made relevant in the context of power and privilege, identity, and race. These are the topics that distinguish an anti-racist education from a multicultural education.

Risk assessment content should be carefully constructed to avoid focusing on student apprehensions, rather than the underlying reasons that these risks exist in a particular country. When educating students about issues such as theft, sexual violence, and corruption, educators should bring the conversation back to the connection of these problems with exploitation and oppression. Although it is important (and often times required by law) to recognize that these risks do exist and safety precautions are necessary, it is also important to acknowledge that the risk that students face while they are abroad is not more important than the risk that locals who live in this country face every day. Caution in the presentation of risks is also needed to avoid “recreat[ing] colonial tropes of societies in the Global South as dangerous, inherently corrupt and violent in nature” (Tiessen and Kumar, 2013). An effective way to teach students about how to

be safe while abroad is to assign students to research the impact of colonization on the country and how it has influenced the socio-economic and political states today.

Media is a multifaceted topic, with one facet being *information literacy*. A survey conducted on medical students about information literacy found that half of students did not feel confident in their ability to find relevant resources in order to conduct global health research (Rana, 2014). This is likely to be a similar issue at Western, as students who are not international studies majors or minors often have not had many opportunities or experiences researching foreign countries. Thus, not only do relevant and reliable media sources need to be provided, critical analysis skills need to be taught. Students should be able to look at a wide variety of media sources and analyze the accuracy of the sources and any biases the source and the student him/herself may have. With resources and critical analysis skills, students will be able to continue to increase their knowledge about the host country once they have arrived by, for example, reading the local newspaper.

Another important aspect to media is the *portrayal of people from global southern countries* in media. Researchers Tiessen & Kumar suggest a discussion about how people from global southern countries are typically represented in mass media, such as Hollywood and the news, and how this has had an impact on our perspectives and stereotypes of these people. One potential impact is on the way that students are likely to portray people they encounter while abroad in their own media. For this reason, a discussion about blog postings and other social media postings should be included, as these postings commonly reinforce stereotypes and are spread to friends and family back home. Another media-related topic to include is photography of local people, as it can be a form of exploitation if not done properly (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013).

Communication skills, including both verbal and non-verbal, are essential. While it would be ideal for students to have at least basic command of the language of the destination country before choosing to go to this country, this would be limiting, especially in countries where the native language is not widely spoken or known. Because of colonialization, many countries speak English as at least one of their languages. To show respect for local people and to keep students from expecting that everyone should learn English to be able to communicate with them, it is still important to teach students *basic words and phrases of the native language*. Knowledge about *non-verbal communication* should also be presented, including both how to interpret non-verbal communication that may be different from what the student is used to, and how to adjust his or her own non-verbal communication if needed.

Instruction about *behavior and conduct* should be included, as the power and privilege that students carry with them often times causes them to believe they deserve to act however they please, no matter where they are. Cultural norms may be quite different in the destination community, and inappropriate behavior, such as dressing in shorts or yelling, can be offensive and disrespectful.

Country-specific information, such as geography, history, politics, economics, religion, holidays, food, currency, and traditions, should somehow be incorporated. Because students may not be all going to the same destination, this could be done as independent research if students are provided with some resources. This is a topic through which the connection with racism can be made directly, and it should be emphasized that students include in their studies the ways that expropriation and colonialism have impacted the current state of the country. This is also a practical topic for relationship building within the local community, as it is helpful to know some background about peoples' lives before attempting to build a friendship.

Cultural norms and differences in *values*, though they are typically associated with multicultural education, should still be included. When combined with lessons about communication, knowing this information will help students to interpret what is going on around them and to interact with locals. Reflections on why students value what they do, why other people may have different values, and how these values are still valid, is what makes this topic follow an anti-racist education approach. Reflections on how differences in cultural norms and values can feed into *stereotypes*, and discussions of what stereotypes the students already have about the people of their destination country, also aligns with an anti-racist approach. A few other recommendations from researchers Tiessen & Kumar do not fit into broad topics, and include:

- Discussion of personal topics, including “sexual relationships, friendships, moral judgements on treatment of people and animals, work ethics and perceptions of power and its potential abuse by students during their stay abroad” (Tiessen & Kumar, 2014)
- Discussions on ethical issues, with a focus on what the student hopes to achieve by participating in this international program and who is really going to benefit- the student or the host?
- Affluence and wealth, and how it is tied with power, privilege, and race
- Promote a “generalized learner stance” that assumes that local people are “competent and knowledgeable about their own lives and circumstances” (Cook, 2008 qt. in Tiessen & Kumar). Students should expect to learn from locals rather than to impart their own beliefs and ideas on them.

There are endless possibilities of topics that could be included in a cultural sensitivity education, but the topics I have provided appeared in several sources and cover the basics.

Instructors should feel free to include in a course any relevant expertise and experience they possess.

Model Study: Arizona State University

In order to demonstrate that an intentionally designed cultural sensitivity course should be successful in the goal of increasing students' cultural sensitivity before they go abroad, I have included a model study of a pre-departure experience course at Arizona State University (ASU). At ASU, a graduate student conducted his own study that focused on the impacts of a pre-international experience course he designed on the cultural competencies gained by students. Henry's study can be used to predict what the effects of a similar course would be on the cultural sensitivity of students at WWU. There are several similarities between the ASU study abroad programs and pre-departure preparation to that of WWU that make Henry's research a good model. The options ASU students have for studying abroad are very similar to those of WWU students, including Faculty-Directed Programs (equivalent to Faculty-led Global Learning Programs), exchange programs (equivalent to direct exchange), as well as partnership programs where students study at a foreign university but only with other foreign students (similar to ISEP). Additionally, the pre-departure preparation that was originally provided by ASU was similar to what is currently provided by the IPE at Western. Prior to Henry's course, the preparation involved online modules, which are not described in detail, and a 90-minute one-on-one orientation. This orientation is similar to the one-on-one meetings that WWU students have with IPE staff in its length, and also in its focus on logistics. A caveat to using this study as a model is that the participants were all Global Studies majors, and therefore were likely to begin with higher cultural competencies than the average WWU student who is interested in studying abroad. For this reason, any improvements in cultural competency that were gained from the

pre-departure course would likely be seen at an even greater magnitude if WWU students were to take a similar course.

The primary research question Henry focused on was “What cultural impact does a pre-international experience course have on students who complete the course before studying or interning abroad?” (Henry, 2014). Specifically, the course was designed to teach cross-cultural competency and intercultural learning, which he defines respectively as “the skills, abilities, and knowledge a person has in order to perform effectively and appropriately within a certain context” and “the area of research, study, and application of knowledge about different cultures, their differences, and their similarities” (Forum on Education Abroad). It is important to note that these definitions differ from the definition of cultural sensitivity that I am advocating for. It does not include any emphasis on institutional racism, and thus the overall goal of Henry’s course differs from what I believe is necessary training for students who plan to go abroad. However, by adding critical race theory as a framework to understand the concepts and skills that are taught in Henry’s course, the content and structure of the pre-international experience course could still be relevant to Western.

Overall, Henry describes the course he designed as “training intended to prepare students for their time abroad and related to country-specific information, cultural development, adjustment, and awareness” (Henry, 2014). The contents and structure of the course were designed based off of surveys from more than 800 ASU students who had studied abroad in the past, as well as pre-departure preparation offered by other Universities. From the survey results, he put together a course that focused on three core competencies:

1. “Knowledge: cultural self-awareness and knowledge of culture worldview frameworks

2. Skills: empathy and the use of cross-cultural communication knowledge during interaction with others by listening and observing
3. Attitudes: curiosity and openness” (Henry, 2014).

In order for students to gain these competencies, the course included the main topics of cross-cultural communication styles, cultural adaptation skills, and the cultural adjustment process. These topics were broken down into culture-general and culture-specific information. An outline of the in-class and out of class assignments, discussions, and activities are outlined in Figure 5 of Henry’s paper, and an in-depth description of each section of the course is outlined as well (Henry, 2014). The framework used for teaching the course content is called transformative learning theory. This theory states that a disorienting dilemma must be faced in order to get a student to critically reflect the “content, process, and premise” of the experience. Case studies and modules can be used to provide these disorienting dilemmas, and then students can practice the reflection process so that they are able to do the same when they come across a cultural dilemma while abroad.

One of the conclusions found through student focus groups, self-reflection writing, and weekly assessment evaluations was that students were more aware of their own cultures and of other cultures after taking the pre-international experience course. A quantitative cultural competency test supported a shift from individual to collective thinking based off tests before and after the course. The quantitative test also showed that students “became more sensitive to knowing when to apply their cultural worldviews in different settings” after completing the course (Henry, 2014). There are several other gains in cultural competency that are documented in the paper, all of which show that the specific goals pertaining to cultural competency were realized through a class that was tailored to these goals. While it would have been useful if the

researcher had been able to perform these same tests on students before and after the 90 minute orientation that had previously been used by the University, it is assumed that the improvements in cultural competency as a result of the 1 credit course were more substantial than they would have been as a result of the 90 minute orientation that only addresses cultural competency issues for 15 minutes. This assumption also applies to WWU, in that a similar 1 credit course that also included critical race theory education would increase students' cultural sensitivity.

Current WWU cultural sensitivity education: Center for International Studies

The Center for International Studies (CIS) is the overseer of all international related programs at Western, including all International Programs and Exchanges (IPE), which is the aspect of their services that I am focusing on. The IPE is responsible for direct exchanges, international student exchange programs (ISEP), study abroad, international internships, independent study, and faculty-led global learning programs. The IPE is the location where students go to learn about options for an international component of their education. While the IPE can direct students to other resources, such as the faculty members who are leading global learning programs, this office is the center through which all students who are going abroad through any Western affiliated program obtain information and apply to the program.

To help students determine what type of international program they are interested in, the IPE has compiled a list of questions for students to answer, including questions such as desired geographic location, language skills, and time period². While most of these questions focus on

2. A copy of the document, entitled "Things to Consider", can be found in Appendix B.

logistics, there is one that asks students “what do I really want out of the experience?” Options include “Language skills, International perspective on my field of study, Resume builder-Internship, Adventure.” If the student is interested in a global southern geographic region, this question could be used as a discussion point in order to get students to reflect on why they want to go to this country, and what the potential implications of this decision would be on people of the host country. The way an international experience is presented to students is very important, as discussed previously. If this survey is used solely to match a student with the experience that he/she desires and is most logistically sound, this sets the student up for perceiving the experience in terms of what he/she gains from it. However, if the IPE intentionally asks students about their motivations and to critically reflect on the impacts the study abroad experience could have before students commit to a certain program, students would be primed to think about their impacts on the host country once they arrive. This could also turn away students who are not willing to think critically about the implications of their plans. While this goes counter to the goals of the CIS and WWU as a whole, who aim to recruit more students for international programs, it is important that students are not sent abroad solely for the purpose of numbers.

The push to encourage more people to go abroad in order to meet the standards of being recognized as a globally engaged university could likely lead to lowered standards for participants and for education provided by the university. If success is measured by the number of students who go abroad, this is a big problem. Currently, WWU collects data about the number of students who study abroad, as well as how participants felt about their experience abroad (Action Plan for Global Engagement at Western). However, all of the questions focus on what the participants got out of the experience³, and cannot be used to analyze how students had an impact on their host communities. Putting larger and larger numbers of students out into

3. See Appendix C for Student Response Survey questions.

different countries, with the goal being the ensuring student satisfaction with the experience, is dangerous.

If the goal instead is to minimize impacts of racism, then a follow-up discussion regarding the question of what the student hopes to get out of the experience would be beneficial. A time where this discussion could be held is during the 30-60 minute meeting with an advisor from the CIS. These meetings are one-on-one, and currently include the topics “completing a comprehensive budget, Financial Aid information (if applicable), safety, academics, registration, travel resources, etc.” (Mantello, private communication, 26 January, 2016). These are all logistical topics, and assume that the student’s desire to go abroad is enough reason that the student *should* go abroad, as long as all of the logistics work out. As discussed previously, it cannot be assumed that all international experiences are “good per se”. These meetings would be the ideal time to determine whether the overall impact of the experience would likely be positive or negative, including impacts on both the student and the host community, and to strategize ways to minimize the negative impacts. Since these meetings are already required for all students who will be partaking in an international program through Western, it would be reasonable to add this component to the meetings. If this were to occur, advisors should be provided with training that would enable them to engage in these types of conversations with students.

In addition to the meetings with an advisor, the CIS provides several other elements of pre-departure preparation to students. There is already some cultural sensitivity education provided in this preparation, as well as room to add more. Some of the preparation is dependent on the specific type of international program, and others apply more generally to all international programs.

The online resources provided by the CIS are an important part of the pre-departure preparation. This is the central location for students to obtain information about international program options, and is often where the CIS directs students for resources. The website, <https://studyabroad.wvu.edu/>, includes mainly logistic resources, such as available program types, financial aid, academic advising, disability accommodations, and health and safety information. While all of this information is important in helping students plan their international experience, it does not provide any resources specifically relating to cultural sensitivity. The site does have a page with “Country Specific Information.” However, all of the resources provided are travel-related, and help to find hostels or places to eat, rather than information about the country, except for the U.S. Department of State link. This link does provide access to maps and to descriptions of US relations with each country. While this country-specific is important, it lacks key information, such as country-specific information about politics, religions, history, cultural traditions, language, and currency. More country-specific resources, as well as cultural sensitivity resources, should be added to the website.

Another resource provided is a learning component of the applications to study abroad. In order to be allowed by the university to study abroad, students must complete the applications, and thus the learning components. Here is another great opportunity for cultural sensitivity education to be provided. Currently, the only section of the learning components that relates to cultural sensitivity is a statement that advises students to “Investigate the local conditions, laws, legal system, political landscape, weather, and culture of the country you’re visiting” (though it does not provide a resource recommendation through which to do this investigation). The rest of the Learning Component focuses on logistics, such as sexual violence prevention, documents to obtain, finances, travel, and safety. The same resources that could be provided on the Study

Abroad website could be provided in the Learning Content of the application. Another option to include would be a case study, where students read about a scenario that may occur in the host country that highlights cultural differences. Then students must respond to the scenario. A resource that provides case studies of this type is The Ethics of International Engagement & Service Learning (EIESL) project, which can be found online (Sher, 2011).

The other types of pre-departure education that are provided by the CIS are dependent on the type of program that the student is pursuing. Since faculty-led global learning programs are led by a WWU faculty member, it is generally left up to the faculty member to provide a cultural sensitivity education beyond what the CIS provides. I will discuss in greater detail the wide variety of cultural sensitivity education provided for students in global learning programs later on. For both direct exchanges and international student exchange programs, it is required that students take a pre-departure 1 credit course called International Studies 301. In these two programs, students are typically more independent than in other international programs because “students generally attend regular undergraduate courses with local students” rather than in classes specifically designed for international students (Education Abroad). Because students typically don’t have much support once they’ve arrived in their host country, these students must take the INTL 301 course. Overall, this course provides both logistics and cultural sensitivity education. With regard to the latter, topics included are culture, values, culture shock, communicating across cultures, being an American abroad, reflecting and telling your story, two days of student presentations about their destination countries, and transitioning home. The course goals which align with cultural sensitivity education include: “become conscious of one’s own cultural perspective as well as others; develop intercultural competency skills (including nonverbal communication differences); engage in a forum to discuss expectations for education

abroad; and increase your understanding of your host country and its culture” (Partolan-Fray, 2015). Teaching methods include reading assignments, discussions, online modules, lectures, group work, student research, and guest presentations. Overall, this course appears very similar to the ASU pre-international experience course that was provided as a model study and thus likely increases students’ cultural competencies. Similar to the ASU course, the INTL 301 is more of a multicultural education rather than an antiracist education. Possibly breaking the class into two sections, depending on the region of the destination country, would be useful to better prepare students to study in a global southern country.

For all other international programs offered through Western, especially the study abroad programs, the CIS offers a 2-hour orientation session for students prior to departure. Again, the focus is on logistics (agenda, money, transportation, packing, finances) and personal wellness and safety (personal safety, personal health, sexual violence, Title IX Rights, counseling services, making the best of school). There are only three slides in the twenty-three slide PowerPoint that relate to culture, including: one that mentions cultural differences in housing (important), one that is dedicated to culture shock (important, but again, focus is on the well-being of the student), and one that suggests the International Buddy Program as a way to stay involved in the International Community upon return. The one slide on communication is not actually about communicating effectively in other cultures- it is about how to stay in touch with people at home. While most students attending this session are traveling to global northern countries, and therefore may be adequately prepared for their experience with this presentation, students who will be studying in global southern countries need a much more in-depth preparation.

The other resource provided for study abroad students by the IPE is the "Student Handbook for Studying Abroad." While this handbook does provide more cultural sensitivity education than the 2 hour presentation does, its main focus is still logistics and well-being of the student. Of the total 30 pages, just 4 of them are dedicated specifically to "Cultural Adjustment". The title of this section is centered on student needs, rather than needs of the host community. Most of it offers descriptions of what culture shock is, and provides strategies to cope with it, which solely relates to student needs. However, there are a few statements that address the need to consider impacts on the host community. One statement says "The more you know about your personal values and how they are derived from your culture, the better prepared you will be to see and understand the cultural differences you will encounter abroad". (Daniels, 2009). There are also a few paragraphs discussing intercultural communication and imposition of personal values, which are more important topics of cultural sensitivity education. While these sections provoke reflection and critical thinking about cultural sensitivity, three paragraphs are not nearly adequate. For example, the handout recommends cultural self-analysis, but if a student has never done this before, he/she will not know where to start, or what aspects of his/her own culture are important to consider. Thus, more interaction and engagement, whether it be through discussions or through online modules, would be helpful additions to this handout. Another likely problem with this handout is that the section titled "Cultural Adjustment" is chapter 6 out of 7, and thus is not prioritized in the handout. If the students have not already been motivated to educate themselves about cultural sensitivity, it is likely they won't even get to this section of the handout.

With all this being said, the staff of the IPE are very knowledgeable and willing to discuss cultural sensitivity. I found that they were willing to provide any resources and

information they knew about, and it is very easy to schedule a one-on-one meeting with them. However, students who are not already aware of the importance of cultural sensitivity are unlikely to seek this extra guidance out on their own.

Current WWU cultural sensitivity education: Faculty-Led Global Learning Programs

Another program that is under the direction of the Center for International Services is the Faculty-Led Global Learning Programs. These programs have been growing in recent years so much that a new director position has been created to manage them. Global Learning Programs are created and implemented by faculty members from any department. Currently, the requirements for a faculty member to begin a new Global Learning Program are not very in-depth, and consist mainly of a one-page proposal that must be approved by the director. There are no specific requirements regarding cultural sensitivity training that must be provided in the program. In an interview with Seth Feinberg, the current director, he told me that the level of cultural sensitivity education that the faculty provide their students varies a lot and depends on the amount of knowledge that each faculty member has on the subject (Feinberg, personal communication, 12 October, 2015). After interviewing six faculty members who have led Global Learning Programs, I found this to be an accurate summary. The faculty members I interviewed came from a wide background of academics, including biology, political science, art, sociology, and service learning. I chose to only interview faculty who had lead trips in global southern countries, and the destinations countries included Mexico, Japan, Kenya, Rwanda, and South Africa.

Below is a summary of the pre-departure education that is provided for these five programs (for one of the programs there were two faculty members who co-led the trip). This summary is by no means comprehensive. In my interviews, I asked faculty members what types

of pre-departure education are provided to students, specifically regarding cultural sensitivity. Depending on the responses I received, I asked additional, more specific questions. I used a general outline of my interview format⁴ with every faculty member, but my interviews were very fluid and dependent on the responses I was given. Additionally, I was given a syllabus for the pre-departure orientation for three of the five global learning programs, so the data collected from these trips is more empirical. Similar to the recommendations for teaching cultural sensitivity, I have broken the pre-departure education provided by these programs into three categories: structure, teaching strategies, and topics. Many of the topics I have listed are very general, and there were often very specific examples that were provided during the interviews that fit into these general categories. While the section describing the amount of time spent on pre-departure training is grouped into individual programs, the summaries of the types of training and the general topics covered are in a random order. I have noted when a particular type of training or topic covered was a part of the pre-departure education for multiple programs.

Structure:

Total amount of days/weeks	Total number of hours	Other
4 days	16 hours	Constant discussions about race, power, and privilege once in host country
2 weeks	40 hours	
20 weeks	6 hours	May be changed to a 1 credit required course for the next trip
10 weeks	15 hours	
2 weeks	40 hours	Optional 1 credit class in the quarter prior to the trip; students complete a social action project and write a self-reflection paper when they return home

4. See Appendix D for an outline of my interview questions for faculty leading Global Learning Programs

Teaching strategies:

Discussions (5), independent research (3), reading assignments (3), video (2), team building activities (2), lecture, activities, debates

Topics:

Power/privilege and identities (2), race (2), appropriation, stereotypes (2), global citizenship, ethics (2), cultural differences (2), expectations (2), guiding principles for the group (3), relationship building with host country (2), nonverbal communication, basic language skills (3), history of host country (3), government and economy of host country, practical information about host country, religions of host country (2), use of cameras (2), media (2), dress and behavior etiquette (2), mindfulness, logistics (5)

This data emphasizes the variety in amount of time spent on pre-departure education, the content, and the teaching strategies utilized. One trend that I gathered is that all faculty members spent some amount of time discussing logistics, with two of the five trips having logistics make up a majority of the topics involved in pre-departure education. As discussed earlier, while it is important and necessary for students to understand and be aware of logistical issues, especially health and safety, it is also important that they are presented in a culturally sensitive manner.

Many topics that are recommended to be included in a cultural sensitivity education are a part of at least some of these programs' pre-departure education. However, the topics of race and power/privilege/identity only make it into two of the five programs. This is understandable, as many faculty members have not had much education themselves regarding race, power, privilege, and identity. Since faculty members are expected to create the content of the entire course on their own, it is unreasonable to expect that most faculty members would possess the expertise to teach these topics. A possible solution would be utilizing other campus resources for

support, or having the CIS provide a pre-departure course to eliminate the burden put on faculty members.

A note to make about the global learning programs is that during many of the interviews, faculty members mentioned that a lot of the cultural sensitivity education they provide is during the time they are abroad. Many of the faculty members live with the students while they are abroad, so they have ample time for discussions. Several faculty members also reported post-trip reflections and debrief sessions as being a part of their program, which was recommended in a lot of literature.

Current WWU cultural sensitivity education: Other resources

Outside of the IPE, Western already has several resources that would be useful for faculty, staff, and students to utilize in order to increase students' cultural sensitivity. One of these resources is the Center for Service Learning (CSL). The practices of the CSL align with anti-racist education approaches. Even though this office is typically focused on the more local Bellingham community, the resources it provides are still applicable at an international level, as is captured by a statement from the CSL's website saying, "Service-learning pedagogy can be applied to any discipline and our faculty and student participants represent all eight colleges of the university" (What is Service Learning, 2015).

One program offered by the CSL that is particularly relevant is the Community Engagement Fellows Program. This program is offered for faculty from WWU, Northwest Indian College, and Whatcom Community College, and is designed to "help higher education faculty in Whatcom County, Washington nurture engaged citizens, serve the public, and improve our region and the planet" (Community Engagement Fellows, 2016). The goals of the program are to provide space for collaborative discussion about how to maintain effective and sustainable

community partnerships. The participants in the fellowship meet two times a month for a full academic year. The first meeting is a whole group forum, and the second is a cohort meeting with individual groups of 5-6 people. This program would be immensely beneficial for faculty members who wanted to implement a new Global Learning Program, or even improve a program they have already led.

In an interview with Travis Tennesen, who leads the Community Engagement Fellows Program, he explained that a large component of the program involves asking faculty why they want to do the particular project they have in mind and what their own motivations are. Another question asked is: how do you prepare yourself and your students to do this work? Because the program is an entire year, it allows time for critical reflection of faculty members, and also allows them the time to plan a program that is culturally sensitive. Participating in the program would also enable them to elicit the same discussions from their students as they themselves discussed in the fellowship. Some of the topics of sessions that align with an antiracist education are “Assessing our Impacts” and “Forming Lasting Partnerships”. Because of the variety of expertise and backgrounds of the faculty involved in the program, it is a great opportunity for sharing skills, experiences, and resources. The CEF program website has a shared archive of resources and meeting notes that could prove valuable for faculty themselves, as well as students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, WWU does have the means to provide a cultural sensitivity education that would prepare students to minimize negative impacts during their study abroad experience. However, not all students are receiving this education. Most students, regardless of the program they are participating in, receive a multicultural rather than an antiracist education. However, by integrating resources from across campus, it would be possible to modify existing structures of

pre-departure education to be taught with an anti-racist framework. While it requires time and effort on the behalf of staff and faculty to make these modifications, and also requires time and effort on behalf of students to complete a comprehensive cultural sensitivity training, these are minimal losses when compared to the consequences of failing to consider the negative impacts that are likely occurring without such a training.

The President's Task Force on Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity issued a statement that aligns Western with antiracist practices. It states, "As stewards of a proudly public university, we at Western must recognize the history and culture we are embedded in and embrace our responsibility to increase access for those who have been historically and structurally excluded from our society's opportunities, resources, and rewards" (President's Taskforce on Equity, Inclusion and Diversity, 2015). Western has, at least in words, taken responsibility for its role in increasing access to opportunities for groups who have been historically oppressed. Up to this point, the focus has primarily been placed on oppressed peoples who are directly related to the Western community- mainly students, faculty, and staff. However, Western also has an impact on many more groups of people who have historically been oppressed, including the host communities where Western students spend time abroad. These people deserve to be a part of the goals of this task force as much as any other person, and Western should take seriously the impact that it has on these communities. If Western Washington University truly stands behind this statement, then we- the students, faculty, and staff- must all take responsibility and work toward implementing changes in Western's international programs.

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Appendix A.
Personal Interviews

Seth Feinberg: Global Learning Programs Director. 12 October, 2015

Dr. Vernon Johnson: Political Science Faculty, South Africa Global Learning Program. 19 January, 2016

Timothy Costello: Center for Service Learning Director, Kenya and Rwanda Global Learning Programs. 7 December, 2015

Julia Sapin: College of Fine & Performing Arts Faculty, Japan Global Learning Program. 11 January, 2016

Seiko Atsuta Purdue: College of Fine & Performing Arts Faculty, Japan Global Learning Program. 11 January, 2016

Krista Mantello: International Programs & Exchanges Program Support Supervisor, 19 October, 2015

Dan Lindeman: International Programs & Exchanges Program Coordinator. 19 October, 2015

Travis Tennessen: Center for Service Learning Assistant Director, Community Engagement Fellows Administrator. 27 January, 2016

Alejandro Acevedo: Biology Faculty, Mexico Global Learning Program. 19 October, 2016.

Liz Mogford: Sociology Faculty, Kenya Global Learning Program. 21 October, 2015 and 2 November, 2015

Appendix B. WWU Education Abroad: Things to Consider

There are many factors to take into consideration such as type of program, location, and coursework to name just a few. In order to help with the process, the Office of International Programs & Exchanges has compiled a list of questions for you to consider when reviewing the program options.

Please Circle:

1. Is there a geographical location that I am interested in?

- Europe
- Asia
- North/Central America
- South America
- Oceania
- Specific country/region _____

2. What do I really want to get out of this experience?

- Language skills
- International perspective on my field of study
- Resume builder- Internship
- Adventure

3. What language skills do I have? _____

Remember, you do not always have to know the host country language to study abroad there.

4. Do I prefer a:

- Large city
- Small town

5. Do I prefer a:

- Large university
- Small university

6. Do I want or need to take classes for my:

- Major
- Minor
- GURs
- Honors
- Electives
- Internship
- Research
- Service learning

7. Do I want to study with:

- Other WWU students: (Faculty-led)
- A group of primarily other US/American students: (Study Abroad)
- A mixed group of international students: (Exchange, Independent field study)

8. Do I want to live with:

- A host family
- In an apartment/ house with other Americans/international students
- In a university residence system

9. Am I interested in going abroad for a:

- Summer

- o Quarter
- o Semester
- o Year-long program

10. Do I plan to do additional travel before or after my program?

Yes No

11. When do I graduate? _____

o If you plan to study abroad close to your planned graduation date, please consult one of the IPE Advisors.

12. Based on my answers, the program types I am most interesting in researching are:

- o Study Abroad
- o Faculty-Led
- o Exchange
- o Independent field study

Before you start applying:

- Share with your academic advisor that you are thinking of studying abroad. Enlist his or her help in determining the best time to fit study abroad into your degree plan.
- Give yourself time to research options: talk with your professors, advisors in the IPE Office and with students who have studied abroad.
- Set some goals: many education abroad programs are good; the best one for you depends on what you want!
- Prioritize your goals: consider long-term academic and professional goals as well as on-campus degree requirements.
- Prepare academically: you may need to take language or other prerequisites for your chosen program.
- Get all the courses you plan to take abroad pre-approved before you go.
- After researching programs it can be helpful to compare your top three options side by side!

Appendix C.
WWU Student Response Surveys

The Rate this Program Questionnaire asks students to rate on a scale of 1-5 stars the following:

1. Overall Experience
2. Program Value
3. Academic Experience
4. Housing Experience
5. Cultural Immersion
6. Program Administration

The program testimonial asks the students to respond to the following questions:

1. Overall Rating: Please rate the overall experience of this program.
2. What elements of the program did you find the most rewarding? Please be as specific as possible.
3. How could this program be improved in the future? Let us know about anything that we might be able to change for future students who participate in this program.
4. Academics: Please provide a testimonial regarding the academic experience of the program.
5. Program Administration: Please provide a testimonial on the administrative aspect of your program. (Program provider, host university staff, program organization, etc.)
6. Living Situation/Accommodations: Please provide a testimonial regarding your living situation/accommodations.
7. Cultural Immersion: Please provide a testimonial regarding your cultural immersion experience.
8. Food: Please provide a testimonial regarding the food considerations within your program.
9. Social Life: Please provide a testimonial regarding the social opportunities within your program.
10. Health Services/Accessibility: Please provide a testimonial regarding the Health Services & Accessibility accommodations.
11. City Life: Please provide a testimonial regarding your experience & impressions living in your host city.
12. Overall Feedback & Additional Comments: Please provide a testimonial regarding your overall impression of the program and any additional comments.

Appendix D.
Outline of Faculty Interviews

“I am researching the types of cultural education WWU provides to students who are going abroad, either studying or volunteering. I’ve seen that you lead a global learning program- could you tell me about what kinds of cultural sensitivity is provided for students before they go abroad with your program? Specifically:

1. What is the scope of your pre-departure preparation? (amount of time, meeting or resources given, required or not, general topic outline)
2. What type of teaching or resources do you provide regarding:
 - a. History of destination country
 - b. Relations between the US and destination country (past and present)
 - c. Important culture/customs/religion/tradition in destination country
3. Discussions regarding:
 - a. Racism and white privilege
 - b. Colonialism and expropriation
 - c. Stereotypes
 - d. Communication and language barriers
 - e. Culture shock
4. Other important/relevant topics”